Literary **Lab**

Loudness in the Novel

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Pamphlets of the Stanford Literary **Lab**

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Loudness in the Novel[1]

> *In the novel, we can always hear voices*
> *(even while reading silently to ourselves).*
> M.M. Bakhtin

The novel is composed entirely of voices: the most prominent among them is typically that of the narrator, which is regularly intermixed with those of the various characters. In reading through a novel, the reader "hears" these heterogeneous voices as they occur in the text. When the novel is read out loud, the voices are audibly heard. They are also heard, however, when the novel is read silently: in this latter case, the voices are not verbalized for others to hear, but acoustically created and perceived in the mind of the reader. Simply put: sound, in the context of the novel, is fundamentally a product of the novel's voices. This conception of sound mechanics may at first seem unintuitive—sound seems to be the product of oral reading—but it is only by starting with the voice that one can fully appreciate sound's function in the novel. Moreover, such a conception of sound mechanics finds affirmation in the works of both Mikhail Bakhtin and Elaine Scarry: "In the novel," writes Bakhtin, "we can always hear voices (even while reading silently to ourselves)."[2]

Now, the voices of the novel, heard by the reader, are particularly interesting and diverse. Each voice sounds unique. Each voice has its own unique semantic content. And, in the case of dialogue, the manner of speaking is often described, meaning that to each instance of a voice a particular quality and sound can be ascribed. So, sound is a continuous aspect of the

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1 A special thanks to Ryan Heuser, whose guidance and knowledge of code made this study possible.

2 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination,* University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 252. Elaine Scarry confirms this description of sound mechanics: "When we read [a] passage aloud or almost aloud, the sound of the words is sensorially present....When we read silently, the spoken words are acoustically imaged rather than actually heard." Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, Princeton UP, 2001, p. 132.

novel—*we can always hear voices*—that directly affects the reader regardless of whether he reads orally or in silence, and the novel is one of the few genres to experiment with the diversity and distribution of multiple voices. Yet despite these facts, little has come of the study of sound in the novel: in part due to the absence of categories by which to distinguish between different types of sound; in part due to a general skepticism regarding the novel's degree of control over how its voices are heard. At the highest level, this paper proposes loudness—a concept that is in fact explicitly associated in the novel with certain voices—as a means to break down, analyze, and make sense of sound's functions in the novel.[3]

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Loudness can be broken down into three basic levels: quiet, neutral, and loud. These three levels provide a simple schema for grouping and analyzing all voices in the novel.[4] While each reader hears the voices of the novel with slight variation, it is my belief that these differences do not typically transgress into our broader three levels of volume. *However, in order to locate loudness in the novel as objectively as possible, this paper will take as its starting point and as its central object of study a select set of voices—what I term the voices of tagged dialogue; that is, voices that are described as being spoken in a certain manner; voices that are shouted, whispered, exclaimed.* Take, for example, the following sentence: ' "Off with their heads!" shouted the Queen.' In this case, the Queen's manner of speaking is made explicit by the verb "shouted" located just outside the dialogue in the external narration. I will call such verbs—verbs that describe how a section of dialogue is spoken—*speaking verbs*. Dialogue with a speaking verb will be called *tagged dialogue*; dialogue without a speaking verb, *suspended dialogue*.[5] Within tagged dialogue, tonal subjectivity is reduced to a minimum, because the sound of the voice is explicitly described.

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3 The type of sound studied in this paper may be contrasted with a second type of novelistic sound: not only does the reader hear the voices of the novel as he comes across them, but on certain occasions these novelistic voices ask the reader to imagine secondary sounds (sometimes referred to as "soundscapes"). For instance, as Elaine Scarry acutely discerns, when the reader is reading *Madame Bovary* and comes across the phrase "drops of water could be heard falling one by one on the taut morié", he not only hears these words being spoken by the narrator, but further, "lightly piggybacking on top" of the sound of the narrator's voice is "the imagined scrims of the sound of raindrops." (Ibid. 116, 132). So, two types of sound: the sound of the narrator speaking the phrase "drops of water could be heard…", and the less intense and more fleeting sound of rain falling on a parasol. I will leave these fleeting and rather infrequent descriptions of sound for a different study, and instead focus on the continuous and sonorous sounds of novelistic voices.

4 Loudness's classificatory nature makes it a particularly productive concept for making sense of the many dynamic voices of the novel. The same cannot be said of concepts like tone, timber, and pitch, which emphasize subtle and minute aspects of sound and as a result tend to differentiate between sounds rather than group sounds together.

5 I took the term "suspended dialogue" from Mark Lambert, *Dickens and the Suspended Quotation,* Yale UP, 1981.

Speaking verbs are the first step towards quantifying textual loudness. In fact, all tagged dialogue can be objectively parsed into one of three levels of loudness based on the respective speaking verb. For example:

> Loud: "Off with their heads!" *shouted* the Queen.
> Neutral: "I suppose so," *said* Alice.
> Quiet: He *whispered*, "She's under sentence of execution."

Speaking verbs indicate that loudness is an unequivocal part of the novel: certain voices in the novel are explicitly loud, and as such their loudness is undeniably based within the novel (not the result of a subjective whim on the part of the reader). The fact that these voices are explicitly loud in no way entails that they are the only loud voices in the novel; however, their clearly stated loudness suggests that these voices are significantly loud—most likely, the loudest ones.

This, then, is the background and topic of the present study. The study itself will be divided into three parts, each of which develops the concept of loudness (as found in tagged dialogue) in a different direction.

Part I examines the words that occur within loud dialogue that is cried, exclaimed, shouted, roared, and screamed. When, for instance, the reader reads the sentence, ' "Off with their heads!" shouted the Queen,' it is the words and punctuation inside the quotations ("Off", "with", "their", "heads", and the exclamation mark) that are typical of what I will call the semantics of loudness. I have relied on speaking verbs to define dialogue that is explicitly loud; however, speaking verbs are not responsible for *making* loud dialogue loud. In my example—"Off with their heads!" shouted the Queen—the dialogue is not transubstantiated into loud dialogue once the word "shouted" is read. Rather, it is the semantic content of the Queen's voice which suggests and elicits within the reader's imagination a speaker who is speaking loudly. As such, a semantic study of loud dialogue is a natural first step towards understanding the roles and functions of loudness in the novel.

Part II examines the structural potential of loudness and loud dialogue. Oscillating between two tiers of structure—the organization of loud dialogue amongst the voices that make up a novel and the organization of the reader's aural experience while reading—this section will explore how the loudest and quietest sections of the novel affect both the plot and the psychology of the reader.

Part III uses loudness as a means of measuring historical change. There is no requirement regarding how many voices in the novel are loud, quiet, and neutral. Part III describes a quiet-

ing down of the British novel over the course of the 19th century by measuring the change in the percentage of loud speaking verbs per decade.[6]

As with much of the work at the Literary Lab, the primary goal in the following pages is to open up new conceptual possibilities. As such, each section is only a beginning. The three parts do not pretend to any completeness.

1. The Semantics of Loud Dialogue

The following semantic analysis takes the form of a most-distinctive-word test (MDW): a test that identifies the words which most distinguish one category from a second category, and that has already been used in the Literary Lab's "Style at the Scale of the Sentence."[7] In my case, loud dialogue was compared with neutral dialogue, the most common form of dialogue in the novel. Speaking verbs made possible the compilation of two large samples: one of 500 instances of explicitly neutral dialogue, framed by "said", "replied", "observed", "rejoined", or "asked"; and another composed of 500 instances of explicitly loud dialogue, framed by "cried", "exclaimed", "shouted", "roared", or "screamed."[8] Both samples were randomly selected from a corpus of 19th century novels written in English. The computer returned the words that occurred both frequently in loud dialogue and infrequently in neutral dialogue. These "loud words" are displayed in **Figure 1.**

The initial expectation was that loud words would cluster around specific topics, perhaps defined by nouns like "scoundrel", "murderer", "fool", and "guilt", or adjectives like "wretched", "despicable", and "miserable." Instead, *loudness showed an affinity, not to topics, but to grammatical structures*. This emerged first at the most basic grammatical level—part of speech. Loud dialogue exhibits a preference for verbs, pronouns, and questions, and simultaneously a disinclination for adjectives, nouns, and prepositions. Among the 27 loud words there are no adjectives, 1 preposition (till), and 2 nouns (life, fellow). **Figure 2** arranges these loud words into broad grammatical categories with the addition of a third column similarly categorizing the words distinctive of neutral dialogue. I have classified "God" and "heaven" as interjections, despite technically being nouns, because they almost always function in loud dialogue as interjections: "My God!", "O, God!", "Heaven in mercy!" etc.

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6 At the start, I intended to include a fourth part on the role of loudness in free indirect discourse. The complexity of the subject, however, requires a study of its own.

