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NOVEL BUILDINGS:
ARCHITECTURAL AND NARRATIVE FORM IN VICTORIAN FICTION

A Dissertation Presented

By

ASHLEY R. NADEAU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2017

English

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NOVEL BUILDINGS:
ARCHITECTURAL AND NARRATIVE FORM IN VICTORIAN FICTION

A Dissertation Presented

By

ASHLEY R. NADEAU

Approved as to style and content by:

____
Suzanne Daly, Chair

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Department of English

DEDICATION

To Paul,

with all my love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the many people who have guided and supported me along the way. First and foremost, I want to thank my chair and advisor, Professor Suzanne Daly, for her many years of wisdom, patience, and motivation. Her formidable breadth of knowledge and sharp critical eye have pushed me to become a better scholar, while her unfailing support and readiness to believe in my work have sustained me when the task at hand felt insurmountable. I also wish to thank my committee members Professor Adam Zucker and Professor Tim Rohan. Adam's advice on writing and on the profession has been indispensible. It was in his course that I first began to write and think about literary representations of space, and this project owes much to him. I am also grateful for Tim's generosity in agreeing to serve on my committee, for his thoughtful suggestions on how to develop my project, and for his faith in me.

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My deepest gratitude goes the friends that have bolstered me intellectually and emotionally throughout the last eight years. Elise, Annie, Kelin, and Jess have taught me so much about friendship and about the power of women banding together. I do not know that I could have survived graduate school without their constant strength, humor, and wisdom. Thank you to Liz and Leanna for reminding to be curious and creative. Their positive energy helped me remain enthusiastic about my project even when the end seemed impossibly far away. A special thank to Carlin and to Annie for lending their editors' eyes to my dissertation. They worked tirelessly up to the very last minute, and this manuscript is certainly better for it.

I am grateful for my family, and for their steadfast love and encouragement. My parents, Lynda, John, Charlie, and Darnel, have always supported and had faith in me. For that I cannot thank them enough. Thank you to my brothers and sisters, Renaud, Emily, Colby, John Connor, and Elyse. I am lucky to be surrounded by such passionate, kind, and courageous family. Thank you to Jeff, who has been more than a brother to me, and whose sardonic humor always rallies my confidence. And thank you to my grandparents, Rita and John. Their accomplishments and industry have been a constant source of inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

NOVEL BUILDINGS
ARCHITECTURAL AND NARRATIVE FORM IN VICTORIAN FICTION

SEPTEMBER 2017

ASHLEY R. NADEAU, B.A., AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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This dissertation, "Novel Buildings: Architectural and Narrative Form in Victorian Fiction," offers an interdisciplinary study of the relationship between the economic and social histories of built space and the Victorian literary imagination. At its most fundamental level, it claims that the spaces we inhabit shape the stories we tell. Reading Victorian literature through the architectural archive of the period, it argues that the nineteenth century's rapidly evolving built environment resulted in a new set of narrative possibilities and laid the foundations for authorial innovations in genre, style, and form.

Organized taxonomically around four architectural types reinvented in the nineteenth century—courthouses, hotels, theaters, and hospitals—my work examines novels that co-opt realism's thick descriptions of these spaces for political and aesthetic ends. Drawing upon contemporary approaches to literary studies, including affect studies and environmental studies, these readings are connected by a consideration of the performative and intersubjective nature of public space. Parallel to my project's critical engagement with material culture, human geography, and spatial embodiment is its

attentiveness to the imbrication of literary and physical forms, thus taking up Victorian studies' recent turn to new formalisms and its efforts at grounding the aesthetic within the everyday. My dissertation's historical arc extends from the end of the eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth, and its geographic trajectory traces a course from England's agricultural and manufacturing provinces, through its urban metropole, to its continental and colonial outposts.

Building upon previous literary studies of domestic, carceral, and commercial architecture, my project expands the critical archive to include a set of relatively understudied public spaces whose cultural significance remains profound even today. Moreover, it contributes to Victorian studies'—and literary studies' in general—recent reinvestment in formalism(s) as it demonstrates the relationship between the various, intersecting, forms that govern and compose built environments, social relations, and literature. Beyond the portability of my methodology to additional architectural forms and/or other literary fields, my project also provides new humanistic avenues of inquiry in the study of urban development and it shifts the ways in which we read and understand representations of space.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Though we are used to thinking of the novel in terms of consciousness, if we subtract the element of space from the nineteenth-century novel it would be hard to say what is left.
>
> –Isobel Armstrong, "Theories of Space in the Nineteenth-Century Novel"

Framing

In 1865, while he was still working as an assistant architect at Arthur Blomfield's London firm, Thomas Hardy published his first piece of literature, the short story "How I Built Myself a House," in the March edition of *Chamber's Journal*. This satirical first-person narrative recounts a middle-class couple's efforts to build a new home of "some mysterious size and proportion, which would make [them] both peculiarly happy ever afterwards" (36). As the couple, John and Sophia, quickly learns, this is an impossible task; neither the perfect house nor perfect happiness is attainable. Even before meeting with their Dickensian architect—a comically precise "Mr. Penny"—and their exploitative surveyor and builder, the couple discovers that they disagree over the form the house should take and that "there was no such thing as fitting [their] ideas together" (37). Most frequently cited as a humorous sketch of Hardy's then-profession, "How I Built Myself a House" can also be read as an early permutation of Hardy's career-long engagement with Victorian gender and sexual politics and the built environments that order these social relations: it is a narrative of a husband and wife's inability to communicate dramatized through the architectonic landscape of their new house.

Following several passive-aggressive disagreements over their meetings with Mr. Penny and the size of the drawing room, the couple's failure to see eye-to-eye is played out in two episodes of spousal conflict that originate from their gendered relationships to the different levels of the house. In the first, Sophia implicitly dares John to join the builders on the roof with the backhanded observation that she would go if she were a man. Despite his fear of heights, he ascends, while she remains on the ground, leading him to observe resentfully that she picked "daisies a little distance off, apparently in a state of complete indifference as to whether I was on the scaffold, at the foot of it, or in St. George's Hospital" (38). Although "scaffold" in this passage refers to a builder's scaffold, it is also highly suggestive of another, more violent scaffold, and implies that Sophia would not be upset to see her husband hanged. In the second episode, Sophia wakes suddenly during one of their first nights in the new house and complains, "'O that builder! Not a single bar of any sort is there to the nursery-windows. John, some day those poor little children will tumble out in their innocence - how should they know better? - and be dashed to pieces. Why did you put the nursery on the second floor?'" (39). While it begins as an attack on the greedy builder, Sophia's complaint is ultimately a critique of her husband's domestic arrangements. John may have descended from the rooftop, but Sophia's mind has risen fearfully to the floor above them. Even while they lie side by side, both husband and wife align themselves with different locations along the vertical axis of the house and imagine that their spouse wishes them harm. Given that Victorian nurseries were regularly relegated to upper stories of houses because it was believed beneficial for children's health,[1] Sophia's objection to the second-floor nursery

[1] For more on the relationship between Victorian domestic design, the medical profession, and the discourse of health, see Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*.

is ironic and, when read alongside her earlier remark about what she would do if she were a man, suggests a dissatisfaction with her social and physical position in the home. As a middle-class mother she could expect to spend much of her time supervising the nursery and, although bars are installed on the windows the day after her panicked awakening, this solution only underscores her imprisonment.

Crowded with unbudgeted add-ons and last minute adjustments, the house—and by extension John and Sophia's marriage—is far beneath the couple's expectations. John's detailed account of his last-minute choice to add a porch instead of a window for the main stairwell isolates this connective, vertical stair-space as a telling symbol of the state of affairs at home. As of mid-century, many Victorians believed that sunlight and ventilation prevented the spread of disease (more on this in Chapter 5); moreover, it was a point of debate during this period whether stairs were unhealthy for the women forced to traverse them in order to attend to their never-ending domestic duties as servants, wives, and mothers (Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way* 130-2). Although John is concerned that the lack of light and ventilation in the stairwell will "reduce myself and family to a state of chronic melancholy," he rationalizes that newly patented reflectors will "throw sunlight into any nook almost" (39). But John's reflectors fail, directing the light to where it is unwanted; we are told that, "the gloom" in the stairs "was for all time" (39). This image of the forever-gloomy stairs is the only information we are given about the future of the home and family. It suggests that any connection that this literal and figurative space of communication might offer between husband and wife is dark and unhealthy.

I begin this study with a brief examination of Hardy's "How I Built Myself A House" because it demonstrates the narrative affordances of the built environment and provides a primer for reading literary representations of architectural forms as narrative venues for the construction of social critique. Given his status as the only major English novelist to have trained as an architect, an architectonic reading of Hardy's work is not unprecedented.[2] Indeed, Hardy seems to invite this sort of interdisciplinary approach. He explicitly compares his poetry to architecture in *The Life of Thomas Hardy*,[3] juxtaposes architectural drawings and poems in his collection *Wessex Poems* (Figure 1.1), and characterizes the buildings of Christminster in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) as "numberless architectural pages" which can be "read" by Jude alternatively as "ideas in modern prose" or presentations in "old poetry" (88-9). This study argues, however, that despite his training Hardy is not exceptional. His contemporaries need not have designed buildings in order to fashion literary representations of the built environment for artistic and political ends. Instead, I suggest that Hardy's fiction exemplifies the pervasiveness of architectural discourse within nineteenth-century literary and popular culture and points to a general awareness of the semiotic and aesthetic potential of architecture. Thus, this introduction calls upon his work as a jumping off point for this project's much broader examination of the relationship between Victorian literary and architectural forms.

---

[2] For examples of scholars that address the architectural elements of Hardy's poetry and prose, see Briggs, Hall, Knoepflmacher, Monterrey, Mink, and Twyning.

[3] "He had fortified himself in his opinion by thinking of the analogy of architecture, between which art and that of poetry he had discovered, to use his own words, that there existed a close and curious parallel, each art, unlike some others, having to carry a rational content inside its artistic form" (323). Hardy, Thomas, et al. *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985. Print.

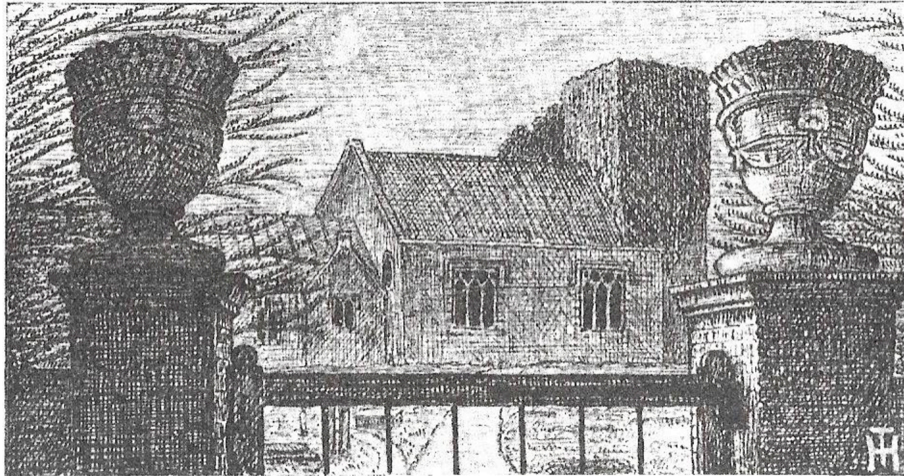

Figure 1.1: Thomas Hardy, Illustration to the poem “Friends Beyond,” *Wessex Poems*.

Thomas Hardy began his career as an architect during a significant period in the field’s history. As with medicine and the law, the study and practice of architecture underwent a process of standardization during the nineteenth century. Additionally, what had previously been “the world of the enlightened gentleman-architect” became firmly established as a middle-class profession.[4] The Institute of British Architects was formed in 1834 (it earned a royal charter and became the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1837) with the intent, according to its founding documents, to protect the “uniformity and respectability of the practice” (Kostof 200). It was followed in 1847 by the Architectural Association (AA), which aimed to supplement the education of young architects during a time in which poorly regulated apprenticeships provided the bulk of an architectural education. By 1890 the AA had become the first independent school of architecture in Britain.

At the same time that professional organizations flourished and the education of architects became increasingly regulated, architectural matters became a topic of public

[4] For an overview of the development of architecture as a profession in England, see Kostof 180-208.

interest to an unprecedented degree. The very year that RIBA was founded, landscape designer John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) published volume one of *Architectural Magazine* (1834-9), the first periodical publication dedicated entirely to architecture. As Gill Chitty notes, "Loudon was a populariser and his illustrated magazine, with its emphasis on technical and practical matters, aimed to introduce architecture as a matter of everyday taste to a general readership" (28). Loudon's magazine was soon joined by other architectural periodicals, most notably *The Builder* (1843-1966, succeeded by the extant publication *Building*). *The Builder* was geared to specialists and laypeople alike, as indicated by its subtitle: "An Illustrated Weekly Magazine for the Drawing-Room, the Studio, the Office, the Workshop, and the Cottage" (Kostof 196). But discussions of architectural matters were not limited to such publications. Competitions over the right to design and construct national building projects were topics of public debate covered in the daily press and in journals such as the *Quarterly Review, Punch, Blackwood's Magazine,* and the *Illustrated London News* (Kostof 196). Furthermore, passionate treatises debating the ethics and aesthetics of various historical architectural movements, such as Augustus Pugin's *Contrasts* (1836) or John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3), were literary sensations. It was "a time when every new manual of Gothic architecture sold like a novel, as one reviewer put it" (Chitty 41), and architectural and cultural critics, like Ruskin, were read closely by authors including William Wordsworth, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot.[5]

[5] Chitty notes that all the named authors above were fans of the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843) and their praise of the book contributed to Ruskin's continued popularity in literary and artistic circles (29-30).

