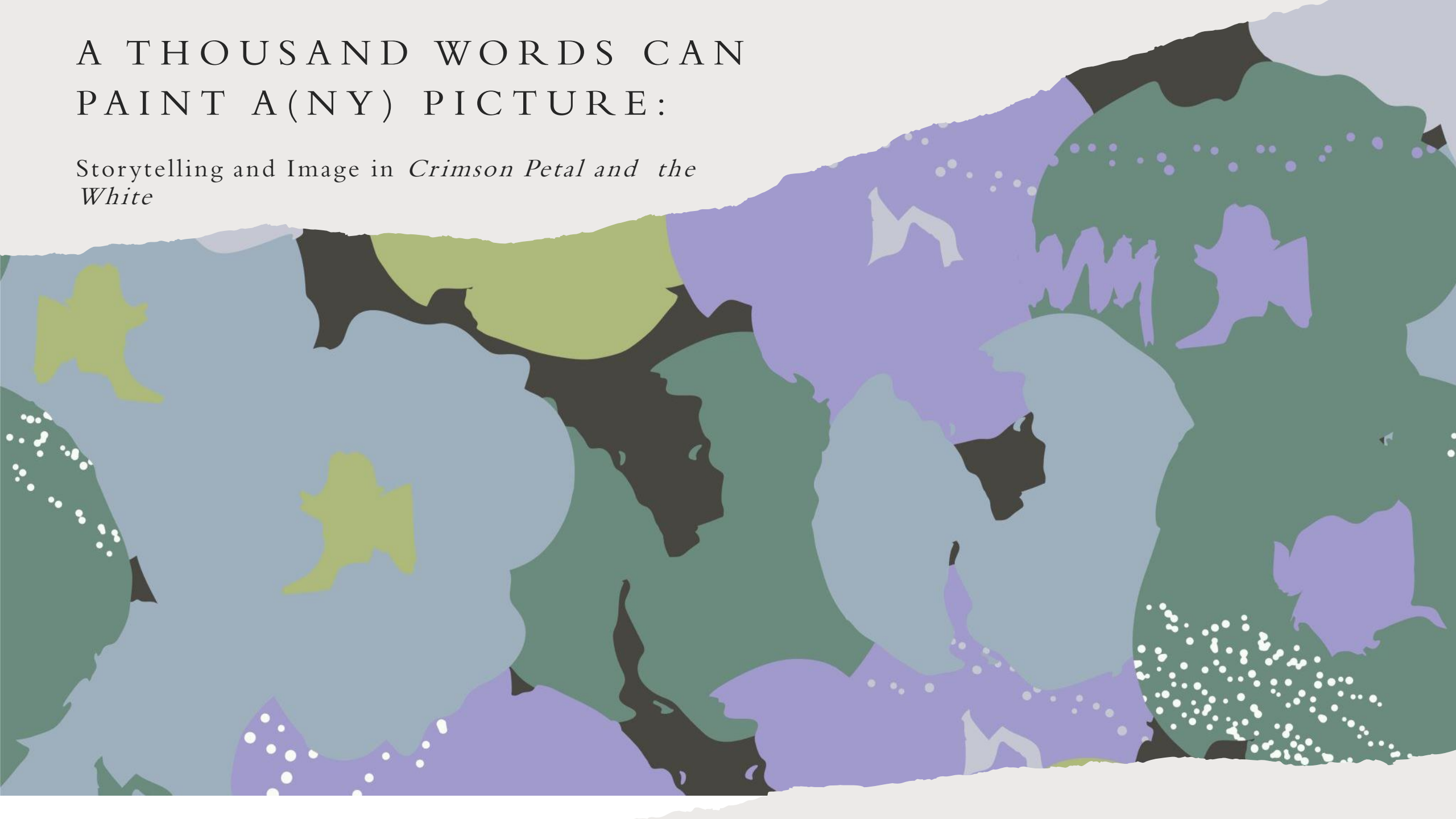
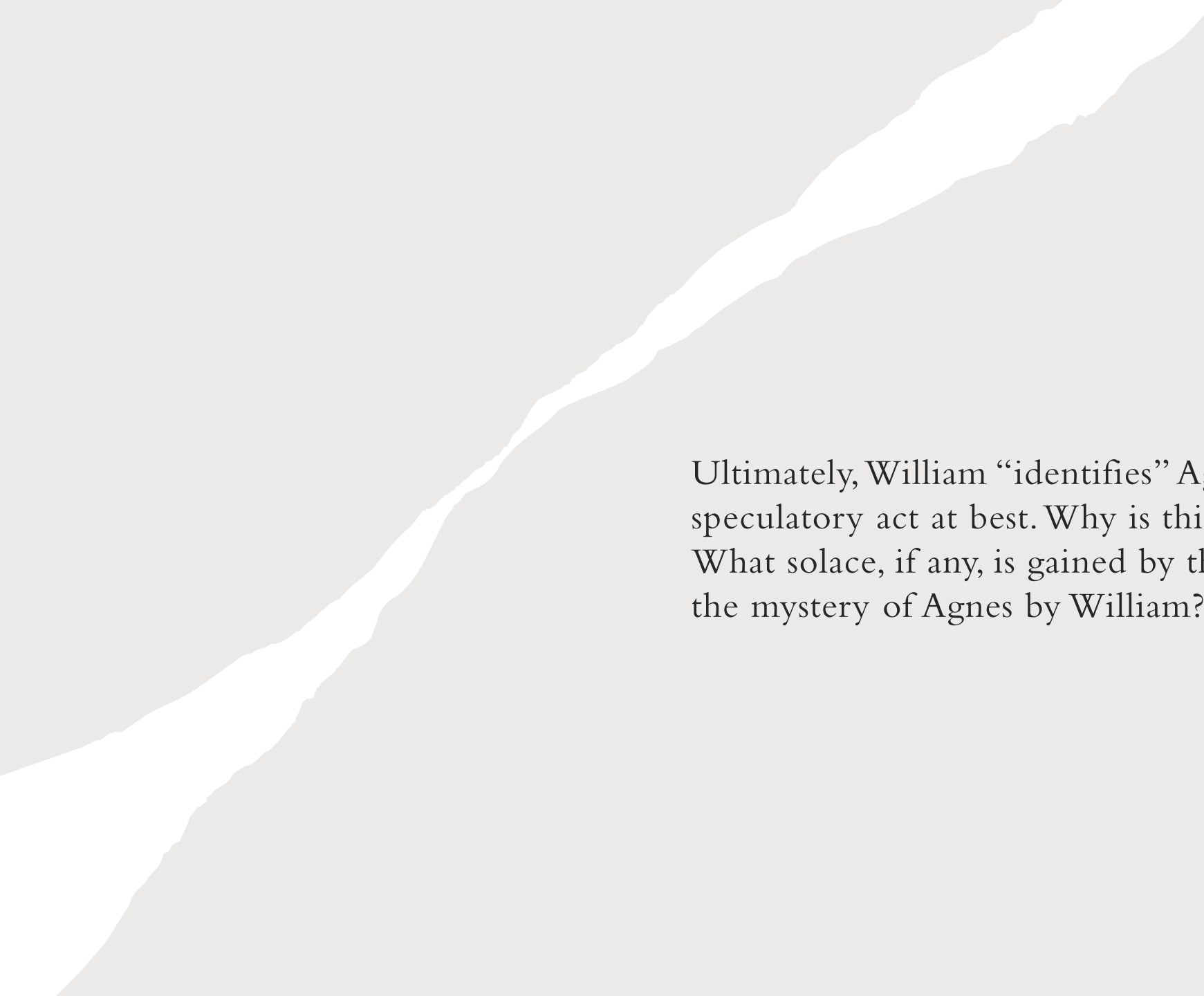