7 Sarah Allison, Marissa Gemma, Ryan Heuser, Franco Moretti, Amir Tevel, and Irena Yamboliev, "Style at the Scale of the Sentence", 2013.

8 The two samples are based on the five most common speaking verbs for each category. A more extensive list of speaking verbs might include the following: (loud) cried, exclaimed, shouted, roared, screamed, shrieked, vociferated, bawled, called, ejaculated, retorted, proclaimed, announced, protested, accosted, declared; (neutral) said, replied, observed, rejoined, asked, answered, returned, repeated, remarked, enquired, responded, suggested, explained, uttered, mentioned; (quiet) whispered, murmured, sighed, grumbled, mumbled, muttered, whimpered, hushed, faltered, stammered, trembled, gasped, shuddered.

word	obs_total	expected	obs: loud dialogue	obs: neutral dialogue	obs(loud)/exp	p-value
exclamation mark	675	337.5	566	109	1.68	0.000
oh	75	37.5	60	15	1.60	0.000
em dash	288	144	179	109	1.24	0.000
what	157	78.5	103	54	1.31	0.000
God	46	23	35	11	1.52	0.000
heaven	12	6	11	1	1.83	0.003
yet	25	12.5	19	6	1.52	0.007
tell	40	20	28	12	1.40	0.008
comma	1885	942.5	993	892	1.05	0.011
how	49	24.5	33	16	1.35	0.011
down	21	10.5	16	5	1.52	0.013
me	241	120.5	138	103	1.15	0.014
o	43	21.5	29	14	1.35	0.016
ye	33	16.5	23	10	1.39	0.018
your	155	77.5	91	64	1.17	0.018
hold	12	6	10	2	1.67	0.019
bless	9	4.5	8	1	1.78	0.020
fellow	20	10	15	5	1.50	0.020
never	69	34.5	43	26	1.25	0.027
let	62	31	39	23	1.26	0.028
save	8	4	7	1	1.75	0.035
question mark	296	148	164	132	1.11	0.036
life	21	10.5	15	6	1.43	0.039
why	40	20	26	14	1.30	0.040
stop	13	6.5	10	3	1.54	0.046
till	13	6.5	10	3	1.54	0.046
thee	30	15	20	10	1.33	0.049

Figure 1: Words statistically distinctive of loud dialogue (loud words).

The relevant statistical values are as follows. The first column displays the word's observed total (obs_total), that is to say, how often the word occurred in both samples combined. The "expected" value signals how often we would expect the word to occur in each sample if it was equally likely to occur in either one. The two specific observed values that follow—obs: loud dialogue and obs: neutral dialogue—indicate how often the given word actually occurred in the loud sample and in the neutral one. The penultimate column—obs(loud)/exp—displays the ratio between the word's observed value in loud dialogue and the expected value: this ratio, in its turn, expresses the word's deviation from the average, and hence its "distinctiveness." Finally, the p-value is a measure of statistical significance: when its value is less than or equal to .05, the result is "significant" in the sense that it is not likely to be a consequence of chance (only words with a p-value of .05 or less were included in our figure). As an example, the word "what" occurred a total of 157 times in the two samples combined, and we would therefore expect it to occur 78.5 times in the loud sample and 78.5 times in the neutral sample. In actuality, however, it occurred 103 times in the loud sample and 54 times in the neutral sample. With an observed/expected that is greater than one and a p-value under .05, "what" is thus distinctive of loud dialogue.

Part of Speech	Loud Words	Neutral Words
Verbs	tell, let, stop, hold, save, bless	was, has, should, may, said, find, suppose
Nouns	life, fellow	night, friend, place
Pronouns	me, your, ye, thee	we, whom
Adjectives		any, good, long, enough, young, which, the
Adverbs	never, down	well, just, when
Prepositions	till	to, in, for, before, as
Conjunctions	yet	and, since
Interjections	oh, o, God, heaven	
Questions	what, why, how, question mark	
Punctuation	exclamation mark, em dash, comma	period, semicolon

Figure 2: Loud and neutral words organized by part of speech.

Moving from part of speech to the next level of grammatical complexity, many loud words tend to occur in loud dialogue *with the same grammatical function.* For example: based on our sample, "tell" functions within loud dialogue as a command 40 percent of the time, while in neutral dialogue it does so only 15 percent of the time. This imperative tendency is shared by all six loud verbs (tell, let, stop, hold, save, bless) and is completely absent in the seven neutral verbs: only two of them—"suppose" and "find"—can function as imperatives, and in neutral dialogue they rarely do. Thus, the correlation is not only between loudness and certain words, but between loudness and a grammatical mood.

The grammar of loudness finds its clearest articulation in three structures described below. These structures in turn offer an explanation for how to recognize loud voices in the absence of speaking verbs. In fact, grammar is possibly a better designator of loudness than the speaking verb itself, given that the latter is sometimes incorrectly paired with dialogue. Take the following sentence from Henry William Herbert's *Marmaduke Wyvil*: "Never!" he said—"Never! So help me He, who looks on all things—no, never!" The utterance is packed full of loud grammar—exclamation marks, em dashes, an imperative, the word "me", three repetitions of the word "never", a reference to God—yet it is framed by a neutral speaking verb. It is a particularly extreme example, but the point remains: speaking verbs in the novel are not always reliable. Much like the construction of a roman arch, the speaking verbs are a scaffolding, an easily discernible unit, which, after a semantic study is complete, can be pulled away leaving grammar as a more accurate sign of loudness. The study of these three grammatical structures, then, gives us the clearest picture of novelistic loudness. It is from them that we can begin formulating what it means for the novel to raise its voice (with the lingering question of why it might want to).

Structure 1.

"O, speak to me!" she cried, kneeling to him—"tell me, O, Randolph, art thou the author of those letters?—anonymous, too! I am thunderstruck." [John Neal, *Randolph*]

"I tell you you have!" she exclaimed, in high temper. "I insist upon undoing it. Now, allow me!" [Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*]

She nodded her head again reluctantly; then cried out,—"Let me go! I'll have the police on you two." [Robert Herrick, *The Web of Life*]

Effie exclaimed, in a tone which went through the heart of all who heard her—"O Jeanie, Jeanie, save me, save me!" [Walter Scott, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*]

"Don't defy me, sir! Don't defy me!" he cried. "You forget that I am your mother's brother!" [John Cooke, *Justin Harley*]

Five loud utterances, and each time the same grammatical structure—an imperative verb followed by the word "me": Tell me; Allow me; Let me; Save me; Don't defy me. Because "me" is always the object of a verb, it signifies a unique displacement of the speaker from subject to object. What results in loud dialogue is a particularly codified structure in which the other (subject of the verb) and the speaker (object of the verb) are overwhelmingly compressed together, often to the point of conflict: (*You*) let *me* go. Loud commands are not made by the All-powerful—then God said, "Let there be light"—nor are they masked in polite etiquette—"Please pass the butter." Instead, loud commands are vehement, often angry cries to another to be freed from a state of ignorance (tell me), restriction (allow me, let me go), danger (save me), rage (don't defy me), or, more generally, misfortune. In loud dialogue, a conflictual or unbalanced state of affairs is typical, and it finds a particularly elegant manifestation in this first structure.

This description of novelistic loudness can be compared with other types of non-novelistic loudness, such as the united loudness of national anthems or the choral unity of Mahler's *Symphony for a Thousand*, where loudness is hopeful, triumphant, and powerful. Franco Moretti observes that the word "we" sits at the center of most European anthems—in fact, it is their most frequent word.[9] This loudness of the "we" is, linguistically, the very opposite—plural subject / singular object—of what one might call the loudness of the "me." Add to this the fact that "we" is statistically distinctive of neutral dialogue (see **Figure 2**), almost never occurring within novelistic passages of loud dialogue, and it becomes clear that novelistic loudness is of a particular type. Loudness in the 19th century English-language novel is distinctively singular: it is the voice of the individual, not the group, that is crying and exclaiming at the loudest moments.

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9 "Of twenty-eight European anthems I have been able to check, twenty-two establish a significant semantic field around the first person plural, beginning of course with the very first word—*Allons*—of the greatest of them all. Nothing seems as essential to national anthems as this grammatical sign of collective identity; even the name of the country receives fewer mentions (20)." Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees,* Verso, 2005, p. 52.

Structure 2.