Consider, too, the social and economic factors that brought architectural matters to the foreground of the Victorian public's attention. It is by now a truism that the industrialization of Britain during the late eighteenth through the nineteenth century led to the rise of the middle class and produced new patterns of life.[6] One of the most significant results of industrialization was the expansion of Victorian cities and suburbs to the extent that by 1851 more than half of an already booming population lived in urban centers (more on this in Chapter 2). James Curl explains the significance of this change, noting, "The most startling achievement of the Victorian period was the successful urbanisation of Britain, the first society of modern times to become predominantly town-dwellers" (Curl 12). Alongside urbanization, industrialization also prompted the production of new building materials. Specifically, manufacturers refined the production of steel beams and plate glass and, as a result, buildings were constructed on a size and scale unimaginable just decades before.[7] Ultimately, these technological and social developments resulted in both the evolution of existing architectural forms and the advent of new building types. Foundational architectural historian Nikolas Pevsner highlights the innovations of the Victorian era in his historical survey of building types, citing nineteenth-century architect Henry van Brunt's observation that:

> The architect, in the course of his career, is called upon to erect buildings for every conceivable purpose, most of them adapted to requirements which have never before arisen in history...[and] which must be accommodated to the complicated conditions of modern society. (qtd. in Pevsner 9)

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[6] Much has been written about the industrialization of Britain and attending rise of the middle class, more than can possibly be cited here. However, Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes* and Gallagher's *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction* are foundational; the former provides an excellent overview of the period's socioeconomic developments, while the latter examines their cultural implications.

[7] For more on the new building materials that fostered innovations in Victorian architectural forms, see Curl 201-22.

Listing “railway buildings of all sorts,” “hotels on a scale never before dreamt of,” “office and mercantile structures, such as no pre-existing conditions of professional and commercial life has ever required,” and many other structures besides, van Brunt (and Pevsner through him) describes the extent to which the Victorians navigated a strikingly new and different built environment. They lived, worked, and sought pleasure in buildings either freshly imagined or radically reconstructed to suit the period’s shifting socioeconomic landscape. In the process, they managed to shape an urban environment that still influences our own and construct immense structures that remain in use even today.

Despite intentionally provincializing his writings within the fictional county of Wessex, Hardy nevertheless represents these architectural and cultural developments in his novels, none more so than his last, *Jude the Obscure*. Although overtly concerned with the politics surrounding marriage and education, the novel also serves as an examination of the relationship between the built environment and societal structures. Consider the following two exchanges between the novel’s protagonists, builder Jude Fawley and his cousin (and later lover) Sue Bridehead. The first exchange occurs during one of their first outings and first moments of emotional connection, and provides a telling prediction of their future challenges as a couple. Jude suggests that they tour a cathedral but Sue rebuts him, “‘Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I’d rather sit in the railway station,’ she answered, a remnant of vexation still in her voice. ‘That’s the centre of town life now. The cathedral has had its day!’” (142). The second takes place later, when Jude cannot find work renovating churches due to the unorthodox nature of he and Sue's life as an unmarried couple; she instructs him, “‘You must fall back upon railway

stations, bridges, theatres, music-halls, hotels—everything that has no connection with conduct'" (322). Identifying those architectural forms most associated with the modernity of the Victorian era, Sue imagines a future for her and her family outside the strictures of those ecclesiastical architectural and social forms that have oppressed them. In her preference for public and commercial structures over the domestic ones that dominate much of Hardy's fiction, she aims for a space outside of Victorian gender and marital norms. Sue is too optimistic, of course; even the most commercial buildings have everything to do with conduct. But her advice nevertheless highlights the prevalence of Victorian discourse about the role of architecture in public life. Claiming that "Gothic is barbaric art, after all. Pugin was wrong, and Wren was right," Sue rejects the period's revival of medieval Christian architecture and the related debates over Victorian society's secular and religious foundations, which I discuss in the following section. Yearning for new, modern structures more reflective of her family's unconventional life, Sue's comments call attention to the nineteenth century's rapid urban and commercial development and bring to light the complicated intersection of architectural design and lived experience.

Taking my cue from Sue, Hardy's last and most transgressive female protagonist, this dissertation offers an interdisciplinary examination of the relationship between the economic and social histories of built public space and the Victorian literary imagination. Addressing four building types—hotels, courthouses, theaters, and hospitals—reinvented in the nineteenth century, I demonstrate how various Victorian authors engaged with the period's shifting political and social landscape through their depictions of architectural forms. At the same time, I explore how the simultaneously historical and fictional

geographies of public, architectural spaces in the nineteenth-century British novel operate as part of, alongside, or against the narrative strategies of the text. Reading Victorian authors through the architectural archive of the period, I argue that the nineteenth century's rapidly developing built environment allowed for new narrative possibilities and shaped authorial innovations in genre, style, and form.

My project joins a tradition of literary spatial studies of the nineteenth-century British novel, much of which has focused on the connection between literary and architectural histories. In general, this vein of research can be traced back to the 1960s and 70s and to individual works like Asa Briggs's *Victorian Cities* (1963) or Raymond Williams's *The Country and City* (1973), and to edited collections like Dyos & Wolff's *The Victorian City* (1973). Feminist and Foucauldian scholars have been particularly instrumental in bringing discrete architectural forms under the critical gaze; as such, literary studies of built space have historically coalesced around either disciplining institutions, like prisons or asylums, or domestic structures that range from urban slums to country estates. More recently the field of Victorian spatial studies has expanded and our understanding of built space has become more nuanced, due in part to a more general "spatial turn" within the humanities and social sciences.[8] This newer scholarship recognizes the broad space of the city as a complex network of overlapping communities and continuous urban development, and also reassesses and reveals existing spatial categories, like the domestic sphere, are more porous than previously assumed.[9]

---

[8] As geographer Edward Soja notes, we are in the midst of an "unprecedented spatial turn" in critical studies across the social sciences and humanities, a trend that he claims may be "one of the most important intellectual developments in the late twentieth century" ("Thirdspace" 262).
[9] For an example of new approaches to the space of the city, see Seth Koven's *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*. Koven complicates existing conceptions of Victorian poverty and urban life, and reveals the ways in which class-based movements within the city

Furthermore, the last fifteen years have witnessed a shift in critical attention towards the built public spaces of nineteenth-century British literature and their impact on literary production. New studies of performative and commercial structures, like Dehn Gilmore's examination of the art gallery and exhibition hall, have addressed how the viewing modes promoted by these spaces informed artistic and textual representation. There remains much work to be done, however; the built public spaces examined in this project remain either relatively under-studied (like hotels and hospitals) or require a second look with a critical eye turned towards the intersections of architectural and narrative forms (like courthouses and theaters).

The following section provides the methodology for my approach to reading literary representations of built public space. It navigates the theorization of built space across two hundred years, within and outside of literary studies, and, in doing so, lands upon three key ideas that inform and shape this project. 1) The Victorians understood architecture as semiotic. It was (and remains) a medium for cultural and political messages, as well as an expression of the material conditions of their society. Architecture is therefore metaphorically akin to written texts whose layered meanings demand analysis to be fully comprehended. 2) Built space is both a container and a canvas. At the same that built space determines social relations and patterns of existence, it also serves as a vessel for embodied subjects capable of improvisation and movement within the space. The movement of these embodied subjects has the potential to serve as

---

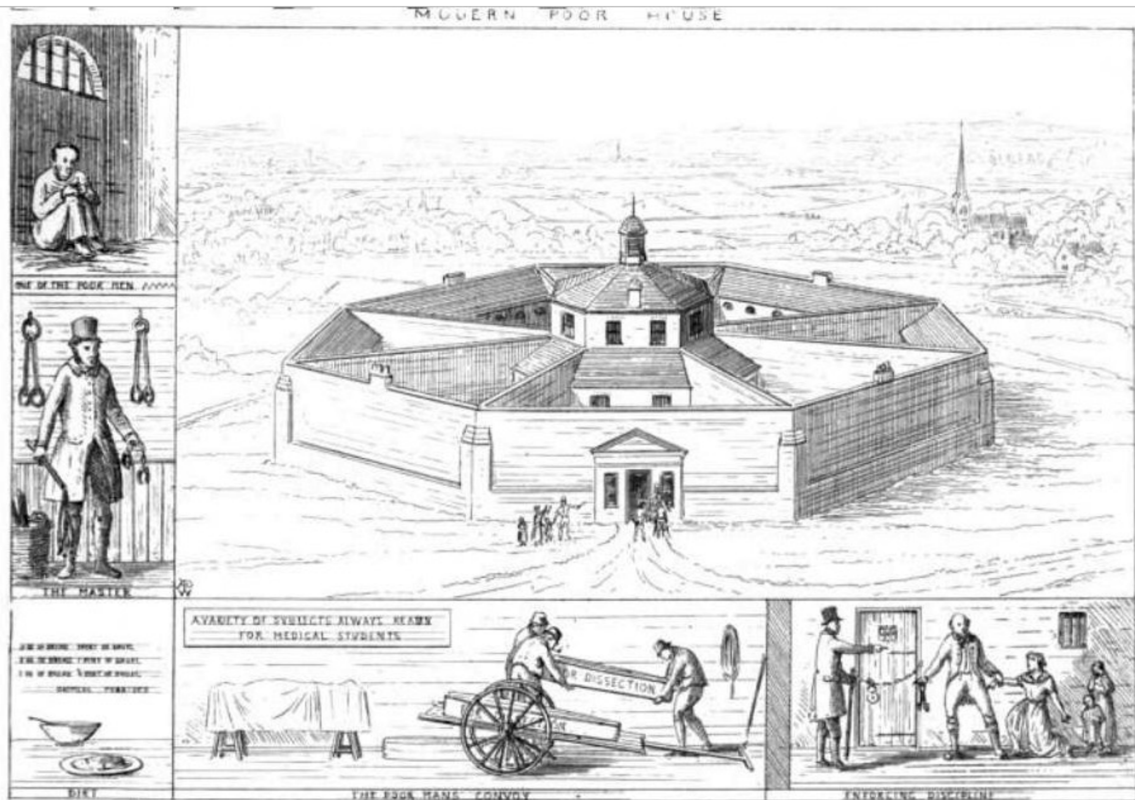
helped shaped Victorian sexual politics and social programs. For a fresh approach to domestic space, see Sharon Marcus's *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth Century London and Paris.* Marcus examines the apartment house as a point of connection between urban and domestic space and its relationship the political and social landscape of the two major European capitals of the nineteenth century.

a medium of social critique. 3) When represented in literature, spatial and architectural forms intersect with, influence, and are coopted by aesthetic forms.

Foundations

Over the past two centuries, approaches to the theorization of built space have traversed morality, politics, and aesthetics. Furthermore, the perspectives from which built space is examined have encompassed the assessment of exterior designs and building materials to the study of abstract forms and the arrangement of people. During the Victorian era the fields of architecture and architectural history developed side by side, and the debates surrounding both what style and meaning new buildings should express were grounded in the study of the past. Although neoclassical exteriors—the most prominent being Palladian—dominated the eighteenth century, by the nineteenth century architects, artists, and cultural critics alike were grappling with what form best suited the ethos of this new age. At the center of this discussion was the promotion of medieval Gothic architecture as an aesthetically and morally superior model for Victorian institutions like churches, universities, courthouses, and even Parliament. Initially celebrated by the Romantics for its picturesque decay and purported nativism, Gothic architecture came to be seen by the Victorians as a stylistic return to pre-Reformation traditions, a symbol of unalienated pre-industrial labor, and/or an embodiment of the Anglo-Catholic values of The Oxford Movement.[10]

[10] For more on the role played by Anglo-Catholicism in the promotion of Gothic architecture, see Muthesius 1-25 and Curl 40-9.