A THOUSAND WORDS CAN PAINT A(NY) PICTURE:

Storytelling and Image in *Crimson Petal and the
White*





Ultimately, William “identifies” Agnes by pubic hair, a speculative act at best. Why is this solution preferable? What solace, if any, is gained by this imposed ending to the mystery of Agnes by William?

“THE PEN IS
INDEED
MIGHTIER THAN
THE SWORD”
(745)

- “The pen is indeed mightier than the sword; it has killed Agnes Rackham and consigned her to History” (745).
- Before the public solution to Agnes’s mystery, Sugar imagines the next part of Agnes’s story (729). How do such stories seem to serve Sugar, overall?
- In Chapter 33, Sugar tears up her Shakespeare, and after she reflects that these “volumes of Shakespeare are harmless, whereas the diaries could betray her any day or night” (821). She proceeds to burn two diaries but stops once she runs into the manuscript of her novel. Why does Sugar not burn the novel or the rest of the diaries? How does this decision affect this novel we are reading? What role do these texts play?

SOPHIE AND ALICE: “ ‘WHO IN THE WORLD AM I?’ ” (731)

- “Sophie understands that the two carriages, at the moment of passing, are like mirror-images of each other; to those mysterious strangers, *she* is the dark mystery, and *they* are the Sophies” (785). Think forward to the little girl she sees on the street on the way to the factory (831). What could this mean to our Sophie? *For* our Sophie?
- What do we make of the “mysterious voice” that compels Sophie, if anything? (731)
- Why is “work” the “one thing she likes better than play” (756)?
- “I would read a thousand million pages, Miss, if all the words were words I could understand” (851).

NOW FOR THE “QUESTIONS THAT ARE
‘IMPOSSIBLE TO ANSWER’
” (785).

- What is the significance of Caroline’s character? She is the character we begin the novel with (aside from the narrator, should we register them as a character) and she is the last character we hear from (again, other than the narrator). What are the implications of this novel’s bookended character to its “primary” plot?
- With no definitive answers as to Agnes’s fate from the last part, the narrator leaves readers to wonder about Sugar and Sophie’s fate (among others). What do we make of these intangible conclusions?
- Who do you think the narrator is? Why?
- The story we read was promised to liven up with a promise of “fucking. . . , not to mention madness, abduction, and violent death” (65). How was the final promise achieved?

The first line of the book is “Watch your step,” followed by “Keep your wits about you; you will need them!”

- Pg 115 “Watch your step” : Sugar to William (Not the only utterance, but the one paid most attention to).
- Pg 876 William reads this second line word-for-word from Sugar’s novel.

Happy Endings

- Pg 777 A recollection of when Mrs. Castaway tells Sugar to “put in a happy ending for me.”
- Pg 246 “Her story must not have a happy ending,” and so she has resolved at this point for the ending to be “death for the heroine. She accepts that as inevitable, and she trusts that her readers will too.”
 - But on pg 134 we know “Sugar’s old life has already ended, like a chapter in a book”

THE END