"What, you've heard their lies too, have ye!" she exclaimed fiercely. [Caroline Kirkland, *A New Home*]

"What!" he cried, "to draw breath day by day, and not to pay for it by striking daily at the rock iniquity? Are you for that, Beauchamp?" [George Meredith, *Beauchamp's Career*]

"What is it, Wilbur? What have they done to you? What has happened?" Selma cried, looking from one to the other, though she had discerned the truth in a flash. [Robert Grant, *Unleavened Bread*]

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "What an opinion must you have of me! Can you possibly suppose that I was aware of her unhappiness?" [Jane Austen, *Lady Susan*]

"Vjera!" he cried. "Have you cut off your beautiful hair? What have you done, child? How could you do it?" [Francis Crawford, *A Cigarette Maker's Romance*]

Questions constitute a second grammatical structure characteristic of loudness—interrogative terms like "what", "why", and "how" being in fact as distinctive of loud dialogue as question marks. To be sure, not all questions are loud; when they are, it's owing to the generating force of *surprise*; usually, an unpleasant or frightened surprise. Loud questions are not thoughtfully formulated ("I suppose," said the doctor, upon Israel's concluding, "that you desire to return to your friends across the sea?"); they are spontaneous reactions to the unexpected. Whence the half interrogatory, half exclamatory "What!" found in the first two examples and the agonistic quality audible throughout.

Loud questions often map out externally the speaker's attempt to come to terms with an unpleasant revelation. As a result, they are often rhetorical—rarely does the speaker actually need or want an informative answer: "What has happened?" Selma cried...*though she had discerned the truth in a flash*. It is the emotional process of acquiescence—moving from disbelief to acknowledgement—that is central to loud questions, not the request for information. This process typically begins with a "What!"—"What have you done, child?"—and then, after a disbelieving acceptance of the event, turns to motive—"How could you do it?" Notably absent from these questions are the words "when", "where", and "who." (In fact, "when" and "whom" are statistically significant of *neutral* dialogue). Loud voices seldom ask specific contextually-based questions, because the speakers have yet to fully accept the event itself; they are still coming to terms with *what* happened, and with the motives behind the event (why and how); details of time (when), place (where), and person (who) are irrelevant.

Structures 3 and 4.

"Ah! Tell me—tell me, whose and what am I?" exclaimed the agitated girl, seizing the hand of her instructress. [Epes Sargent, *Fleetwood*]

"I receive it," cried he, "as the pledge of <u>my</u> happiness;—yet—yet let <u>your</u> voice ratify the gift." [Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*]

> "Do not—do not leave me," she exclaimed passionately, as she beheld his departure, while with hands clasped in something like a mortal agony of fear, she approached me. "He will soon return—he is terrible in <u>his</u> anger—he will do some **dreadful** act." [William Simms, *The Prima Donna*]

> "And now, father, <u>your</u> blessing—<u>your</u> consent!" cried Thames. [William Ainsworth, *Jack Sheppard*]

> "Sarah! Sarah!" cried Frances, in terror; "<u>my</u> sister—<u>my</u> **only** sister—oh! do not smile so horridly, know me or you will break <u>my</u> heart." [James Cooper, *The Spy*]

Two final structures: one which is present and one whose absence is itself significant. The manifest structure, that of repetition, frequently centers around the em dash: "Tell me—tell me", "yet—yet", "Do not—do not", "your blessing—your consent", "my sister—my only sister." Loud dialogue is full of em dashes accompanied by frantic stammering repetition. The result: the reader's extended experience of a cry or exclamation along with a focused intensity on an object (your blessing, my sister) or an action (tell me, do not). Incomplete or fragmentary as these loud cries may be, they manage to concentrate the attention on what is most important. This loud use of the em dash is very different from the essayistic use, in which an appositive thought is inserted in between two independent sentences.[10]

The absent structure, which would act as a counterpoint to the structure of repetition, is that of description. Notice the nearly complete lack of adjectives in all of the above loud utterances. I have bolded the two lone adjectives—"dreadful" and "only"—and underlined the possessive adjectives, which are more common, but which are of course not descriptive but relational. The absence of adjectives was already visible in **Figure 2** above, where loud dialogue has none of them among its most distinctive words, whereas neutral dialogue has multiple: any, good, long, enough, young, which. In short, loudness in the novel is anti-descriptive. The absence suggests a certain rigidity present in loud language. There is a certain primal bleakness.

The loudest points in the novel are not effective at conveying information. Loud dialogue is repetitive, and therefore inefficient. It inclines towards rigid, non-descriptive structures: the (You)-[imperative]-me construction is a stark frame, with little room for embellishment; the absence of "when-" and "where-" questions reveals a lack of interest in details and subtlety. If we think of reading as a purely mental act—as something we do because it is interesting and makes us think—then there seems to be no reason for the presence of loud dialogue. However, the fact is that nearly all 19th century English-language novels incorporate these loud structures. The reason must be partially due to the fact that these loud structures affect the reader in a way that details, no matter how interesting, cannot. I would go so far as to say

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10 Mere repetition, without the em dash, is often loud as well: "O, stop, stop!" she cried out. "There's my father! O, father, father!" [George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss]*

that a lack of loudness can emotionally alienate the reader from a character. Take the following passage from *Robinson Crusoe*:

> The third day in the morning, the wind having abated over night, the sea was calm, and I ventur'd; but I am a warning piece again, to all rash and ignorant pilots; for no sooner was I come to the point, when even I was not my boat's length from the shore, but I found myself in a great depth of water, and a current like the sluice of a mill: It carry'd my boat along with it with such violence, that all I could do, could not keep her so much as on the edge of it; but I found it hurry'd me farther and farther out from the eddy, which was on my left hand. There was no wind stirring to help me, and all I could do with my paddlers signify'd nothing, and now I began to give myself over for lost; for as the current was on both sides the island, I knew in a few leagues distance they must joyn again, and then I was irrecoverably gone; nor did I see any possibility of avoiding it.[11]

Robinson finds himself in a near death situation and yet the passage is completely void of any feeling of panic. But imagine *if Robinson were to cry out, and his speech were to assume a grammatically loud structure*. Then his emotional intensity would be dramatized aurally and psychologically for the reader, and the act of reading itself would become louder, more intense. Through the "loud" grammatical structures I have described, *we come to experience the character's emotion as an event, in all its importance*. Loudness brings us into the novel, and near its characters, like no other device.

2. Loudness as a Structural Aspect of Novels and Novel Reading

Leaving our grammar of loudness where it is, I want to pick up a new strand of thought—loudness as a structural device. Given that loudness is heard by the reader, one would expect it to contribute to the arrangement of the novel's parts, occurring neither always nor in random fashion, but according to meaningful and analyzable tendencies. Loudness has, after all, been a structural aspect of music and music notation since at least the 17th century.[12] Now, at the level of textual mechanics, a novel's aural trajectory, heard by the reader, is created via the novel's string of consecutive voices. Accordingly, the loudness of a chapter can be approximated by measuring the proportion of loud dialogue within it; plotting these data points for each chapter will more or less capture a novel's overall loudness contour.

The structural characteristics of loudness formulated here are based almost entirely on Book I of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* and will take form through three successive graphs.[13] First,

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11 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe,* Penguin Books, 2003, p. 110.

12 "Dynamic changes were almost certainly a part of performance earlier, but, like tempos, only came to be notated with any regularity in the 17th century. Until the late 18th century, however, such notations were far from extensive." Don Randel, *The Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* Harvard UP, 1999, p. 506.

13 It was while reading *The Idiot* that the structural significance of loudness first occurred to me: the text retains a particularly oral quality, perhaps because Dostoevsky composed much of *The Idiot* by reading it out loud to a stenographer.

a graph of the general contour of loudness in Book I; second, a closer look at its organization within a smaller three-chapter segment; third, an illustration of loudness as it is allocated between the voices of different characters. Though loudness is not a structural aspect of *all* novels, I believe that the structure derived from *The Idiot* will find recapitulation elsewhere, and I will offer a hint of possibilities to come in the final pages of this section, devoted to the third volume of *Pride and Prejudice*.

In the study of the novel, the concept of structure has, for the most part, been associated—via Roland Barthes and his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative"—with the nature of narrative events and episodes, their functions ("nuclei" or "catalyzer"), their duration, sequence, and so on. However, loudness provides a means for thinking about novelistic order while maintaining an interesting distance from plot. Its study is dependent on *the way* that events are told rather than the events themselves (the same plot can theoretically be communicated either loudly or neutrally). These differences should not, however, discourage an investigation of the interplay between loudness and plot—in fact, I will often try to show precisely how loudness exerts an influence on a plot's twists and turns. As Shklovsky wrote, "The methods and devices of plot construction are similar, and in principle identical with the devices of, for instance, musical orchestration. Works of literature represent a warp of sounds, of articulatory movements and thoughts."[14] While Shklovsky may not have had such a literal interpretation in mind, the study of loudness as a structural device is one way of analyzing a novel's "articulatory movements."