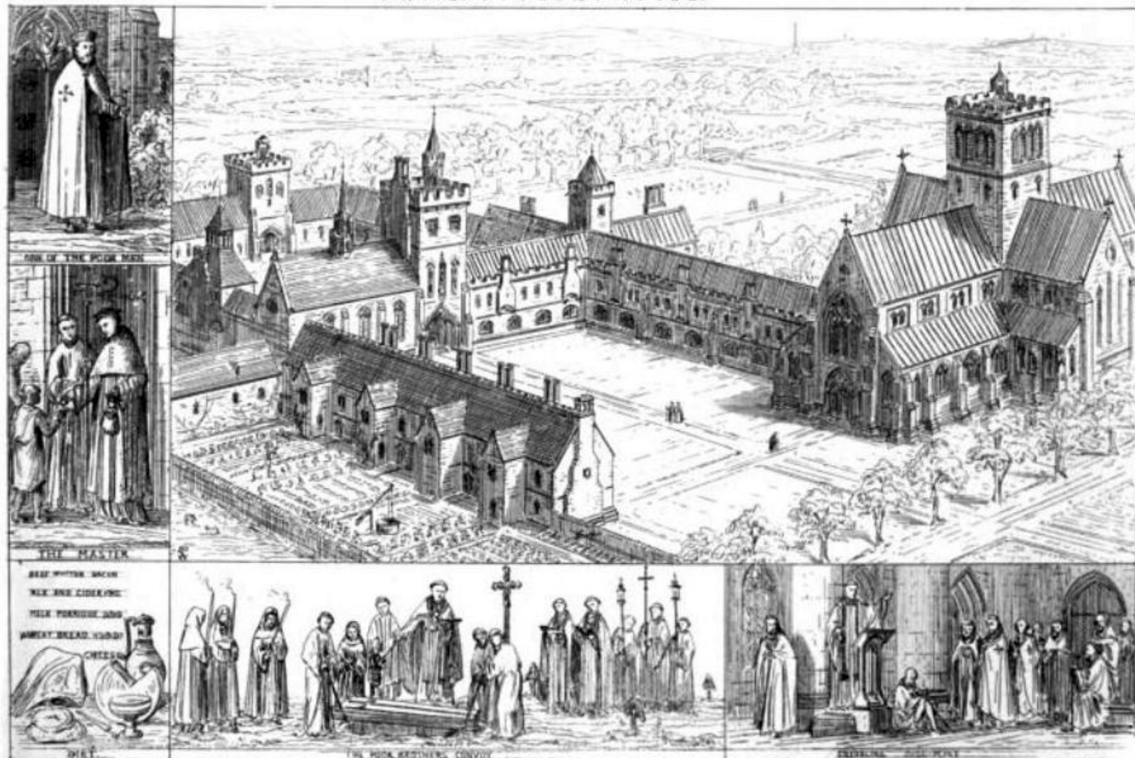


Figure 1.2: A. W. N. Pugin, “Contrasted Residences for the Poor.” *Contrasts*.

Augustus W. N. Pugin (1812-52) was one of the nineteenth-century's most prominent Gothic revivalist architects and a proponent of its Christian connections.[11] He converted to Catholicism in 1834 and published *Contrasts, or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day: Shewing the Present Decay of Taste* two years later. *Contrasts* does exactly what its subtitle promises; Pugin presents side-by-side illustrations of utilitarian institutions associated with industrialization and their medieval, religious counterparts. For example, in one of the most widely reproduced illustrations from *Contrasts*, Pugin juxtaposes a nineteenth-century workhouse with a medieval monastery, highlighting the carceral qualities of the former and the open and inviting aspect of the latter (Figure 1.2). Ultimately Pugin argues for more than a return to medieval architectural forms; his work advocates for a return to the religious and social formations of that period. Because of his religious advocacy, Pugin's work was much maligned outside of Anglo-Catholic circles. Nevertheless, his work provides a model for addressing the social impact of architectural styles and his influence can be detected in the work of Ruskin.

Like Pugin, John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a proponent of Gothicism as a remedy to utilitarianism and industrialized labor; however, Ruskin was dismissive of Pugin's Catholicism and overt religiosity. An art critic instead of an architect, Ruskin initially approached medieval Gothic architecture aesthetically. In the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), Ruskin's breakout book of criticism and first major success within literary circles, he addresses Gothic buildings only as suitably picturesque subjects for landscape painters. However, by 1849 Ruskin's interest in architecture led him to publish

[11] See Hill for a comprehensive biography of A. W. N. Pugin and his career as an architect.

The Seven Lamps of Architecture and to begin work on *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3). In the former work Ruskin isolates decoration as the defining difference between buildings and architecture (*Seven Lamps* 30), and he goes on to identify the seven "lamps" or elements of architecture as sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience. In his identification of the latter he assesses Gothic architecture as superior to other styles because of its adaptability and freedom from the geometrical demands of classical architectural styles.[12] Moreover, he values its organic integration of decoration within the very stonework of the buildings, as opposed to what he views as other styles' surface-level addition of decorative elements.

Both *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* highlight Ruskin's appreciation for the social significance of architectural aesthetics as much as they reveal his disinterest in the practical demands of building. For Ruskin, the decoration of a building should be symbolic and "'readable'" (Muthesius 34), and as Michael W. Brooks argues, "[Ruskin's] training in literature kept him aware that a building is an act of expression, not merely a utilitarian artifact" (1). Ruskin's literary approach to architectural forms is most apparent in *The Stones of Venice*. Claiming that "we require from buildings, as from men, two kinds of goodness: first, the doing their practical duty well: then that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it," Ruskin goes on to explain that:

> Then the practical duty divides itself into two branches, -- acting and talking: -- acting, as to defend us from weather or violence; talking, as the duty of monuments or tombs, to record facts and express feelings; or of churches,

[12] Ruskin writes, "For in one point of view Gothic is not only the best, but the *only rational* architecture, as being that which can fit itself most easily to all services, vulgar or noble...And it is one of the chief virtues of the Gothic builders, that they never suffered ideas of outside symmetries and consistencies to interfere with the real use and value of what they did" (*The Stones of Venice* 168).

> temples, public edifices, treated as books of history, to tell such history clearly and forcibly (*The Stones of Venice* 29).

His identification of the rhetorical power of the built environment is striking and suggestive for my project: if buildings are texts—talking "books of history"—can they not be translated into literature? If like Ruskin, Victorian authors could read buildings, can we not read the literary representations of buildings as subtext? And, as Ruskin realized later in his career, can these buildings and their textual counterparts not express more than piety or grief?

Ultimately, Ruskin's attention to the semiotics of buildings led him to shift his approach from aesthetic appreciation to social critique. Chris Brooks explains, "As Ruskin's thinking developed, he increasingly concentrated upon the material conditions, the economic, social and physical circumstances, in which, and out of which, people make the things of their culture" (178). Likewise, Stefan Muthesius notes that Ruskin's attentiveness to decorative features led him "to enquire into the social conditions which would or would not allow the craftsman to enjoy working on these features" (38). By 1865, in an address to RIBA, Ruskin announced that he put "his old 'poetic' study of architecture" aside in favor of necessity and the needs of the poor (Hardman 198). This development in Ruskin's approach to architecture was influential for the late nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts Movement and the thinking of socialist activist, artist, and author William Morris (1834-96); however, Ruskin's attentiveness to the decorative aspects of architecture led Morris and his peers to concentrate on the material production of furnishings instead of buildings.

Regardless of their religious differences, Ruskin and Pugin's tacitly class-based rejection of utilitarian architecture anticipate to a degree the Marxist theorizations of

space that developed a century later. Yet their distinctly Victorian focus on style as "the principle vehicle of architectural semantics" (C. Brooks 176), in keeping with the period's emphasis the exterior of buildings over their interior floor plans and design, distances their work from the twentieth-century's shift towards function and phenomenology as sites of meaning. This shift can largely be attributed to the mid-century development of the field of critical spatial studies and the foundational works of Gaston Bachelard, Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel de Certeau. This project is informed by all of these scholars to varying degrees. Although Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) has been influential for literary theorists addressing primarily the psychological import of domestic space in the novel, his insights regarding the psychic dimensions of spatial experience are also applicable to socially rich public spaces. Bourdieu's sensitivity to class disparity in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979) and Lefebvre's and de Certeau's analysis of capitalist spatial relations in their respective *The Production of Space* (1974) and *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) bear obvious import to the largely consumer-centric spaces this project addresses and, more generally, to the marked urban economic disparity and class struggles of the Victorian period.

Particularly instructive for me are Lefebvre and de Certeau, not only for their engagement with public space but also for their study of bodily relationships to space, a subject addressed in several of my chapters. For Lefebvre space is both a product to be used and a producer of social relations, because the dimensions of spaces govern social behavior. Elaborating on this, he argues, "Space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered. It is produced with this purpose

in mind; this is its *raison d'etre* (Lefebvre 143). This analysis of the commanding feature of spatial contours has been important to literary scholars interested in the disciplining or regulating of behavior within narrative spaces,[13] although contemporary critical spatial studies have in general identified this approach as too deterministic to account for individual action in space or space's varied effects on different identity groups.[14] While it does not respond to Lefebvre directly, de Certeau's work on spatial practices offers a corrective to this by pointing to the potential for individual resistance to the constraints spatial structures, as well as to the ways in which an individual's movements in space tell stories and articulate spatial syntaxes, further illuminating the interrelation between the built environment and patterns of human activity. Ultimately, de Certeau's ascription of narrative properties to spatial negotiations is crucial to my readings of character movements, though I also draw on Lefebvre's work to situate these movements within the dialogue of the spatialized social constructs embodied in architecture.

My approach is in keeping with current developments in critical spatial studies. In particular, my efforts at placing Victorian literary representations of the experience of built space in conversation with the social and economic histories that fomented the evolution of public architectural forms are informed by recent work within the field of human geography. Specifically, Edward Soja revises Lefebvre's taxonomies of space to develop a "trialectics of spatiality," whereby perceived, lived, and conceived spaces exist simultaneously within the same place ("Thirdspace" 262). Soja argues for a move beyond a dialectical method of theorizing our place in the world to a model he terms the

[13] We might think here of John Bender's *Imagining the Penitentiary*.
[14] For more on this, see work in the field of human geography and particularly Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender*, David Harvey's *Spaces of Capital*, and Edward Soja's *Thirdspace*.

"trialectics of being."[15] This model, he explains, articulates the reciprocal relationship between spatiality, sociality, and historicality and demands a transdisciplinary approach to critical spatial thinking. As Soja claims, the experience of "being-in-the-world" is a complex interaction between historical, spatial, and social factors, and these three terms should be studied together ("Thirdspace" 262).

Contemporary literary studies of built space parallel Soja's interest in the intersections of spatiality, history, and social life, but additionally consider the ways in which literary form is connected to, and even encapsulates, these intersections. For example, Hsuan L. Hsu's *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth Century American Literature* (2010) addresses different literary subgenres popular in nineteenth-century America and connects their narrative forms to the associated historical, spatial scale they aim to represent. Writing that "Literature both represents real places and actively reshapes their boundaries and cultural meanings" (19), Hsu argues for not only literature's usefulness as an indicator of social knowledge about built spaces, but also its role in restructuring the meaning of built space as a physical expression of cultural codes and mores. In attending to the individual artist's aesthetic engagement with these spaces, Hsu also privileges what is unique to literature: its dually representative and imaginative operations. He moves beyond New Historicist projects that examine representations of historical space and considers what work these spaces are doing for narrative and how the manipulations of these spaces speak to artistic responses to political, economic, and cultural forces.

[15] Soja defines the trialectics of being as a circular relationship between spatiality, historicality, and sociality, which constitute being ("Thirdspace" 263).

Likewise, within Victorian studies Caroline Levine's *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015) offers a new model for examining the imbrication of spatial, social, and literary forms, one that is suggestive of the relationships between built public space and the Victorian literary imagination. Addressing the intentionally broad subject of forms, both physical and aesthetic, Levine argues for a mode of analysis that attends to their "affordances," or "the potential uses or actions latent in materials and design" (6). One of Levine's key insights is the portability of forms, their ability to travel between mediums. As she explains, "Literary form does not operate outside of the social but works among many organizing principles, all circulating in a world jam-packed with other arrangements" (7). As such, "a reading practice that follows the affordances of both literary forms and material objects imagines these as mutually shaping potentialities, but does not fold one into the other, as if the materiality of the extratextual world were the ultimate determinant" (10). In other words, literature may borrow material forms, like architecture, for its own ends.

We can turn again to Hardy for a concise example of the usefulness and malleability of architectural forms in literary representation. Consider his description of Casterbridge in his 1886 novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. He writes:

> The old-fashioned fronts of these houses, which had older than old-fashioned backs, rose sheer from the pavement, into which the bow-windows protruded like bastions, necessitating a pleasing *chassez-dechassez* movement to the time-pressed pedestrian at every few yards. He was bound also to evolve other Terpsichorean figures in respect of door-steps, scrapers, cellar-hatches, church buttresses, and the overhanging angles of walls which, originally unobtrusive, have become bow-legged and knock-kneed. (Hardy *MoC* 66)

In this passage Hardy calls upon the convex contours of the windows and the sagging exoskeletons of church buttresses and rooftops to create a street-space that is more dance

floor than thoroughfare. Calling attention to the ways in which the architecture of the streets affects the motion of the bodies passing along them—not just inviting, but enforcing a ballet of steps—Hardy shapes the space of the novel as a reflection of the waltz-like rotation of romantic partners described by its plot.

In the chapters that follow I apply the reading practices sketched out in this introduction's brief examinations of Hardy's work. Drawing upon architectural history and contemporary approaches to literary studies, each chapter closely reads literature that co-opts realism's thick description of built public spaces for political and aesthetic ends and attends to the intersection of literary and architectural forms. But this turn to public space requires putting Hardy aside for a time. The rural settings and gender politics characteristic of his fiction result in narrative landscapes far more pastoral and/or domestic than the modern building types examined in this study. Moreover, in addressing authors who, unlike Hardy, did not train as architects, this project demonstrates the fundamental relationship of the built environment to the Victorian literary imagination. I only return to Hardy in the conclusion to this dissertation, as I look towards the horizon of critical studies of the narrative representation of built space. But first, a layout of what is to come.

Blueprint

Architecture, whether monumental or vernacular, is a concretion of cultural norms and a projection of societal aspirations. But even the most monolithic of buildings are limited in their ability to shape the actions and perceptions of embodied subjects. At the same time that my project locates public venues within the larger frameworks of

industrial capitalism, imperial expansion, and the policing of gender and sexuality, it also recovers individualized navigations and authorial critiques of these architectural and societal structures. Literary architectural spaces are representative and imaginative; they are simultaneously modeled upon or against historical architectural forms and conventions *and* are products of authorial invention. As such, they are dynamic architectural landscapes that characters interact with and respond to; sites imbued with meaning through their encapsulation of the social norms and aspirations articulated through architecture, and through the ways in which they structure narrative action and influence narrative aesthetics and form.

The discrete public spaces of this study—each with their own social, architectural, and literary history—do not shape the narratives they inhabit in uniform ways. As Franco Moretti puts it, “each space determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story…Space is not the ‘outside’ of narrative, then, but an internal force, that shapes it from within” (70). Rather than apply one literary theory or narratalogical model across the variety of novels addressed here, this project argues for a methodology that treats each space’s relationship to narrative independently. Chapters are organized around public spaces rather than authors, genres, or chronological order and each chapter calls upon different theoretical models. Though the novels grouped in these chapters might at first glance appear incommensurate, this comparative approach allows for greater attention to different spatial treatments: in style, form, and plotting.

The second chapter of this dissertation considers Wilkie Collins’s adoption of the hotel as a site of formal innovation and a symbol of the Victorian era’s shifting social and economic landscape. In Collins’s fiction, hotels are permeable spaces where privacy is

purchased but never guaranteed. Sounds carry through walls and rooms, creating the sensation that this space is not your own. Reading Collins's first successful novel *Basil* (1852) against his later novella *The Haunted Hotel* (1878), this chapter identifies his depiction of the jarring sonic and sensory landscape of the hotel as multifaceted exploration of Victorian attitudes towards the growing instability of class boundaries between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Moreover, it suggests that the sonic and sensory landscape of the hotel lends itself to Collins's formal innovations in the realm of literary suspense and examines both works as part of Collins's crucial role in the development of the sensation genre.

Chapter 3 takes up the previous chapter's focus on the sensory experience of the built environment and extends its examination of the physicality of spatial embodiment to the affects engendered by these particular spaces. Specifically focused on the affective space of the Victorian courthouse, this chapter analyzes the gendered trope of the courtroom swoon in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), and Charlotte Yonge's *The Trial* (1864) as a critique of an increasingly compartmentalized and industrialized legal and social landscape. It attends to Gaskell's and Eliot's strategic employment of gesture and affect as a means of highlighting the divisions—made manifest in real physical partitions—the Victorian courthouse drew between members of the same community. Key to this analysis is a consideration of the relationship between affect and melodrama within the inherently theatrical space of the courtroom.

Chapter 4 is likewise focused on a performative venue, as with the courthouse floor. It examines the concretions of representation created by the narrative rendition of

nineteenth-century theaters and stagecraft in the works of Charlotte Brontë and Oscar Wilde. It argues that on the level of form, the reinscription of theatrical realism in the realist novel produces the generic hybridity—the underlying Gothicism—characteristic of both Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). In doing so, it subverts realist narrative expectations and illuminates the ways in which both Victorian theaters and novels participated in the construction of imperialist, bourgeois, and heteronormative cultural narratives.

Chapter 5 departs from the previous three chapters in that it examines the *un*narratability of the hospital. Addressing George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and W. E. Henley's *In Hospital* (1888), this chapter considers the absence of the hospital in Victorian fiction despite the prevalence of debates surrounding hospital design and health. Centered on a reading of atmospheres, both literal and figurative, this chapter recovers nineteenth-century preoccupations with the hospital's mode of ventilation and anti-domestic environment. It tracks these general atmospheric concerns against the treatment of hospitals as repositories for the pauperized poor. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates the limits of narrative in capturing the experience of a particular building type and the people it served. The final chapter serves as a coda to this dissertation. Returning briefly to Thomas Hardy, it traces the origins of this project, considers the importance of my project to Victorian literary and cultural studies, and charts potential avenues for future research.

Despite each chapter's individualized approach to its architectural subject and the heterogeneity of my primary texts, there are several thematic threads that run throughout

the project as a whole and bind my readings together. All of my chapters treat, in some way, the relationship between the concretization of Victorian class politics in the construction of the built environment and the narrative dominance of particular demographics, most notably the bourgeois family. Chapters 3 and 4 address the performative nature of public space; chapters 2, 3, and 5 consider the physical experience of the built environment; and chapters 2, 4, and 5 address the inherent Gothicism of industrialization and the rise of consumer culture. This is a project that explores how the material form of the built environment intersects with the aesthetic forms of Victorian fiction. On the level of form, the majority of the texts I address treat the building types that are the subject of my chapters as climactic settings, spaces whose contours and conditions precipitate the eventfulness that predicates plot. This is especially true of the following chapter, which considers how the architectural setting of a pivotal narrative moment might serve as a structural model for the novel as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING SUSPENSE, RENOVATING SENSATION: WILKIE COLLINS AND THE HOTEL

At Someone Else's Door

Few studies of Wilkie Collins (1824-89) begin without citing Henry James's famous appraisal of his work: "To Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors."[16] But if Collins gets the credit for domesticating horror, it is James's eminently quotable praise of him that deserves the credit for shaping the landscape of contemporary scholarship on Collins's work. The last twenty-five years have served as a period of critical revival for Wilkie Collins, with contemporary scholarship working to recuperate Collins's literary reputation after he was dismissed throughout much of the twentieth century for his development of plot over characters. Although latently underwriting a critical turn to the sensational via its influence on burgeoning modernism, in practice the citation of James's assessment of Wilkie Collins has anchored the importance of Collins's work to the nineteenth-century's culture of domesticity. Until very recently, scholarship placed the domestic sphere at the center of critical conversations about Collins and tacitly neutered other critical veins in his writing. Consequently, other projects have, in general, highlighted the gender and sexual politics of his novels over

[16] From a review of the New York edition of M. E. Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863), printed in the American publication *Nation* in 1865; quoted in Page 122.

other artistic and political aims.[17] Furthermore, the repeated incantation of "at our own doors" as the preamble to countless works on Collins has resulted in an imbalance of scholarship that privileges the physical and architectural space of the private home over the many other public spaces in which Collins sets his mysteries.

This chapter also calls upon James's endorsement of Collins's talent for mystery, horror, and suspense, but it does so precisely to highlight the context that critics regularly exclude when citing James on Collins. Immediately following his identification of Collins's mysteries being "at our own doors" James argues that:

> [Collins's] innovation gave a new impulse to the literature of horrors. It was fatal to the authority of Mrs. Radcliffe and her everlasting castle in the Apennines…Instead of the terrors of *Udolpho*, we were treated to the terrors of the cheerful country-house and the busy London lodgings. And there is no doubt that these were infinitely the more terrible. (qtd. in Page 122)

In singling out both the country-house *and* the busy London lodgings, James points to the ways in which the terrors of the sensation genre are as much predicated on threats within aristocratic estates as they are on the rapid developments within England's metropolitan capitol. As noted in the introduction to this study, the nineteenth century was a period of unprecedented internal migration. People moved from rural communities to cities at a rate of half a million per decade.[18] Visitors also came to cities in droves; the clearest example of this being the estimated 6 million people who attended the Great Exhibition of 1851, more than double London's population at the time.

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[17] It was only in the 1980s that sensation fiction, and those writers associated with it, began to regain critical traction, largely due to feminist critiques of the canon and developments in queer theory. As a result, issues of gender and sexuality have historically framed the critical conversation around the genre with a great deal of interest concentrated on the figure of the middle-class home and women's relationship to that space. Although contemporary studies are increasingly diverse, critics of sensation fiction would be nowhere today without the foundational work of scholars such as Winifred Hughes, Jenny Bourne Taylor, Ann Cvetovich, and D.A. Miller.

[18] Long 1.

All of these newly mobile bodies had to stay somewhere, many or most in long or short-term lodgings. However, as Sharon Marcus points out in *Apartment Stories*, Victorian scholars have generally neglected the various types of lodgings available in the nineteenth-century, likely because such readings undermine the standard image of Victorian middle-class domesticity that has long framed critical approaches to the period.[19] At their most basic level, lodgings force us to reconsider the division between public and private that have historically marshaled the study of space. For this reason, they are a natural point of departure for my project, whose primary intervention is a reassessment of the narrative role of built public space in nineteenth-century British fiction. Specifically addressing the commercial, short-term lodgings provided by the nineteenth-century hotel, this chapter examines the foundational role this public building type played in Wilkie Collins's ongoing engagement with sensation fiction's form and motifs. In doing so, it highlights the inherently public nature of a genre otherwise known for its engagement with ostensibly private issues, like marital infidelity or illegitimate children.

Lodging houses, inns, and hotels crop up with surprising regularity in the novels and short stories of Wilkie Collins.[20] Almost always depicted as dangerous places where villains lurk and the plot twists, lodgings, and more particularly, hotels in Collins's fiction generally function as loci of meaning where the violations and instabilities of social and class boundaries are figured through the permeability of architectural structures. In his move to situate the suspenseful and climactic exposure of these

[19] Marcus 2-11.

[20] Plots that prominently feature lodgings, inns, and hotels range throughout the entirety of Collins's career, from his second published short story to his later novels. Some examples include: "The Last Stage Coachman" (1843), "A Terribly Strange Bed" (1852), "The Stolen Letter" (1856), "The Dream Women" (1855), *The Moonstone* (1868), and *Man and Wife* (1870).

boundary failures within the increasingly public and palatial architectural figure of the hotel, I argue that narratives like Collins's *Basil* (1852) and *The Haunted Hotel* (1878) allegorize the challenge posed to aristocratic power by an ascendant bourgeoisie and a shifting cultural landscape in which the forces of capital threaten to eclipse the distinctions of rank.

For Collins's Victorian readers, hotels were legible as markers for the period's increasingly physically and economically mobile populace. Always already suggestive of novelty and difference due to its French appellation, the British hotel developed during the eighteenth century as an exclusive alternative to the coaching inn. Both Pevsner and Sandoval-Strausz cite the 1760s as the period in which *hotel* entered the English language. Sandoval-Strausz explains the introduction of the term as:

> a borrowing of the French term *hôtel*, which referred not to travel accommodation but rather to the residence of a nobleman, a town hall, or any other large official building. In English, the term signified a guest house of particularly high quality, though such pretensions were contested. (6)

The hotel's French heritage and luxurious aspirations are evident in an advertisement for the Hotel De la Sabloniere, dated 1790-1800 (Figure 2.1).[21] Yet despite its promise of "elegant and commodious" lodgings, prototypical hotels like the Hotel De la Sabloniere were scarce in the eighteenth century. As Mary Cathcart Borer explains, during this period the coaching inn was "still the social centre of town, for there were seldom any other public rooms available to serve as meeting places" (154), whereas the earliest hotels typically "had no common dining-room. A resident took a suite and kept to himself" (162). Thus, "Before about 1820 it was considered rather pretentious to talk of an hotel" (Borer 162).

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[21] Borer describes the Hôtel Sablonnière as a favorite spot for French tourists up until the mid-nineteenth century (194).

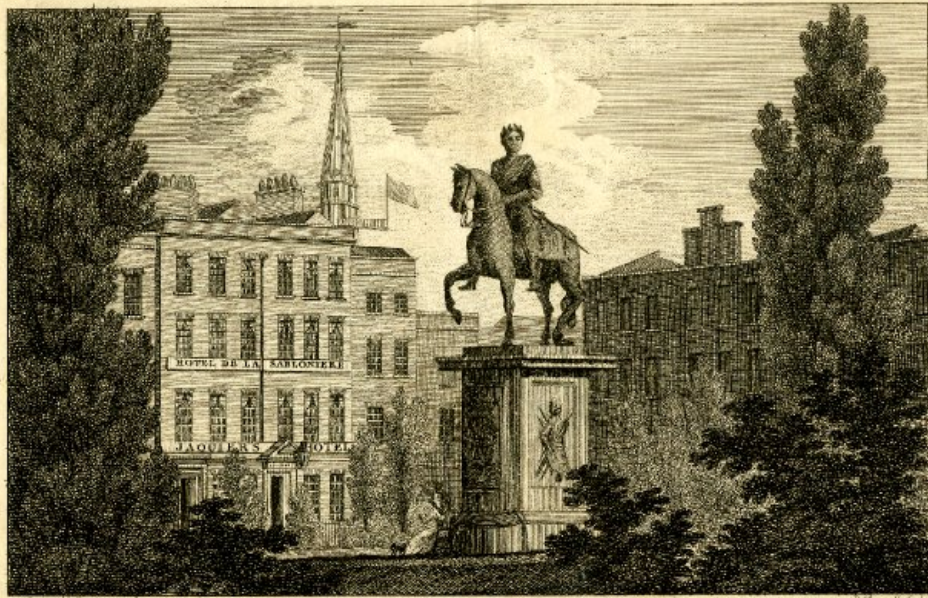

Figure 2.1: Peter Mazell, *Hotel De la Sabloniere, Leicester Square, LONDON*. 1790-1800. Etching. British Library, London.

However, following the railway boom of the 1840s and the concomitant decline in the stagecoach—a decline dramatized in Collins's early story, "The Last Stage Coachman" (1843)—the inns that dotted the British roadsides began to fail and in their

stead a new model of hotel arose.[22] The increased speed and volume of railway travel demanded the construction of a building type designed to house a larger and more economically diverse group of travelers.[23] In their evolution to meet the needs of those itinerant urban visitors who traveled to London and other metropolitan centers for work or for the pleasure of attending one of the many mid-century attractions that drew crowds (like the Great Exhibition), hotels offered a modern solution to a crisis in temporary urban lodging. Accordingly, their number grew precipitously.[24] Soon they were as common to rail stations as the bookstand (where cheap reprints of many of Collins's novels were sold).[25] This led commentators like Albert Smith to dub hotels: "Chapels of Ease to the railways" (8), and guidebooks like *The British Metropolis in 1851: A Classified Guide to London* to suggest that seeking a hotel should be introductory material and the first objective of any visitor just arrived at their railroad terminus (1).