<div align="center">❧</div>

Figure 3 graphs loudness over time in Book I of *The Idiot*. For each chapter the loudness level is plotted based on the average loudness of the chapter's speaking verbs. Speaking verbs are assigned a value from 0 to 4 according to the following rubric: neutral or "empty" speaking verbs like "said" and "replied", which offer no account of tone, take a value of 0; speaking verbs like "picked up" and "warmly approved", which have a trace of resonance, take a value of 1; medium-loud speaking verbs like "retorted", "interrupted", and "said sternly" take a value of 2; loud speaking verbs like "said loudly" and "interrupted hotly" take a value of 3; very loud speaking verbs like "shouted", "screamed", and "exclaimed" take a value of 4.

A graph and also a striking pattern. Three crescendos: a tentative crescendo broken by chapters of narration (chapters 2–7), a second more extreme crescendo (chapters 8–10), then two chapters of relaxation (11–12), and a final crescendo (13–16). The first crescendo significantly quieter than the latter two; the latter two about equal at their extremities. The concept of the crescendo offers one way of describing organized loudness: it is a simple pattern—loud, louder, louder—but versatile. In the current graph, a crescendo describes an increase in the overall loudness of successive chapters. However, one can think of crescen-

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14 Viktor Shklovsky, "The Relationship between Devices of Plot Construction and General Devices of Style", in *Theory of Prose*, Dalkey Archive Press, 1990, p. 45.

dos more generally (a propensity for the novel as a whole to begin quietly and end loudly), or more specifically (a series of utterances that become progressively louder).
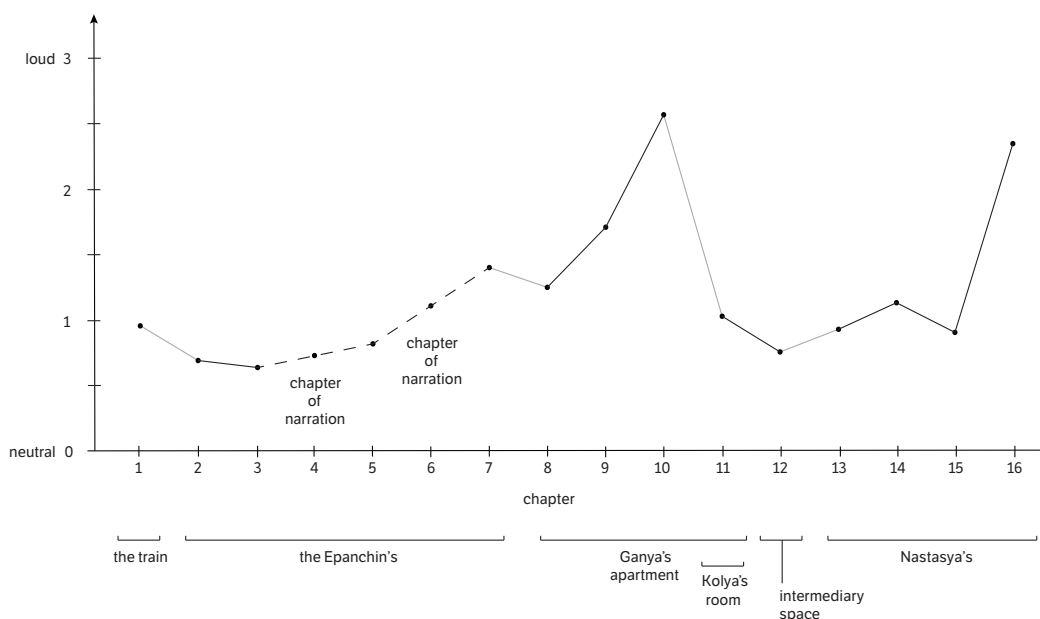

Figure 3: Loudness at the scale of the chapter: *The Idiot,* Book I.

This figure does not take into account quiet speaking verbs, which make up less than 2% of the total speaking verbs in Book I. It should be noted, however, that quiet speaking verbs tend to increase in tandem with loud speaking verbs—both register a movement away from the neutral, normal methods of speaking. Accordingly, quiet speaking verbs do not produce quietness, as we might have thought; rather they produce a type of intensification. This, at least, is the tendency.

At the bottom of **Figure 3** are brackets describing the narrative space of each chapter: chapter 1 is set on a train; chapters 2–7 in the various rooms of the Epanchin's house; etc. Interestingly, the three main spaces of Book I—the Epanchin's, Ganya's, and Nastasya's—and the three crescendos align with remarkable precision. More particularly, each major space begins with a relatively neutral conversation that becomes progressively louder until an outburst of loud dialogue precipitates a crisis: a scene of departure is then followed by a new chapter that is both quieter and set in a different location.[15] What I initially described as the broad interplay between loudness and plot might therefore be more clearly articulated in this specific case as the synchronization of loudness, narrative space, and chapter division.

So, **Figure 3**: the aural experience of reading is condensed into an image with a recognizable pattern; this pattern in turn suggests that loudness is organized; and this organization

15 The second crescendo provides a particularly elegant example of the pattern. In this case, the dialogue of chapter 8 becomes progressively louder until the loud dialogue of chapter 10 gives rise to a clamorous dispersal—Rogozhin shouts to the Prince: "Prince, my dear soul, drop them all, spit on them, and let's go! You'll learn how Rogozhin loves!"; Nastasya calls to Ganya: "Don't see me off!...Good-bye, till this evening! Without fail, you hear!"; and the narrator tells us that Ganya was "so oblivious that he barely noticed how the whole Rogozhin crowd poured past him and even jostled him in the doorway quickly making their way out of the apartment after Rogozhin." The next chapter begins in a new space, quietly—"The prince left the drawing room and shut himself up in his room." Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *The Idiot*, Vintage Classics, 2003, p. 117–118.

offers a new perspective for thinking about novelistic structure—one which foregrounds the voices that make up the novel (i.e. the way the events are told) rather than the events themselves. At the same time, this organized loudness, important to the aural and psychological experience of the reader, is also integrated with plot via narrative space and chapter divisions. Thus, in a conversation-dominated novel, loudness offers both a formal climax within the story-world (the dialogic argument rather than the description of physical combat) and an affective climax uniquely felt by the reader during novel reading.

Given the general trajectory of loudness in Book I, it is only natural to wonder what specifically is happening within these chapters? Thus, **Figure 4**, with a smaller time span—only three chapters (chapters 8-10)—but in which every dialogic speech act is given a loudness ranking, this time from -2 to 4: -2 being quiet, 0 being neutral, 4 being loud. Quiet dialogue is aligned with -2 (rather than -4, the opposite of loud dialogue at 4), so that the scale will reflect simultaneously the wide dynamic range between loud and neutral dialogue and the much smaller dynamic range between neutral and quiet dialogue. As in **Figure 3**, numbers are based on speaking verbs, if present: quiet speaking verbs like "observed timidly" and "repeated in a half-whisper" take a value of -1; very quiet speaking verbs like "whispered", "murmured", and "said softly" take a value of -2. In the absence of speaking verbs, I have tagged suspended quotations according to the loudness of surrounding utterances and readerly intuition.
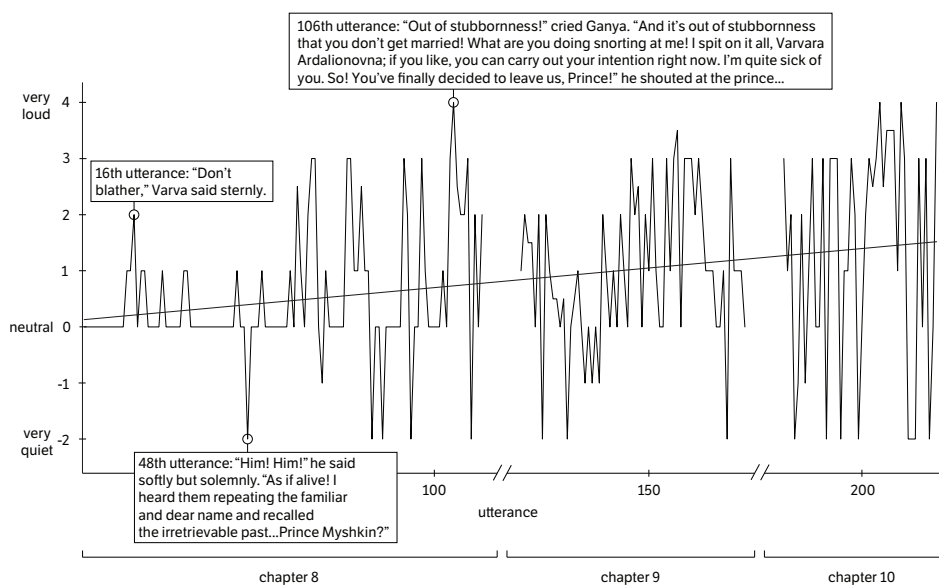

Figure 4: Loudness at the scale of the utterance: *The Idiot,* chapters 8–10.