However, as Smith, the *Classified Guide,* and the text of *Basil* make clear, a hotel's proximity to rail stations did not necessarily promise new facilities and quality construction. The development of hotels was uneven, and for at least the first half of the century they could vary widely in size and appearance. Some of the older, eighteenth-century hotels continued to operate. In other cases, small terrace houses were converted

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[22] In his account of the decline of the inn, Paul Slattery offers a striking insight that connects development of the hotel with the birth of the contemporary service economy. He writes, "There was little impetus to change inns since customers did not make explicit choices to stay at any one inn rather than another. They stayed wherever the coaches stopped and stayed typically for only one night at a time in any inn. Thus, the key relationship was between the innkeeper and the coach operators that stopped at the inn, not between the innkeeper and the customers" (Slattery 25).

[23] For the relationship between the railway and the hotel, see Watkin 15, Simmon 204-6.

[24] Slattery estimates that—counting hotels *and* inns—the total number of available beds in Britain in 1750 numbered around 8,000, and that by 1850 their ranks had swelled to 80,000 (29).

[25] For more on the commercial relationship between sensation fiction and rail travel, see Hammond 51-72.

into hotels in order to cash in on the crowds that continued to travel to London in the wake of the Exhibition.[26] And, similar to today, newly constructed hotels could range in quality and price: "for commercial travellers and people who could not afford the larger establishments, there grew up round nearly every station in the country, a crop of privately-owned commercial hotels, many of them called 'railway' hotels, which offered amenities varying between modest comfort and near squalor" (Borer 178).

Nevertheless, as the century progressed and rail travel continued to expand, hotel standards and amenities generally continued to improve. Compared to its eighteenth-century forebear and competitor the coaching inn, the typical new station hotel was of "a size and luxury of appointment which staggered the Victorians" (Borer 175). More significantly, these new hotels no longer exclusively catered to the upper classes. The same industrial forces that allowed for the development of the hotel as a modern building type also promoted the development of new class structures and a larger body of consumers. As Paul Slattery notes, "the biggest boost in hotel demand and hotel supply was from domestic leisure that was tied to the emerging structure" of the middle class (34). Likewise, Borer explains, via hotels, "many of the middle-class travellers were sampling for the first time the new luxury which had been made possible by Britain's rising prosperity" (Borer 177). Within the hotel the distance between the upper and middle classes must have seemed smaller (even literally) than ever before.

Eventually, hotels became destinations in their own right. New luxury hotels were constructed and the general size of hotels increased dramatically to accommodate recreational as well as sleeping spaces. By the 1870s and 80s grand hotels, like the

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[26] Smith 7-8.

Midland Grand (Figure 2.2 & 2.3), were becoming the norm. Connected to London's St Pancras station and designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78), the Midland Grand opened in 1873 and featured a Gothic exterior and new technologies, such as a hydraulic lift. Capitalizing on bourgeois Victorians' increased access to money and leisure time, hotels of this period featured a series of complex and interconnected public rooms, from grand ballrooms to coffee rooms in which one could see and be seen. This shift to public display and sociability represented a complete reversal of the exclusivity and privacy promised by eighteenth century hotels. Visitors' lists were often posted in the lobbies of grand hotels, a practice that would likely shock contemporary hotel patrons. Although originally a retreat from the mixed company of the coaching inn, the hotel eventually surpassed the inn in its publicity and availability to a range of patrons. By the end of the nineteenth-century, hotels had developed from a railway convenience catering to a geographically and economically mobile populace into the consumer paradises they still represent today.

Figure 2.2: L.M. S. Ry. "Midland Grand Hotel." 1928. Photograph. *Steel Highway*, written by Cecil J. Allen, Longmans, Green & Co., 1928, p. 93. Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 2.3: The Midland Grand Hotel. Newsprint. 1885. *Harper's Handbook for Traveler's in Europe and the east*, 1885. Wikimedia Commons.

As chronotopes of Victorian patterns of economic expansion and consumption, hotels in the nineteenth century evolved in response to the same forces that promoted the growth and diversification of the Victorian literary market and resulted in the split between high and lowbrow fiction. The novels addressed in this chapter offer a glimpse of Collins responding to these cultural and literary climates. In comparing *Basil* and *The Haunted Hotel*—two texts situated twenty-six years apart and representative of Collins's early and late style—this chapter examines the ways in which Collins's developing strategies of representation and narrative form converge around the locus of the hotel. It identifies the structural properties shared between these fictional public spaces and the texts that contain them. Arguing that Collins's hotel scenes crystallize a set of thematic, formal, and historical issues, I posit that these sites of overlapping architectural and textual forms express the complex relationships between Victorian economic developments and class-based hierarchies and offer insights into Collins's decades-long experiments with genre and narrative form in his assiduous pursuit a wide readership and the approval of "King Public."[27]

As I will demonstrate in the sections to come, the permeability and public nature of nineteenth century hotel space, as represented in Collins's work, demonstrate these forms' uncanny domesticity and potentiality as sites of genre innovation. More pointedly, by situating the disruption of what might be characterized as these novels' marriage plots within the uncanny space of the hotel, Collins creates space for new narratives and attending genre formations. *Basil* deals with mid-century anxieties surrounding the dissolution of class boundaries and, as a result, is narratologically crucial to Collins's

[27] For more on his relationship with his readership, see Lonoff 66.

anticipation and mastery of the sensation form. *The Haunted Hotel*, on the other hand, deals with the late-century substitution of an already declining aristocracy with its entrepreneurial avatar, and reanimates sensation motifs within the period's revival of the literary gothic form, producing a hybrid narrative that critiques its own commercial viability.

Central to my readings of both texts are analyses of Collins's depiction of the sensory environment of the hotel. Specifically, I examine Collins's conversion of the architectural mediation of physical senses into a formal structure for suspense. Although a study of the senses in sensation fiction is not unprecedented, my attention to the inherent spatiality of sensation and the experiential dimension of the built environment provides a new approach. More broadly, this chapter's exploration of literary representations of the sensory dimensions of built space lays the groundwork for my dissertation's examination of the material and formal relationship between narrative and architectural forms.

The Climax and the Cheap Hotel

First published in three volumes in 1852 by Richard Bentley, *Basil: A Story of Modern Life* is Wilkie Collins's second published novel.[28] Following a biography of his father, the painter William Collins, and the historical romance *Antonina* (1850), *Basil* stands out for its modern, metropolitan setting and sensibility and its perceptive

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[28] Not popular enough to call for a second edition, *Basil*'s copyright was auctioned off by a struggling Bentley, resulting in the 1856 publication of a cheap single-volume edition for Blackwood's London Library. In 1862, riding high after the blockbuster success of *The Woman in White*, Collins revised *Basil* for Sampson Low, Son & Co, altering the preface and deleting many individual words, phrases, and clauses. Unless noted, this chapter draws upon the 1862 edition of the novel.

dramatization of mid-century tensions surrounding the interrelated issues of class, sexuality, and commercialism. Its plot recounts the story of the second son of a proud English aristocrat, his disastrous secret marriage to Margaret Sherwin, a sexually precocious shopkeepers' daughter,[29] and his flight from notoriety after pressing his ear to a hotel's thin wall and discovering his wife's adultery with her father's clerk, Mannion.

On the level of form, *Basil* anticipates the narrative style that would later make Collins a household name. Opening with the eponymous protagonist's claim that the following collection of journal entries and letters is a "history of little more than the events of one year" (1), the novel promises to be a story told only by Basil. However, this promise is broken very shortly after the second volume's climactic hotel scene. Rapidly unraveling from this moment, Basil's story reworks the eighteenth-century epistolary form as it degenerates from a single narrative to a frequently punctuated (literally and figuratively) collection of transcribed letters and in-the-moment journal entries from Basil and others. With a narrative trajectory that might best be described as the movement from Basil's privileged access to knowledge—knowledge that he withholds from his readers—to the revelation of his ignorance and subsequent lack of agency in telling his own story, the suspenseful *Basil* was a moderate, if a bit controversial, success. Although censured by several reviewers for its adulterous and violent plot, *Basil* won the approval of Charles Dickens and helped cement he and Collins's professional and personal friendship.[30] It also paved the way for Collins's future sensation fiction blockbusters.

[29] As Davidoff and Hall note, "In status terms, the element of personal service demanded by retail trade was considered demeaning and tainted the calling" (243).
[30] For more on Collins's friendship with Dickens, see Peters 121.

Yet, until recently *Basil* has received comparatively little attention from modern critics. This is remarkable given that it features the same social issues that motivated Collins's later novels and which interest cultural critics today: explorations of female sexuality, marital indiscretion, and spousal abuse; questions regarding insanity, identity, and class consciousness; the challenges of rapid modernization and the influences of urban development; and the duplicitous, even carceral, potential of the middle-class home. Current scholarship on *Basil* addresses many of these issues, with a growing interest in Basil's voyeurism and flâneuristic impulses, and in Collins's gothic and antipathetic version of the bourgeois home and grim depictions of the newly minted London suburbs.[31]

However, if modern critics tend to focus on the disturbing commercialism of the Sherwin's suburban villa or Basil's flâneur's passion for urban exploration, Victorian reviewers of the novel tended to be struck by *Basil*'s hotel scene. Regularly cited by those lobbing censure at the novel, critics found the explicit sexuality and violence of the scene so distasteful that references to it were usually thickly veiled. In "The Progress of Fiction as an Art," published in the *Westminster Review* in October of 1853 and now famous for its early efforts at drawing distinctions between "higher" and "lower" forms of literature,[32] an anonymous critic (suspected to be George Eliot) scathingly pans *Basil*, writing, "The incident which forms the foundation of the whole, is absolutely disgusting" (372).[33] Another anonymous, and less condemnatory, review published in the *Dublin University Magazine* in January of 1853 writes, "we would rather some catastrophe less

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[31] See Gilmore 89, Wagner 200-211, and Law.

[32] Taylor 6.

[33] Eliot's biographer, Gordon S. Haight, has suggested that she may be the author of the piece.

startling had been selected as the turning point of a story" (qtd. in Page 41). Regardless as to whether readers agree or disagree with Victorians' assessment of *Basil*'s hotel scene, it has received little attention from contemporary literary critics despite its nineteenth-century identification as the "foundation" or "turning point" in the story.

Arriving at the end of the second part of this three-part novel, the hotel scene is initially striking for its physical departure from the Sherwin's Hollyoake Square home. With few exceptions, the entire second part takes place in or around the Sherwin's sitting room and is claustrophobically domestic until Basil attempts to escort Margaret home from a party she attended with the clerk Mannion. Discovering the pair leaving earlier than promised, Basil follows them by cab to a region of London in the opposite direction of the crackling-new varnished world of North Villa. A dark double to the partial development of the Sherwin's suburban neighborhood, Basil describes the spot as, "a very lonely place—a colony of half-finished streets, and half-inhabited houses, which had grown up in the neighborhood of a great railway station." Accompanied by the sound of "the fierce scream of the whistle, and the heaving, heavy throb of the engine starting on its journey," Basil proceeds down a street with closed shops at one end and private homes at the other, and follows Margaret and Mannion to a "hotel—a neglected, deserted, dreary-looking building" located nine doors down (158-9).

Unlike the worn-in and pastoral inns Basil visits with his sister Clara in his bachelor days—where his greatest transgression against his father is the laughably innocent act of "drinking the landlady's fresh milk" and "the landlord's old ale"—this hotel is a figure for all that is modern and unfamiliar. Despite looking dreary and run-down already, the establishment and its half-built environs is likely as new to the

neighborhood as the nearby railway station. As Tamara Wagner notes in her reading of *Basil*'s depictions of the London suburbs, building speculation was a common phenomenon in the region of new railway stations and, if failed, produced shoddily built and abandoned slums.[34] Given its decrepitude and location, this hotel is likely representative of the down-market, converted terrace house variety that attempted to profit from the crowds of Exhibition goers who flooded the city the year before *Basil* was published. Tellingly located mid-way between a shopping district and residential area, the hotel space is a hybrid of the two. Its location on the indistinct boundary between commercial and domestic zones not only points to the hotel's trade in beds for the night, but also to the potential of paying for a night's company too. In original drafts of the novel the hotel was a house of assignation, but Collins was forced by his publisher to convert the brothel into a hotel.[35] This substitution only underscores the salacious potential of a hotel-space available to a diverse public that lacks the public arenas (dining rooms, coffee rooms, etc.) that could provide a measure of social policing against illicit sexual encounters.