Figure 4 provides a closer look at the mechanics and distribution of loudness within the chapter as well as a second opportunity to analyze the effects of patterned voices on plot. First, mechanics. The general crescendo of chapters 8–10 (indicated here by the trend line), becomes, in **Figure 4**, much more complicated. Clearly observable is a movement away from

neutral dialogue: 62% of dialogue is neutral in chapter eight, 27% is neutral in chapter nine, and 12% is neutral in chapter ten. The graph looks, in fact, much like a seismograph registering a high-intensity tremor. In chapter eight, the brief fluctuations in loudness keep returning to neutral dialogue, and the line remains fixed at 0 for eight separate intervals. There is constancy here: these are relatively stable conversations. In chapter nine, the oscillations become more frequent, the peak-to-peak amplitudes increase, and the conversations become more volatile. In chapter ten, the conversations reach the height of instability: dialogue keeps swinging between the two extremes (-2 and 3), rarely stopping for a neutral utterance.

Because each point in **Figure 4** represents a unique dialogic utterance, the graph closely follows both the dynamic trajectory felt by the reader and the dynamic organization of the novel's voices. We have zoomed in on the streamline three-point crescendo of **Figure 3** and can now see the twists and turns of the novel's dynamic organism. And twists and turns they truly are. Take, for instance, the loudest moment of chapter 8 (labeled in **Figure 4** as the 106th utterance: "Out of stubbornness!" cried Ganya. "And it's out of stubbornness that you don't get married!..."). This very loud utterance, on par with subsequent peaks in chapter 10, must be quickly restrained in order that the loud climax and dispersal can be held off for another two chapters and the gradual, three-chapter crescendo can be maintained. Here is the restraining passage as it appears in the text, beginning with Ganya's shout and ending with the first words of chapter 9:

> "Out of stubbornness!" cried Ganya. "And it's out of stubbornness that you don't get married! What are you doing snorting at me! I spit on it all, Varvara Ardalionovna; if you like, you can carry out your intention right now. I'm quite sick of you. So! You've finally decided to leave us, Prince!" he shouted at the prince, seeing him get up from his place.
>
> In Ganya's voice that degree of irritation could be heard in which a man almost enjoys his irritation, gives himself over to it without restraint and almost with increasing pleasure, whatever may come of it. The prince turned around at the door in order to make some reply, but, seeing from the pained expression on his offender's face that with one more drop the vessel would overflow, he turned again and silently went out. A few minutes later he heard, by the noises coming from the drawing room, that in his absence the conversation had become more noisy and frank.
>
> He went through the large room to the front hall, in order to get to the corridor and from there to his room. Passing by the door to the stairs, he heard and saw that someone outside the door was trying very hard to ring the bell; but something must have been wrong with the bell: it only jiggled slightly but made no sound. The prince lifted the bar, opened the door, and—stepped back in amazement, even shuddered all over: before him stood Nastasya Filippovna.
>
> ...
>
> [Medium-loud dialogue between Nastasya and the prince.]
>
> ...

"They're quarreling," the prince replied and went to the drawing room.

He came in at a rather decisive moment: Nina Alexandrovna was ready to forget entirely that she was "resigned to everything"; she was, however, defending Varya. Ptitsyn, too, was standing beside Varya, having abandoned his scribbled-over paper. Varya herself was not intimidated, nor was she the timid sort; but her brother's rudeness was becoming more and more impolite and insufferable. On such occasions she usually stopped talking and merely looked at her brother silently, mockingly, not taking her eyes off him. This maneuver, as she knew, was apt to drive him to the utmost limits. At that very moment the prince stepped into the room and said loudly:

"Nastasya Filippovna!"

Chapter IX

A general hush fell...[16]

The passage captures a scene on the verge of explosion, and yet Dostoevsky is able, by a series of restraining maneuvers, to quickly subdue the clamor for the reader. First, a spatial transformation. Simultaneous with the loudest utterance in chapter 8 is the prince "get[ting] up from his place" in order to leave. There are still two chapters to come, each progressively louder—now is not the time for a fracas. So the prince leaves—"he went through the large room to the front hall, in order to get to the corridor and from there to his room"—and the loudness which the reader was experiencing firsthand is now reported in the neutral tone of narration: "the conversation had become more noisy and frank." The authorial decision to assume the narrative voice tempers the previous loudness, pacifying it. Then a new character is introduced and a brief conversation of *mezzo forte* follows. The reader returns, with the prince, at a decisive moment in the conversation just abandoned. Again, the reader does not hear the loudness of the conversation, because it is being communicated in the neutral voice of the narrator. The prince announces Nastasya. Chapter break. And a general hush.

Thus, a three part sequence: spatial change; loudness resets; and, acknowledging the aural break for the reader, the chapter ends. These micro-level interrelationships between loudness, space, and chapter division are everywhere in Book I. The narrator follows Prince Myshkin, and Dostoevsky moves Myshkin like a knight in a game of chess: the many small scale maneuvers creating the three large scale progression in **Figure 3**. And the large scale cannot be emphasized enough. The three escalations are particularly impressive given the time span over which they occur: 200 pages, approximately four hours of reading. These movements from neutrality to loudness (and, to a lesser degree, from loudness to neutrality) seem to capture a deep structural component of *The Idiot*, Book I—a structural component so fundamental that its gradual progressions span hourly periods in real time.

A final visualization from *The Idiot*: **Figure 5**, the most experimental by far. In this case, each character is given a specific color. Next, the overall loudness of a character's speech is plot-

16 Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *The Idiot*, Vintage Classics, 2003, p. 100–102.

ted per chapter (based solely on speaking verbs). Here, the dashed horizontal line represents a character whose average speech was neutral in every chapter. Any point above the horizontal line indicates a character who speaks loudly in the specified chapter. Any point below the horizontal line indicates a character who speaks quietly in the specified chapter. Finally, the diameter of each point represents how often the character speaks: the thicker the point, the more speaking verbs attributed to that character during the stipulated chapter. I have added lines connecting points of the same color to make it easier to distinguish the individual characters.
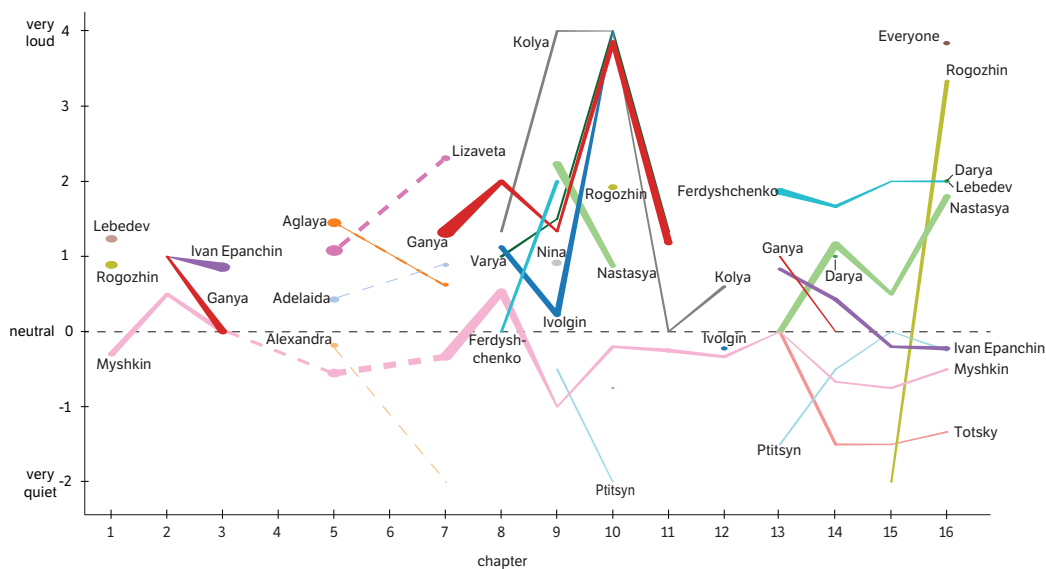

Figure 5: Loudness allocated between characters: *The Idiot,* Book I.

If **Figure 3** illustrates a dynamic progression, **Figure 5** reveals the individual characters who create it. It is as if each line is a voice or a singer. Though the loudness is created by many discrete individuals, **Figure 5** is not a graph of cacophony. Emerging from the many vocal lines, one can see the three climaxes of **Figure 3**: first, a slight peak in chapter 7; second, the dramatic peak in chapter 10; third, a bifurcation of dialogue into the extremes: Rogozhin, Lebedev, Ferdyshchenko, Darya, Nastasya, and Everyone filling the room with loudness; Myshkin, Ivan Epanchin, Ptitsyn, and Totsky creating an undercurrent of whispers. **Figure 5** is truly a graph of polyphony, of voices "artistically organized."[17]

At the same time, one voice—that of Myshkin—stands out from the rest as the only voice to hover in the neutral range, averse to extremes and particularly averse to loudness. Myshkin is noticeably unrelated to the dynamic progressions of Book I. He therefore plays no part in the aural reading experience which I have been stressing throughout this section. In fact, the vocal organization of Book I prefigures the central difficulty of the novel: to portray the "per-

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17 "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized." Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 262

fectly beautiful man" within a novel which is expected to fulfill certain expectations of plot. As Reinhold Niebuhr remarks in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, "It is impossible to symbolize the divine goodness in history in any other way than by complete powerlessness."[18] But how can a powerless, *quiet* character like Prince Myshkin generate an engaging plot requiring conflict, and thus moments of loudness? In the end, he cannot, leading Joseph Frank to write, "It is not hard to point out the flaws [of *The Idiot*] if we take the nineteenth-century conception of the well-made novel as a standard; more difficult is to explain why it triumphs so effortlessly *over all the inconsistencies and awkwardnesses of its structure and motivation.*"[19] Yet importantly, Frank brackets Book I from this harsh criticism. He brackets it precisely because it *feels* structurally organized.

Beyond the confines of *The Idiot*, Myshkin also exemplifies a unique type of protagonist—the quiet or neutral-speaking protagonist thrown into a loud environment. It is a type that I conjecture begins to occur for the first time with frequency in the 19th century, and a type that has not yet received a clear formulation. Franco Moretti locates a second example of this character-type in *The Bourgeois*:

> As the hero of *Mastro-Don Gesualdo* (1889) mixes for the first time with the town's old elite, at a party early in the novel, he truly seems to belong to a new human species: envious and malevolent, the local notables surround him, inquiring with hypocritical concern about his first big loan; and he answers, 'tranquillamente'—'quietly,' 'evenly'...The notables scream, act out, threaten, curse; Gesualdo remains seated, silent, polite, 'quietly continuing to cast up his accounts in his pocketbook, that lay open on his knee. Then he raised his hand, and retorted in a calm voice...'[20]

The structural consequences of a quiet or neutral-speaking protagonist have yet to be clearly articulated. Like other moments in this paper, loose ends are an inevitable (and exciting) aspect of research in the digital humanities.

❧

The structural analysis of loudness in Book I of *The Idiot*, which I have presented above, is intended as a prototype, opening the broader question of whether the concepts outlined in this section also apply to other novels. On this point, the jury is still out. However, the results of a first test on *Pride and Prejudice* strengthen my confidence for the future.

There are different ways to measure textual loudness. With *The Idiot*, I could not use the loud lexicon defined in Part I, because that lexicon was unique to the English language; as a consequence, I had to measure loudness by counting speaking verbs—a choice that worked quite nicely, as Dostoevsky was particularly careful and prolific with his use of these special verbs. With *Pride and Prejudice*, however, I chose to return to the grammar of loudness, partly out of curiosity, partly because it required less manual work. The graph below

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18 From the epigraph to chapter 17 of Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky, The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871*, Princeton UP, 1995, p. 316.

19 Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky, The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871*, Princeton UP, 1995, p. 340.

20 Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, Verso, 2013, p. 150.

attempts to measure the density of loud words as one reads through *Pride and Prejudice*. More specifically, the calculation relies on the concept of a "moving average"—first measuring the number of loud words occurring within a 320-word period, then shifting this period through the novel—the higher the line, the higher the density of loud words clustered within the corresponding point. Needless to say, as "loud words" are not actually *always* loud (only *frequently* so), the graph is based on a significant amount of estimations and averages. Add to this the fact that all loud words were weighted equally, and it becomes clear that I am pushing the loud lexicon to its limit, if not beyond. The conclusions, while interesting, must thus remain speculative.
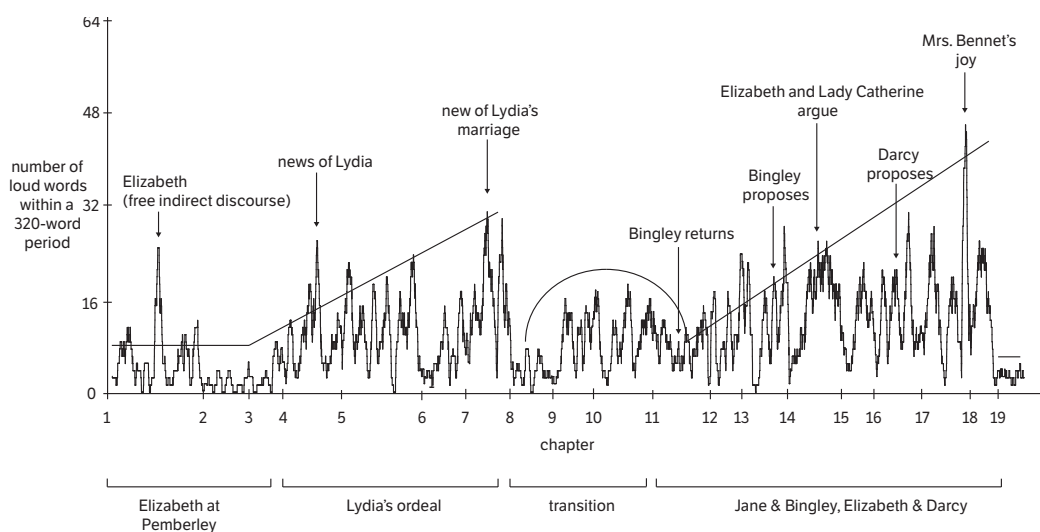

Figure 6: Loudness in *Pride and Prejudice*, Volume 3

Nevertheless, loudness appears to be acutely organized in the third volume of *Pride and Prejudice*, as illustrated in **Figure 6**, where I have labeled certain moments in the plot for ease of orientation. Loudness divides the third volume into four parts: a quiet beginning at Pemberley (chapters 1–3); the first crescendo centering on Lydia and Wickham (chapters 4–7); a transitional regrouping (chapters 8–10); and finally the second crescendo focused first on Bingley and Jane's courtship, then on Darcy and Elizabeth's. To these four parts, one might add a fifth: the final chapter tacked on to the end—so much quieter than the rest, and so much more conducive to the "happy" ending. If we were to smooth out the progressions in each part, the graph of loudness would look something like the overlaid line. The graph calls to mind what Nicholas Dames has described as a "wave-theory of novelistic affect: a picture of novelistic rhythm as a continual oscillation between 'relaxing' subplots, or purely discursive passages, and the more rigidly hermeneutic drives of suspense and revelation that create a particularly rapt, if necessarily short-lived, form of attentiveness."[21] It is an interesting theory, and a theory that a study of loudness might be able to substantiate and adjust.

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21 Nicholas Dames, "Wave-Theories and Affective Physiologies", *Victorian Studies* 46.2 (2004), p. 214.

The graph of *Pride and Prejudice* does indeed exhibit these "waves", but with the added benefit of turning the abstract concept into a concrete image—not only a wave, but a wave with a specific length and degree.

3. The Quieting Down of the British Novel

The previous section was premised on the fact that a novel's loudness is constantly in flux, each voice in turn appropriating a degree in the step-like spectrum from quiet to loud. But the variability of loudness—this idea that some text is louder or quieter than other text—can be dilated to apply in broader senses. The overall loudness of a single novel, say *Pamela*, might be louder than the overall loudness of another novel, say *Old Man and the Sea*. The novels of one author might typically be louder than the novels of a second author. Some genres might be particularly quiet, while other genres might be particularly loud. The British novel might be quieter than the Russian novel, just as the British grammar of loudness might be different from the Russian grammar. Finally, the novels of a single culture may become more or less loud over time. It is on this final variation—variation over time in the British novel over the course of the 19th century—that I will focus here.

There are different ways to measure the change in the average loudness of the aggregate "British novel." I will begin with the most basic—plotting the percentage of loud speaking verbs, decade by decade. The resulting graph (**Figure 7**) shows a striking drop in the percentage of loud speaking verbs: from 19% in the first decade of the 19th century, to 6% in the last decade. Conversely, the trend could also be described as a growing monopoly of the speaking verb "said"—the most neutral of all speaking verbs—in the context of dialogic utterances. Note how the space of "said" increases from about 50% to about 85% of all utterances, while all other neutral speaking verbs decline.