Bribing the hotel's waiter with a sovereign to take him to, "where I can hear their voices," Basil is led upstairs and warned to "step soft" as the waiter brings him to an empty room and indicates that the wall is "'only boards papered over—'" (159). No longer overwhelmed by the noise of throbbing engines and the beating of his own heart, Basil is able to hear those dread sounds that reveal his marriage as a sham. He says, "I listened; and through the thin partition, I heard voices—*her* voice, and *his* voice. *I heard and I knew*—knew my degradation in all its infamy, knew her wrongs in all their

[34] Wagner 204-5.
[35] Peters 115.

nameless horror" (160). The flimsy structure of the hotel, with its too-thin partitions providing anonymity but not secrecy, allows Basil to hear the damning proof of Margaret's infidelity. Yet, at the same moment that Basil hears Margaret and Mannion together, he is overwhelmed by the couple's celebration of their "foul plot" and nearly loses consciousness. Aware only of the physical torment he feels at this deception, Basil fails to disclose any more information about what he hears. Although the implications of Margaret and Mannion's mingled voices are obvious, the reader is still left in the dark regarding the details of their plot against Basil. The thin wall that grants Basil the knowledge of his wife's adultery leaves the reader hanging in suspense. Limited by a first-person narrative, and to free indirect discourse in the place of dialogue, the reader cannot see what Basil does not; they can only discover what he is willing (or physically able) to recount. Insensible for half of the scene and indirect for the rest, Basil offers just enough information to rouse the reader's desire for more information about the origins of the unlikely coupling of a beautiful young woman and her father's much older clerk.

Evicted from the hotel after recovering from his fainting fit, Basil awaits the couple's exit. While he describes his own "sharp agony of suspense" as he keeps watch on the door to the hotel, Collins heightens readers' suspense by delaying the couple's exit and introducing a policeman on his rounds. Significantly ensconced in a dark narrow alley leading to mews, Basil cannot see everything happening and mostly describes what he hears on the hotel's street. The sound of the policeman's approaching boots and whistled song inform Basil that his revenge may be ruined, yet it is also the sound of policeman's retreating steps, Mannion's rejection of the waiter's warning to take care on the dark street, and the banging of the hotel's door after him that tell Basil that "Mannion

had been left to his fate" (163). With the street now silent, Basil violently attacks Mannion, beating him senseless and beyond "the semblance of humanity" (164). Attempting to catch his wife following the attack, Basil starts off on a wild and reeling chase through the streets of London but loses track of both Margaret and his senses again, only to wake hours later in his own study. It is here that the second section of the novel ends. Rather than return to the scene of the hotel, this space is left mysterious and cut off from the rest of the narrative; the third section picks up with Basil recovering in the safety of his home, and the reader is forced to follow the narrative further in order to learn Mannion and Margaret's fates.

The Modern Soundscape of Suspense

In the above scene, the subdivided space of the hotel and its environs is critical to not only the discovery and violence that drives the narrative to its close in the third part of the novel, but also to the way in which that narrative is told. Basil's eavesdropping in the hotel is the culmination of so many other acts of eavesdropping in the novel—Basil in the garden below the Sherwin's drawing-room window during a fight between mother and daughter, Basil on the landing listening to Margaret attack her mother's cat, or Clara at the door to her father's study listening to a confrontation between Basil and their father—where every other thin partition ultimately reflects the dynamics of the hotel's inner chambers and permeability.[36] Basil's (and thus the readers') knowledge of the events that transpire is conveyed through sounds that are mediated by the walls, doors, and narrow passageways in and around the hotel.

[36] Collins 131, 134, 205.

Divorcing sight from sound, these spatial partitions suspensefully delay or limit the amount of available information in ways that heighten desire. In *Basil*, what the ear hears, the eye wants; Basil desires Margaret's murmuring veiled face on the omnibus, as the reader desires the revelation of what rustling body Mr. Sherwin is hiding behind a screen in he and Basil's last confrontation. Functioning as the space between hearing and seeing, between detection and understanding, the permeable partitions of this text ultimately dramatize the narrative's drive to disclosure, no matter how terrible the resulting knowledge may be. Finally awake to his part in this plot after the hotel scene, Basil listens to what has been sounding through the walls the whole time.

In the preface to the novel Collins identifies the special care he took in capturing every detail of *Basil*'s London setting. He writes in 1852 edition that:

> So again, in certain parts of this book where I have attempted to excite the *suspense* or pity of the reader, I have admitted as perfectly fit accessories to the scene the most ordinary street-sounds that could be heard, and the most ordinary street-events that could occur, at the time and place represented—believing that by adding to truth, they were adding to tragedy…(emphasis added, *xxxvi*)

A self-proclaimed attempt at both realistic representation and a manipulation of his readers' affective responses to the narrative, the preface reveals not only the centrality of urban, public spaces to the text, but also these urban spaces' ability to impinge upon intimate scenes through sound. Basil is what sound theorist R. Murray Schafer would call an "earwitness" to the "soundscape" of mid-century London.[37] He frequently privileges his sense of hearing when describing his surroundings and Collins consciously pairs Basil's most highly-strung, emotive moments with external sounds that carry through

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[37] Both terms are neologisms of Schafer's invention. An "earwitness" is "one who testifies or can testify to what he or she has heard" (272) and a "soundscape" is, most simply, "The sonic environment" (274). Schafer's 1977 study of soundscapes has been seminal; the field of sound studies has taken off in the last fifteen years. For a thorough examination of the Victorian soundscape, see John M. Picker's work of the same name.

windows and walls. These consistent episodes of disturbance and vulnerability to noises that travel across partitions make salient the permeability of architectural structures, the proximity of others, and the constant threat of public exposure in the urban setting.

Promising on its first page to be “a story of an error…fatal in its results” (3), Collins regularly signposts the terrible outcome of Basil’s desire for the lower-class Margaret through his negative response to auditory stimuli after key moments in her presence. Take, for example, Basil’s return to his father’s house after encountering Margaret for the first time on an omnibus. Having spent his afternoon enjoying the sights and sounds of London and stalking his future wife to her suburban home, Basil describes his own home as “dull, empty, inexpressibly miserable,” but far from quiet (33). After his romp in suburbia, Basil is newly aware of the world just outside his own doors. As if discovering for the first time the potential proximity between the street and study, between Margaret’s world and his own, Basil recounts that, “the distant roll of carriages along the surrounding streets had a heavy boding sound; the opening and shutting of doors in the domestic offices below, startled and irritated me” (33). Explicitly (fore)boding, this passage offers an early indication of the threat the tradesman’s daughter poses. Foreshadowing the devaluation of his family’s nobility-based cultural capital as a result of his marriage, Basil’s suburban exposure allows the sounds of the street and the labor of the lower classes to intrude his aristocratic home.[38] Signaled through the specific sound of the opening and closing of doors, the noises imply a mobility that threatens the boundaries and inaccessibility of Basil’s aristocratic home and status.

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[38] For more on the class politics of urban noise see Picker 43, 51-4.

After buying Margaret's hand in marriage with the promise of life insurance and a year of celibacy, Basil returns to his father's home and recounts his first night as a married man as a tortured one. He explains, "The physical and mental reaction…was so sudden and severe, that the faintest noise from the street now terrified—yes, literally terrified me" (99). Once comfortable in his bed, Basil is now stripped of his insulation from the outside world. Hypersensitive, he begins to associate street sounds with torture, and silence with a state of ominous anticipation. Explaining, "When no sounds were audible, then I listened for them to come" (99), Basil sensitizes the reader to the coming sounds of the "heaving, heavy throb" of the train engine's roar and his wife's infidelity, the soundscape of economic and social upheaval. In stark contrast to the first thrilling and tactile sensations of conjugal bliss that Basil's marriage night should entail, this night's harrowing nervous and auditory sensations are the product of the failure of boundaries both physical and social. Although Graham Law reads the novel as "a story of two Londons – one public and one private" (71), the noisiness of Basil's father's house implies a failure of these partitions, a failure brought home by Mr. Sherwin's confession that he once toured Basil's father's house to gain inspiration from its furnishings.

In rendering the aristocratic home equally as public to the hotel at the novel's center, Collins indicates that it is not only Basil's marriage that threatens his father's atavistic fantasy of aristocratic difference. This threat is already internalized in the structures of inheritance that are as old (and outdated) as the family name. As the second son, Basil is expected to take a profession, and is already figuratively wed to the capitalism of the lower classes. Moreover, in his antagonist Mannion Basil finds a double who exemplifies the devaluation of birthright and redistricting of class boundaries from

the ancestral to the commercial. Disclosed in a series of letters sent from his hospital bed, Mannion reveals himself to be the son of a gentleman, albeit a poor one who died at the scaffold for forging Basil's father's name. Arriving in the middle of the novel, after the hotel scene, Mannion's letter reveals what Collins's sonic realism has suggested all along: *Basil* is not a story about romance gone wrong; it is a story about a class-based revenge plot.[39] While Basil is under the delusion that Margaret will love him for his good name and gentleman's-son's accomplishments, respecting his sexual forbearance as a sacrifice to duty, Mannion knows that it is her greed that is the key to her affections. Deriding Basil's refusal to consummate their marriage as indicative of a second-son's impotency to inherit his father's estate, and promising his own future fortune through the clever management of her father's business, Mannion seduces Margaret and reveals the ways in which Basil's domestic, private life is at the mercy of commercial desires. Like the domesticity of the mid-century hotel, it was and can still be bought.

Architectural and Textual Structures of Suspense

In *Basil*'s hotel scene sonic realism is in large part a form of architectural realism, where the new and cheaply built partitions of (sub)urban construction fail to keep the world at bay. The sounds that seep through these partitions mark a narrative space in which physical and social boundaries are eroded by an encroaching commercialism—a specter for the rising bourgeoisie and the only thing this plot imagines as more terrifying and fatally promised than the infidelity at its core. While according to Collins his sonic

[39] Tamar Heller persuasively identifies the novel as a "historical allegory about the rise of the bourgeoisie" (60).

realism is only an "accessory" to suspense,[40] closer attention to its spatial relations reveals that more than just an atmospheric effect, sound is both a key element of Collins's representational register and a mechanism of suspense in the novel. The architectural mediation of hearing and seeing in this first-person novel operates as a spatial logic for suspense, as structural and physical boundaries both signal and screen what is yet to come. And as this section will demonstrate, the relationship between space and sound that produces suspense on the level of plot is converted into textual structures that maintain this suspense after *Basil*'s sonic realism exceeds the limits of Victorian sexual propriety.

With its many formal parts and partitions, *Basil* capitalizes on readers' interest by arranging cliffhangers along breaks between documented periods or in the gaps between the different pieces of the "manuscript," encouraging readers to continue on to the next section. Although only published in either a three- or single-volume form, the novel anticipates the serial publishing form that catered to a growing reading public and transformed literature from a luxury good into a commodity for mass consumption, a process which stoked fears, "that class-based cultural boundaries were breaking down with the expansion of new methods of production and circulations" (Taylor 6), a process already reflected in *Basil* on the level of plot.

In comparing Collins's plotting practices to architectural construction I employ an analogy that Collins himself used when referring to his own work. As Sue Lonoff notes, "In the planning stages, Collins referred to his novels in architectural terms. He would not begin work on the text itself until he had laid the 'foundation' or 'constructed the

[40] "Sonic realism" is my term as applied to literature; it has previously been used in the discussion of sound recordings and in scholar Casey O'Callaghan's work on the philosophy of sound.

framework'--a difficult and tedious process. '...I am slowly putting up the scaffolding of the book which is yet to be built'" (34). Lonoff draws upon Collins's claim in the preface to *Basil*, that fiction is the twin sister to drama, and reads his novels as structurally similar to the space of a theater, with serialized breaks operating like the "raising and lowering of the curtain on stage" (23). Though an apt metaphor for Collins's later serialized works where readers were forced to wait for the following week or month's issue to discover what happens next, in *Basil*, sections and textual partitions are not determined by a publisher's schedule and thus operate less like acts than they do like a series of screens and doors. While the climax of the novel is aligned with a section break, as the novel progresses the action rises and falls more frequently and is organized around typographical breaks within chapters and sections. Only momentarily stalling the progress of the plot, Collins's visual sub-division of the text within the larger divisions of chapters and sections is a management of typography that more closely metaphorically resembles a blueprint than a script.

Even if Collins did not think of the final drafts of his novels as paper buildings, or his text's formal partitions as party walls, he was meticulous about the visual structure of a text and the mechanics of reading. Particularly attentive to the type settings of his novels, as Alison Winter explains, "Collins not only paced his verbal cues in a way that Dickens called 'dissective,' but even tried to control how readers' eyes would take in the print. He took great pains over typographical effort" (326). In *Basil*, Collins's management of typography and textual structure establishes an analogous relationship between Basil's architecturally delayed access to information and readers' structurally delayed access to plot resolution. As integral to the narrative momentum as the permeable

walls of the hotel in *Basil* are the breaks within and between the novel's sections—textual partitions that invite violation like the walls, windows, and doors of the lodgings. Not only metaphorically reflective of each other, textual and architectural partitions also occupy the same spaces in the text; Collins's typographic breaks bookend the rented rooms of the text, and as the narrative grows increasingly suspenseful both types of partitions face accelerated spatial division and violation.

In the first two sections of the novel any gaps in the narrative are products of Basil's own resistance to representation. He repeatedly and obliquely references his romantic overtures towards Margaret but refrains from recounting these interactions with the explanation that he need not recapitulate what has already been said, ignoring the fact that these conversations were hidden from the reader in the first place. With a reticence better suited to the Austenian romances of an earlier era, Basil's refusal to share information with his reader despite his allusion to these conversations' "fatal" ends is decidedly un-suspenseful. At this early point, the narrative more closely resembles a renovation of the eighteenth-century's romances than the gothic narratives that Tamar Heller suggests Mannion's revenge echoes or the sensation novels that Collins would later be famous for.[41] As such, the only suspense offered by these scenes is the tame variety associated with romantic closure rather than the more electric sensation genre that hinges on the discovery of sexual impropriety. As a first-person narrator recounting his command over the events of these early scenes, Basil defuses any feelings of foreboding with the indication that there is nothing new to learn about these moments. Safely re-situated in the present tense by his address to the reader, these moments suggest not only

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[41] Heller compares *Basil* to Shelley's *Frankenstein* (60).

Basil's ultimate safety from Mannion's revenge, but also the sanctity of his romantic and domestic privacy. Here, Basil can control what readers see and hear; in the hotel scene and subsequent third section of the novel, that fantasy is destroyed.

During and after the scene at the hotel, gaps in representation are converted into physical, typographical gaps and disinterest is transformed into suspense. While the hotel scene reveals the fragility of physical boundaries, Basil's resulting confession to his father reveals the fragility of texts. Choosing to rip Basil's page out of the family album rather than record his future life as the cuckolded husband of a shopkeeper's daughter, Basil's father effectively destroys the integrity of his narrative through the negation of his identity. From this point forward, Collins employs a hybrid form where Basil's narrative is interrupted by the transposed letters of Mannion and others, with elongated dashes and rows of asterisks visually breaking the text across the page.

Asterisks, in particular, are used exclusively in Basil's own narrative as markers of lapses in time and Basil's loss of consciousness. As the novel progresses, Collins's use of asterisks rapidly multiplies, marking the limitations of Basil's knowledge, and thus ability to record, what has happened. In the journal that succeeds the third part and purports to be written in the present tense, asterisks operate as placeholders for the periods of unconsciousness Basil experiences after the nervous shock of Mannion's death—which fittingly comes after a fall from a cliff in the Cornish fog. Like Pamela writing in her journal up to the moment of Mr. B's seduction, Basil scribbles his moments of wakefulness in between a page filled of asterisks (Figure 2.4). On the precipice between life and death himself, Basil loses control over his consciousness and his narrative, and literal space is created for readers to hazard guesses at the conclusion.

With the frequency of minor partitions brought to the limit and Basil's future uncertain, Collins closes the journal and changes the form to a series of letters, this time from well-meaning strangers.

338 BASIL.

* * * * * *

The doctor and a strange man have been looking among my papers.

My God! am I dying? dying at the very time when there is a chance of happiness for my future life?

* * * * * *

Clara! — far from her — nothing but the little book-marker she worked for me— leave it round my neck when I—

I can't move, or breathe, or think — if I could only be taken back — if my father could see me as I am now! Night again — the dreams that *will* come always of home; sometimes, the untried home in heaven, as well as the familiar home on earth —

* * * * * *

Clara! I shall die out of my senses, unless Clara — break the news gently — it may kill her —

Her face so bright and calm! her watchful, weeping eyes always looking at me, with a light in them that shines steady through the quivering tears. While the light lasts, I shall live; when it begins to die out —*

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

* There are some lines of writing beyond this point; but they are illegible.

Figure 2.4: Scanned image of *Basil*, pg. 338. 1862 reprint. Bernhard Tauchnitz.

On its surface, *Basil* offers the sort of narrative closure that Victorian readers would have come to expect. The suspense, amplified to the point that it threatens the structural stability of the text, is alleviated through a shift in form and narrator. As if exiting the too tight space of Basil's narrative—a space visually constricted by walls of asterisks closing in—Collins continues the novel with the inclusion of a letter from William Penhale, a kindly working-class Cornish husband and father who takes on Basil's care and sees that his family is found. From here, the novel quickly moves towards resolution; Penhale reads Basil's diary and notifies his family. In a last letter and postscript of sorts, Basil explains he is now living on the estate left to his sister in a sex-less state of emotional incest, his father's love restored and his family's reputation spared by Margaret and Mannion's deaths. Out of the city and into the country, Basil's domestic life is reinstated after the interruption that was his married life.

In general, theories on suspense argue that it succeeds because it promises a conservative resolution to a shocking narrative problem and a satisfying restoration of the status quo. Likewise, during the height of sensation fiction's popularity critics of the genre charged those novels—largely identified through their relationship to suspense—with the production of a passive reading public and a body of mindless consumers, thus establishing a binary in which the sensory elements of sensation fiction render it antithetical to thought and reason.[42] *Basil*, in both its grim conclusion and narrative form, is more subversive than these accounts of suspense and sensation would have it. Rather than supporting a theory of passivity, *Basil*'s drive to knowledge rather than resolution is more akin to Caroline Levine's recent reformulations of nineteenth-century attitudes

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[42] Henry Mansel's 1863 critique titled "Sensation Novels" famously compares the genre to an addiction and connects its rapid consumption to a demand for entertainment suited to the accelerated speed of rail travel.

towards suspense as invitations to speculation that arose alongside the cultural dissemination and adoption of the scientific method, or to Nicholas Daly's proposal that the temporal accelerations of suspense narratives trained Victorian readers for the sensations of industrial modernity.[43] It encourages conjecture about Margaret and Mannion's relationship and their aspirations of upward mobility, and it anticipates the challenge that sensation fiction posed to class-divisions established on cultural *habitus*—a challenge historically registered not so much in its content but in its material patterns of circulation, famously, between kitchen and drawing room. Furthermore, *Basil,* in its revisions to the marriage-plots of earlier fiction, demands readers participate in a figurative process of architectural and textual violation and deconstruction, and it encourages a critique of a system that pits the classes against each other.

Ironically resolved in the same sort of country inn that Basil and his sister visited in his bachelor days, the novel only appears to reestablish a social landscape where the lower classes are happy to sacrifice their time and energy to help an aristocrat, where the landed gentry can idle away their days on their country estates, and where ones life is exempt from the market forces of commerce and interest. Widowed and leaving no offspring, Basil's life and the novel's conclusion is, if anything, a disruption of the aristocratic status quo. With the closing narrative conceit that Basil has been goaded into selling his private journal to a public audience after his father's death, the novel plays out the cheap hotel's failed promise of a temporary lodging in private space on multiple levels. Rather than reproduce the private domesticity of its literary forebears, *Basil*'s narrative structure and mechanics of suspense instead converts private matters into

[43] See Levine 2, Daly 37.

moments for public speculation and consumption. By closing on an explanation of the texts' production, the final pages of *Basil* implicate the reader in the novel's vigorously spatialized account of mid-century versions of commodification and voyeurism (perhaps best exemplified by the Great Exhibition). The spatial mediation of suspense not only invites readers to speculate what is hidden behind various architectural and textual partitions, it also suggests the ways in which the same sort of financial speculation that promoted the expansion of rail travel and the rise of the hotel also led to the encroaching commodification of aristocratic private life that is realized in Collins's later works, and in *The Haunted Hotel* in particular.

However, if the spatial politics of *Basil* shed light on the antagonisms engendered in this process of commodification, then *The Haunted Hotel* deploys the permeable boundaries of the hotel to explore the classing of sensation fiction, and thus Collins's body of work, as a lower form of art. Depicting an evolving Victorian commercial landscape where tensions between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie are subsumed by a shared drive to profit, *The Haunted Hotel* examines the conversion of class distinction from a matter of birth to one of business acumen as it satirizes the inverted profit-driven hierarchy of the late-Victorian literary market. This was a market not unlike our own, where blockbusters are assumed to be lowbrow and true "art" might make no money at all. Highlighting his body of work's own artistic devaluation in light of its identification with sensation and popular fiction, in *The Haunted Hotel* Collins revises *Basil*'s plot and suspenseful drive to knowledge and instead produces a narrative structure and plotted pursuit of profit that ironizes the perceived intellectual shallowness of popular fiction.

Spectral Sensation and the Death of Suspense in *The Haunted Hotel*

Published in six monthly installments in the magazine *Belgravia* from June until November 1878 and only a little more than a hundred pages long,[44] *The Haunted Hotel: A Mystery in Modern Venice* tells the somewhat convoluted story of the marriage, death, and afterlife of the British Lord Montbarry; a man who jilts his cousin Agnes to marry the Italian adventuress the Countess Narona and pays for it with his life. Pairing the historical backdrop of a Medici poison plot with the more topical narratives of insurance fraud and real estate speculation, Collins's novella revolves around several subplots: the mystery of Montbarry's suspicious death in a Venetian palace; the renovation of that palace into a luxury hotel by an investment firm affiliated with his youngest brother Henry Westwick; the haunting of Montbarry's family while on a trip to the hotel; and the subsequent revelation that the Countess murdered her husband and hid his corpse within a secret compartment between the hotel's first and second stories.

Like all of Collins's writing after 1870, *The Haunted Hotel* has received sparse critical attention due in large part to what critics have historically characterized as a deterioration in the complexity and quality of Collins's later works. It is only in the last decade that scholars have begun to reassess the novella. New approaches to *The Haunted Hotel* appreciate its revision of Gothic literary aesthetics, its allegorical portrayal of the demise of an atavistic aristocracy in order to make way for its more entrepreneurial successors, and its refurbishment of a privately held, ancestral space into a publicly owned palace of consumption and socialization.[45] What has been generally overlooked by this new scholarship are the ways in which these elements are revisions of *Basil's* plot

[44] For more on the publishing history of *The Haunted Hotel* see Page and Sasaki.
[45] For recent scholarship on *The Haunted Hotel*, see Constantini, Talairach-Vielmas, Salotto, Parker, Lynn, and Smith.

and its thematic concerns. Triangulated around the figures of the fair and angelic heroine, the dark and seductive villainess, and the smitten youngest son, *The Haunted Hotel* recycles *Basil*'s Clara, Margaret, and Basil in Agnes Lockwood, the Countess Narona, and Henry Westwick but reconfigures their romantic desires and class relations. In recasting the characters as members by blood or marriage of the same aristocratic family, Collins tempers the class conflict of *Basil* in favor of a competition within the upper class between those members that rely on inherited wealth versus those who have embraced the capitalism and commerce of the middle class readership that the novella's publisher *Belgravia* sought to capture.[46]

Beyond defusing the class dynamics that motivate *Basil*'s plot, Collins updates his heroes and villains to suit late-century Victorian attitudes and anxieties, reversing their alliances so that the idle members of the aristocracy (represented by Lord Mountbarry and the Countess Narona) are cast as the antagonists to an industrious stand-in for the bourgeoisie (Henry Westwick). Having eschewed Basil's sentimental attitudes towards love and filial honor—attitudes best fitted to the historical romance left to molder on Basil's desk—Henry Westwick embraces the cold calculations of figures like Mr. Sherwin and Mannion. He nonchalantly invests in the renovation of the Palace Hotel mere days after his eldest brother's death and convinces his extended family to spend a honeymoon there a couple months later, all the while courting his deceased brother's former fiancée, Agnes. In a marked departure from Basil's father's views on commerce, Agnes notes that, "[Henry's] income as a younger son stood in need...of all the additions that he could make to it by successful speculation" (51), indicating a shift from the

[46] For more on *Belgravia*'s publishing history, see Gabriele, Cooke.

aristocracy's resistance to the commercial practices of the bourgeoisie to a full endorsement of them. With a quarter of a century between them, *The Haunted Hotel* dispels Basil's father's obsession with ancestry and nobility for an aristocracy openly invested in business acumen and novelty. The head of the family is surprisingly disposable—quite literally given the decapitation of Montbarry—so long as there is a more savvy and profitable heir to take his place.

Like his characters, Collins updates the hotel at the center of this later work to reflect the consumer culture of the late 1870s and the growing trend of reconstructing Continental palaces as luxury resorts (Figure 2.5).[47] Whereas *Basil*'s suburban hotel embodies the permeability of social boundaries and represents the relationship between the rise of rail travel and the development of early hotels as (seemingly) private and/or convenient alternatives to coaching inns, the Palace Hotel reorders those boundaries entirely and represents the evolution of hotels into destinations of their own. Notably leaving the hotel's outer Palladian shell left intact, the interior of the former Venetian palace is "almost rebuilt" after the Lord's death:

> The vast saloons were partitioned off into 'apartments' containing three or four rooms each. The broad corridors in the upper regions afforded spare space enough for rows of little bedchambers, devoted to servants and to travellers with limited means. Nothing was spared but the solid floors and the finely-carved ceilings…As for the once-desolate and disused ground floor of the building, it was now transformed, by means of splendid dining-rooms, reception-rooms, billiard-rooms, and smoking rooms. (59)

The only spaces left untouched by the renovations, preserved for their luxury and attractive decorations, are Montbarry and the Baron Rivar's former apartments, now

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[47] Pevsner 179. For example, The Hotel Danieli, Venice—originally the Palazzo Dandalo—was converted into a hotel in 1824 and later renovated in the 1890s to accommodate modern innovations in lighting, plumbing, and heating; it remains a luxury hotel today. Charles Dickens was reportedly a guest at the hotel, which suggests that it may have served as the inspiration for The Palace Hotel of Collins's *The Haunted Hotel.*

renumbered fourteen and thirty-eight and classed as the most desirable of all of the hotel's accommodations. With the rest of the palace divided up into a variety of rooms designed to appeal to guests of almost every economic level, what were once the privileged and private spaces of Montbarry and the Baron are now available to anyone with the money to pay for them. And, as the novella makes clear, the types of guests fitting that qualification are not exclusively of the same noble pedigree of the Westwick clan. Theater owners, artists, and American tourists all inhabit the hotel and mingle in its coffee and dining rooms, even if their own private rooms might vary in size or amenities. While the line between guests and servants or staff remains clear, the boundary between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie that is only tacitly erased by the anonymity of the railway hotel is openly obliterated by public leisure spaces that cater to capital over class.