As a result of this quieting progression, novels like *Adeline Mowbray* (1804) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839), in which nearly half of the speaking verbs are loud, become progressively less and less common and acceptable. In their place, one finds novels like *Middlemarch* (1874) in which less than one percent of speaking verbs are loud (*Middlemarch* incorporates a mere 21 loud speaking verbs, while relying heavily on approximately 1,840 occurrences of the speaking verb "said"). The triumph of the "said": this is one way to describe *Middlemarch*. A triumph which allows subtle variation in tone—"said falteringly", "said easily", "said in her easy staccato"—but significantly diminishes the dynamic range (there is no "said loudly" in *Middlemarch*). Often times, the neutrality of the "said" is even explicitly emphasized: 'Mrs. Waule...happened to say this very morning (not at all with a defiant air, but in a low, muffled, neutral tone, as of a voice heard through cotton wool) that she did not wish "to enjoy their
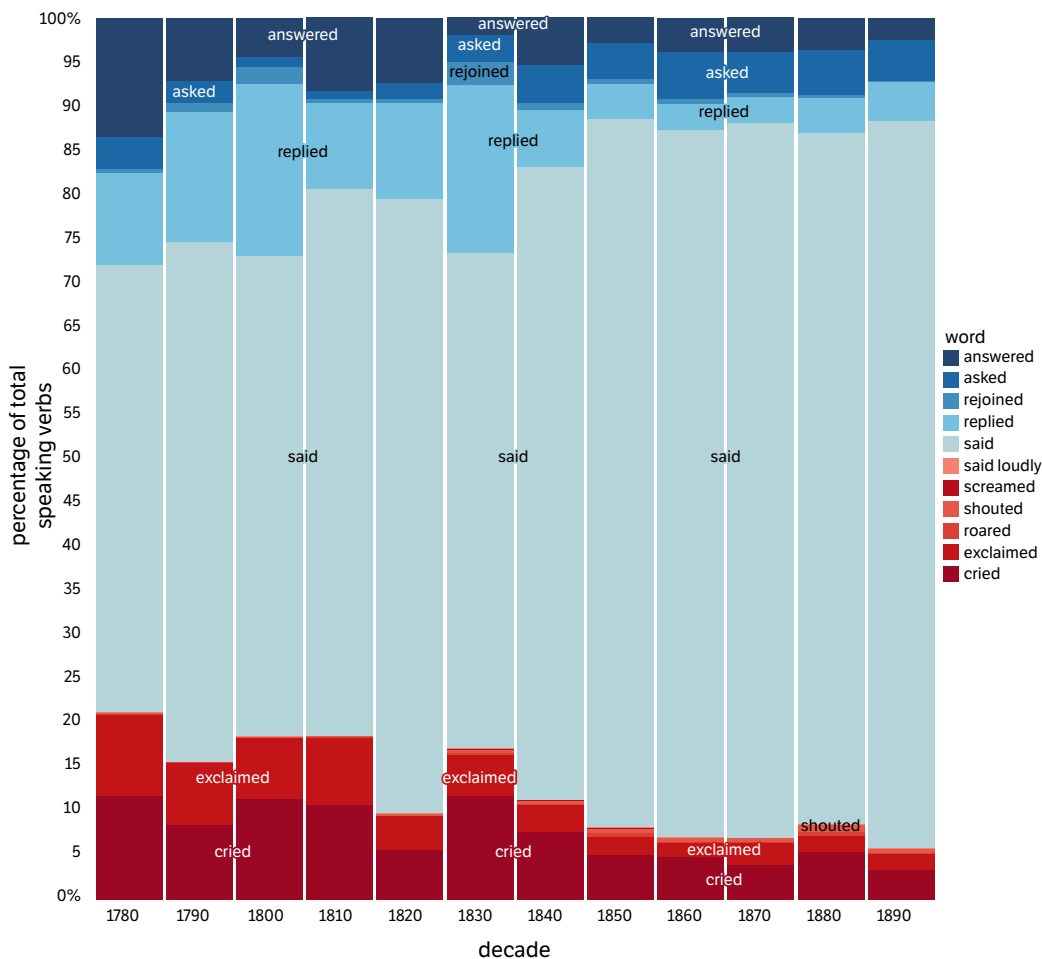
Figure 7: Distribution of speaking verb types by decade in British 19th century fiction.

Of course, the words themselves—"cried", "exclaimed", "said", etc.—do not always function as speaking verbs. The challenge was thus to computationally eliminate instances like "She cried but no one noticed" in which "cried" does not frame dialogue and does not function as a speaking verb. This was accomplished by counting the number of occurrences of "cried", "exclaimed", "said", etc., in the narrative portion of "mixed sentences"—sentences containing a mixture of dialogue and narration—a process made possible by the fact that "mixed sentences" are a labeled category in the Chadwyck-Healey corpus. Loud speaking verbs are indicated by various shades of red; neutral speaking verbs by various shades of blue. Although not visible in this graph, which represents percentages, it is interesting to note that the total number of speaking verbs remains relatively constant throughout the century.

good opinion." '[22] Or, more simply: ' "What are you laughing at so profanely?" said Rosamond, with bland neutrality.'[23]

The general muting of the novel over the course of the 19th century aligns closely with what Philip Fisher describes as a terminological shift in English philosophy and psychology from *passions* to *emotions* and *moods*.

> We can see in mid-eighteenth-century English philosophy and rhetoric the banishing of the term "passion" and its replacement by the new term "emotion"...What remained unchanged, when the passions came to be called the emotions, were the words for the specific passions or emotions. We still speak of the emotion of fear, or the emotion of anger, or of angry feelings and jealous feelings. If the full specificity of fear and anger and jealousy is preserved, what difference can it make to have gone from speaking of fear as a passion to regarding fear as an emotion or feeling? The answer lies, in part, in what would count as salient or typical examples of fear when one is speaking of a feeling of fear or an emotion of fear or of fear as a passion. A fear of mice or a phobia about sticky tactile surfaces (to use a Freudian example) might seem useful as instances of emotions. Such modern, quirky, therapeutic instances often govern twentieth-century discussions of inner states. But when describing the passions, Aristotle went at once to the single greatest, universal fear: the fear of imminent death, as a soldier might experience it on a battlefield, or as a trembling passenger might on a ship that seems about to sink. The inflection given to our tacit understanding of fear by what seem to be natural or colorless examples is often the most revealing snapshot of the shift from a vocabulary of passions to one of feelings, emotions, or moods.[24]

The passions transformed into "colorless" (or "noiseless") emotions and moods—this is the idea. Fisher continues:

> What does it mean to speak, as we often do in the twentieth century, as though moods were our preferred version of inner states? Passions, moods, emotions, and feelings are profoundly different configurations of the underlying notion of a temporary state of a person. Each term makes plausible a very distinct template. Boredom, depression, nostalgia, and anxiety might be natural first instances of what we mean by mood, but such states could never have been plausible examples of passions. Rage and wonder, central to any idea of what the passions are, seem out of place with the low-energy conditions generally meant by the term "mood."[25]

The progression from passions to emotions to moods outlines a broad diminutive trend in the conception of feeling—a trend in which the common feelings become less poignant and more subtle. Moreover, the trend centers around the 19th century (Fisher catalogues it

22 George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Penguin Books, 2011, p. 105.

23 Ibid. 270.

24 Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions*, Princeton UP, 2002, p. 6.

25 Ibid. 6–7.

as beginning in the mid-eighteenth century and continuing into the twentieth), such that the muting of the passions is concurrent with the muting of the novel seen in **Figure 7**.[26]

It is not coincidental that Fisher pulls his example of a shift from passions to emotions from "*English* philosophy and rhetoric." The century long diminuendo has a particularly British facet; it appears that British culture was maximally receptive to this tempering of the loud voice. Richard Wagner similarly notes a British preference for the neutral voice, commenting at length in his *Über das Dirigieren* [*On Conducting*] (1869) on the tendency of British orchestras to play at a level volume: "The orchestra generally played *mezzoforte*; no real *forte*, no real *piano* was attained."[27] But while the British may have taken the muting farther and more seriously than other Western nationalities, I do not think the quieting of the novel will prove solely endemic to British culture. There are other, more general phenomena which likely contributed to the quieting of the novel so visible in the British variant. For example, Georg Simmel claims in "The Metropolis and Mental Life" that the "violent stimuli [of the] metropolis" led to changes in the mental life of persons and, more importantly, to the proliferation of two particular attitudes—the "blasé attitude" and the slightly more formal attitude of "reserve"—both of which correspond with the reduction of passionate, loud utterances: the blasé being too unaffected to speak loudly; the reserved choosing seldom to reveal any internal loud utterances throbbing within.[28] Similarly broad, the quieting of the British novel is consonant with and likely a result of the general process of socialization and rationalization within the novel. As Franco Moretti argues in "The Serious Century", the 19th century witnessed an attempt to "rationalize the novelistic universe: turning it into a world of few surprises, fewer adventures, and no miracles."[29] It was a century of *rational softening* both in terms of novelistic content and novelistic voice.[30] The world of the novel became socialized, less dramatic, focused on quotidian life, and concurrently its voices became less dramatic, more moderate—the speaking verb "said" displacing loud speaking verbs like "cried" and "exclaimed."

Now, as Part I clearly demonstrated, novelistic loudness can be registered not only by speaking verbs, but also by grammar. It is to this second grammatical method that I now turn. What was happening to loud grammar during the 19th century while the percentage of loud speaking verbs was reduced by over half? Among the many possible trajectories, one can imagine

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26 It should be noted that loud speaking verbs, when isolated from dialogue, are the inarticulate utterances typical of the passionate experience: crying, exclaiming, shouting, roaring, screaming. Given the similarity between passionate utterances and loud dialogue, it would be interesting to use the preceding linguistic study of loud dialogue as a means for studying 19th century passions.

27 Quoted in Nicholas Dames, *Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction*, Oxford UP, 2007, p. 145.

28 Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", in *On Individual and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 329–331.

29 Franco Moretti, "The Serious Century", in *The Novel: History, Geography, Culture*, Princeton UP, 2006, p. 381.

30 I have taken the phrase "rational softening" from the narrator of *Pride and Prejudice*, who say of Charlotte's letter to Elizabeth: "It was Mr. Collin's picture of Hunsford and Rosing *rationally softened*." (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Books, 1996, p. 144). The musical word *pianissimo* provides an explicit link between softening and quieting.

two extremes: on the one hand, a world in which loud grammar diminished concurrently with the neutralization of the speaking verbs—a complete quieting; on the other hand, a world in which the speaking verbs were neutralized but the loud grammar stayed constant—a superficial quieting. As should be apparent, the speaking verb/grammar distinction plays an important role in the overall understanding of novelistic loudness. It should be noted, however, that readers most likely come to recognize and learn loud grammar through recurrent instances of dialogue framed by loud speaking verbs. As a result, the decline in loud speaking verbs implies a muddying or obfuscation of the grammar itself.

Unfortunately, little can presently be said regarding the amplification or diminution of loud grammar—I am still developing the tools necessary to accurately measure such changes. Calculating the frequency of loud words within each decade of the corpus is too inaccurate: the overall frequency of the loud word "tell", for example, might increase over the course of the 19th century because it occurs repeatedly in non-loud narrative sentences like "she couldn't tell if..." while simultaneously occurring less and less often in the loud command+me form "tell me!" At the same time, the density calculation used in the graph of *Pride and Prejudice* is not easily applied to a corpus of novels. To reiterate, this calculation relies on the concept of a "moving average"—first measuring the number of loud words occurring within a 320-word period, then shifting this period through the novel—the higher the density of loud words the louder that period in the novel. As can be imagined, the 320-word density calculation, iterated over an entire corpus, cannot be converted into a single number that ranks the loudness of a decade without some controversy. Such a conversion would require making decisions regarding questions like whether or not a novel with a significant number of really loud passages is louder than a novel that is constantly at *mezzo forte*—questions which we are still thinking about and working through. And so, after looking at a variety of graphs, each which attempted to measure the overall frequency of grammatical loudness over time, the only thing I can confidently say is that our loud grammar certainly does not disappear.

What, then, to make of this wish-wash? Here is one possibility:

One the one hand, a first form of pressure (probably social in origin) urges the novel to mute itself. In response to this stimulus, the British novel abandons its one *explicit* reference to vocal loudness—the loud speaking verb. The characters of the late 19th century are seldom crying and exclaiming, and this, in its turn, obscures the reader's perception of loud grammar. At the same time, a second pressure (which probably has its source in the needs of narrative construction) compels the novel to retain some degree of loudness. Seemingly indispensable, loud grammar does not disappear. What results is the creation of a few, peculiar compromise formations. I have mentioned a first compromise formation earlier—the oxymoronic creation of loud grammatical dialogue framed by a neutral speaking verb, as seen in the passage from *Marmaduke Wyvil*: "Never!" he said—"Never! So help me He, who looks on all things—no, never!" More interesting, however, is the emergence of loud grammar in new, *less dense*, configurations—the paramount example of this second compro-

mise formation being free indirect discourse. Take, for example, this passage from *Emma* (where I have bolded the loud grammar):

> **How** could she have been so deceived**!**—He protested that he had **never** thought seriously of Harriet—**never!** She looked back as well as she could; but it was all confusion.[31]

The passage relies on our loud lexicon: a semantic reliance on "how", "never", and the exclamation point as well as a grammatical reliance on repetition (via the em dash) and an exclamatory question ("How could she have been so deceived!"). However, the loud grammar is less dense and the passage is less intense than a loud dialogic utterance—' "**How** could you deceive **me!**" cried Emma'—would have been. What we have, then, is an instance of our loud grammar trying to peek out from under a neutral narrative sentence yet remaining somewhat muffled. In a different instance of free indirect discourse, this time from the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, the content of the passage itself describes the concept of muting: "**How** earnestly did she then wish that her former opinions had been more reasonable, her expressions more moderate**!**"[32] Upon further investigation, the appropriation of a diluted loud grammar can be found in many, if not most, passages of free indirect discourse:

> She was feeling, thinking, trembling, about everything;—agitated, happy, miserable, infinitely obliged, absolutely angry. It was all beyond belief**!** He was inexcusable, incomprehensible**!**—But such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil. He had previously made her the happiest of human beings, and now he had insulted— she knew not **what** to say—**how** to class or **how** to regard it. She would not have him serious, and **yet what** could excuse the use of such words and offers, if they meant but to trifle**?** [Austen, *Mansfield Park*]

> But if there had been somewhere a strong and handsome individual, a gallant nature,...**why**, by chance, should she not find him**? Oh**, **what** an impossibility**!** Nothing, moreover, was worth the effort of a search, all was false**!** [Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*]

> Something had happened—he forgot **what**—in the smoking room. He had insulted her— kissed her**?** Incredible**!** Nobody believed a word against Hugh, of course. Who could**?** Kissing Sally in the smoking-room**!** [Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*]

> Was there blood on his face**?** Was hot blood flowing**?** Or was it dry blood congealing **down** his cheek**?** It took him hours even to ask the question: time being no more than an agony in darkness, without measurement. A long time after he opened his eyes he realized he was seeing something—something, something, but the effort to recall was too great. No, no; no recall**!** [Lawrence, *England, My England*]

> She had always **let** herself be dominated by her elder sister. Now, though somewhere inside herself she was weeping, she was free of the dominion of *other women*. **Ah!** That in itself was a relief, like being given another **life:** to be

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31 Jane Austen, *Emma*, Oxford UP, 2003, p. 106.

32 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Books, 1996, p. 355.

free of the strange dominion and obsession of *other women*. **How** awful they were, women**!** [Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*][33]

Yet again, I find myself on the verge of a new subject, in this case on the function of loudness in free indirect discourse. And yet, again, it is necessary to leave off *in medias res*.

Conclusion

Three parts with the ghost of a fourth part to come. Each part pushing loudness into a different direction: into grammar, into narrative structure, into culture, (and soon into style). What began as a concept fashioned from a semantic study of loud dialogue, literary loudness has become a concept that reaches beyond dialogue into the structural organization of a novel's voices, into a culture's relationship with passions and emotions, and into grammatical systems that appear to emerge even within the narrative passages of free indirect discourse. *Yet the main revelation is the discovery that loudness is perceivable and measurable within the novel. This is the primary achievement. Written language codifies loudness; the word becomes its own type of gramophone-record; and the text preserves variations in loudness over time.*

Latent within much of this study is a cultural-historical constraint. The majority of my analysis was based on the 19th century English-language novel, while a third was based solely on the British variant. It remains to be seen how other cultures treat literary loudness. We do not yet know how universal are the grammatical structures of loudness that emerged from the English-language novel, nor whether the quieting down of the British novel is true of the Western novel at large. Yet, despite leaning heavily on a single culture's literature, I hope this study of loudness has led to broader findings, such that may affect how we interpret novels and even, more basically, how perceptively we read.

Beyond these larger concepts, there is, within this study, an orchidaceous quality. At moments, yes, the sociological component gains predominance. But at others, it is the conceptual game itself—the challenge of hearing loudness in text—that takes center stage. This is most apparent, perhaps, in the colorful messy graph of *The Idiot*, but it surfaces at other moments as well. For some reason, these moments are my favorite part. And I hope that literary criticism continues to leave this orchidaceous space open, for I have found these small moments of finesse—a few passing harmonies in a Schumann sonata, the tiny grotesque turns in an orchid, an iris, a sweet pea—to be a special space of happiness.

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33 These passages of free indirect discourse are taken from two classic studies: Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences*, Routledge & Kegan, 1982. And: Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and Its Functioning In the Nineteenth-century European Novel*, Manchester UP, 1977.