Yet, for all of its refurbishments, the Palace Hotel is as permeable a space as the hotel in *Basil*. Agnes, hearing boots being thrown into the hallway on the floor above her, complains of "that barbarous disregard of the comfort of others which is observable in humanity when it inhabits a hotel" (94), and Henry finds that the hotel's manager is never quite far enough out of earshot. What is different in Collins's portrayal of this hotel is that the same type of sensory data that accosts Basil and definitively proves his wife's infidelity is only selectively and subjectively experienced in *The Haunted Hotel*; its legibility demands interpretation and confirmation. No longer just sounds carrying through walls, a range of overwhelmingly negative and supernatural sensations disturb each member of the dead Montbarry's family during their nights in the hotel—sensations that are emotional and physical and imperceptible to anyone besides themselves.

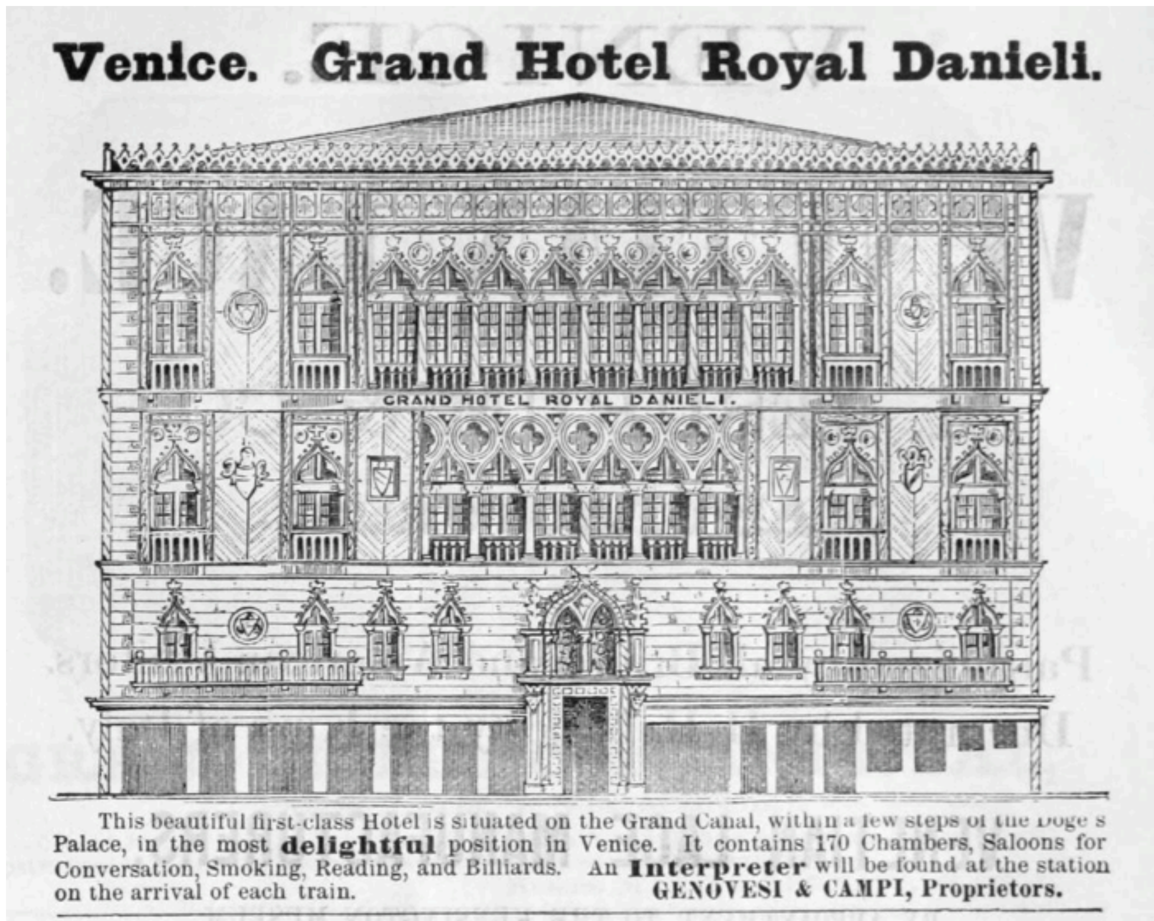

Figure 2.5: Hotel Danieli Venice Advertisement. 1885. Newsprint. *Harper's hand-book for travellers in Europe and the east*. Compiled by W. Pembroke Fetridge, Harper & Brothers, 1885. Wikimedia Commons.

In this narrative space, suspense is not produced through the boundaries between seeing and hearing, between conscious and unconscious, between textual partitions and the drive to knowledge. Instead, suspense is produced in the tension between readers' and the Westwicks' perceptions of haunting and other characters' utter disbelief in these experiences. On a more meta-textual level suspenseful tension is produced by a plot consisting of blatant foreshadowing, a red herring, the willful disavowal of a confession, and a resistance to closure, or more succinctly, a plot that appears to lose interest in its own mystery. What ultimately becomes suspenseful in *The Haunted Hotel* is the question

of whether the Westwick clan will accept the solution to the mystery that is never hidden from them, or us as readers.

Initially, the mystery of *The Haunted Hotel* appears to be the unexplained disappearance of Ferrari, Montbarry and the Countess's Italian courier. But, as becomes increasingly clear via the Westwick's haunting in the palace-cum-hotel, the characters' of *The Haunted Hotel*'s efforts to discover the fate of Ferrari is a misreading of the mystery in Venice. In the sort of bait-and-switch that converts a Venetian castle into a modern hotel, and which results in an ill Ferrari impersonating the murdered Montbarry and dying under his name, Collins maneuvers his protagonists, and by extension the reader, from being invested in Ferrari's disappearance to forgetting his absence altogether, and later, from desiring an affirmation of the countess's role in her husband's death to accepting Henry and Agnes's marriage as a more satisfying outcome. In the case of the narrative and its contents, the evidence of what becomes the primary mystery (the plot against Montbarry) is not withheld. It is not hidden on the other side of the wall, or partitioned from the rest of the text. It is presented in various forms that only demand to be read correctly.

Each of the novella's six, monthly installments contains one or more clues consistently misinterpreted or utterly dismissed by its characters. Ranging from the physical and sensorial to the architectural and textual, these clues to the mystery include such items as: letters and a check to Mrs. Ferrari that she assumes are proof of murder and blood money; an insurance investigation report that fails to discover anything suspicious about Montbarry's unexpected death shortly after Ferrari's disappearance, despite his brother-in-law's chemical-burned hands; a hotel room that appears to be

sound to everyone outside of the Westwick clan; a play detailing a grisly murder; and a severed head and its gold teeth. Juxtaposing these clues, a striking equation is drawn between evidence of the body and evidence of texts, where, as the sections taking place in the hotel demonstrate, the body and its senses are equally as, if not more, authoritative than any document purports to be, despite how commercially important it is that this physical, sensory data is dismissed.

Henry Westwick, first to visit hotel and first of his relatives to be lodged in his deceased brother's former bedroom, is disturbed by sleeplessness, depression, and a loss of appetite. When the next member of the family, Montbarry's sister Mrs. Norburry arrives, she too is booked in his former room and suffers from terrible nightmares and tortured nerves. A third member of the family, theater producer and brother Francis Westwick, is so overcome by a noxious smell in the room, undetectable to everyone around him, that he cannot spend the night. In each case, when the siblings learn the history of the room their first impulse is to quell any feelings of superstition. Demonstrating a preference for good business sense over one's own senses, the Lord's siblings are inclined to ignore their experiences of haunting and the grim possibility that their brother's death was not what it seemed in order to preserve the reputation of the hotel.

The Westwicks' repeated refusal to recognize the supernatural nature of their experiences constitutes the suspense of the novella and leads to the climax of the story. Having arranged for Agnes to also stay in Montbarry's former bedroom, the Countess gains entry by hiding in a large wardrobe. When Agnes wakes in the middle of the night to an extinguished candle and total darkness, she discovers the Countess rigid with fear in

a chair beside her bed. Agnes attempts to rouse and confront her only to be arrested by the vision of a ghastly, decayed and decapitated head, with "Thin remains of a discoloured moustache and whiskers, hanging over the upper lip, and over the hollows where the cheeks had once been," and "bluish lips, parted in a fixed grin" descending upon her from the ceiling (95). Faced with this terrible vision she is overwhelmed and loses consciousness; she awakens the next morning only to discover that the eldest remaining Westwick brother and new Lord Montbarry is convinced her experience was only a dream, despite the countess's own version of events and the discovery of a rotted severed head in a hidden compartment located between the ceiling of Agnes's room and the floor of the room above.

This consistent dismissal of the Westwick clan's experiences in the former Lord's bedroom is in keeping with attitudes of the hotel's management and its patrons. Guests unrelated to Montbarry uniformly find the haunted room the most comfortable they have ever stayed in, with one couple adding nights to their vacation to take advantage of the repose it offers. When Henry initially mentions his experience to friends he is overheard by the manager who invites guests to perform a type of spatial reading and, "judge for themselves whether Mr. Westwick's bedroom was to blame for Mr. Westwick's sleepless nights" (68). Similarly, when Francis Westwick is overwhelmed by a noxious smell in the room, another guest suggests he should seek out a doctor for whatever is "wrong, very wrong" with his nose and trust the word of a physician over his own senses (73). Still, with word of the siblings' experiences "passing from mouth to mouth" (71), the manager is faced with only one option to prevent the hotel's haunting from becoming a matter of public opinion; he orders a new number plate for the door and changes the

room's number from 14 to 13A in an attempt to rewrite its past. In doing so, he converts the actual space of the hotel into a text whose legibility is at odds with its literal and figurative sensationalism and highlights a nose-thumbing narrative strategy in which profit and public opinion is courted to the detriment of any narrative solution or subjective reality.

In a departure from the mechanics of suspense in *Basil*, the protagonists and reader are no longer equally invested in discovering the truth behind the renovated walls of the Palace Hotel. Counteracting the narrative momentum, a momentum driven by the desire to discover an answer to the mystery of whether the room is haunted by a murdered Lord Montbarry, is the disinterest of those who should be most invested in the truth. Although the truth is provided in the form of a confessional play composed by the Countess, in what is a deeply unsatisfying conclusion to *The Haunted Hotel*, Henry Westwick and his elder brother fail to finish reading it before they toss it into the fire and shrug their shoulders about never having liked Montbarry in the first place.

Compelled to write in the hopes of making a second profit from her marriage after her brother fritters away Montbarry's life insurance payout, the Countess literally works herself to death producing a dramatized account of her loveless marriage and murderous plot against her husband. Identifying the countess as a stand-in for Collins's own efforts to situate himself alongside and against popular fiction, Heller persuasively argues that the countess's desperate sally into writing for money "is a grim commentary on the critical reception of the Victorian sensation writer" (167). However, in limiting her focus to the countess and what she identifies as the "female gothic" trope in Collins's writing, Heller risks rendering his engagement with the Victorian literary market as resigned

acceptance rather than the nuanced critique that *The Haunted Hotel* suggests, leading her to claim that, "Collins' later works often seem to have been written as if he had his by-now securely lowbrow status in mind" (165). I argue that closer inspections of the various literal and architectural texts that compose the narrative reveal a more nuanced response to the demise of the sensation genre rather than an acceptance of its artistic or political insignificance.

Returning to the architectonics of the hotel for its climax and suspense, *The Haunted Hotel* builds upon *Basil*'s dramatization of the hierarchical binaries of bourgeoisie vs. aristocracy; however, it complicates this portrait of society with a shift in focus to the related, and equally contentious, divisions within Victorian literary culture. The novella allegorizes the distinctions between popular fiction and high art, between sensation and reason. As Daly explains, "the sensation novel was thought to conjure up a corporeal rather than a cerebral response in the reader" (40). Both he and Hammond identify sensation fiction's affiliation with the railway, the latter noting "There was an increasing sense that while railway reading [more often than not sensation fiction] wasn't art, it was entertainment, and of a kind that signaled its reader was 'not at home'" (74). Citing another reason for the devaluation of sensation fiction, Cvetkovich explains "The sensation novel's lack of artistic value was attributed to its production by an industry concerned only with economic value" (18). Taken together, these scholars argue that sensation fiction came to be considered less than art because of its association with the literal sensations of the body, its production of a sense of traveling, and its commercialism.

Collins's *The Haunted Hotel* takes up all three associations and plays them against each other to satirize the devaluation of the genre he helped form. Its narrative emphasizes the validity of sensations as an interpretive framework, one capable of exhuming the socioeconomic forces that gave rise to the hotel, only to dismiss them in the name of that same structure's profit. By setting his tale in a social and architectural landscape that values leisure and commerce, Collins ironically pits sensation fiction against the consumerism that ultimately tarnished its reputation. For Henry and the new Lord Montbarry to accept the sensory evidence of their brother's murder would force them to both risk their business and acknowledge that their commercial successes were only made possible through the expiation of an ancestral order. For this reason the only "use" the Westwick clan can find for the Countess's play—also titled "The Haunted Hotel" and composed of the same sensational narrative as Collins's novella—is to treat it like trash and rekindle the fire in a chilly hotel room.

In addition to reflecting real trends in hotel construction and the development of a leisure economy, the renovation of a medieval Italian palace into a modern English hotel is highly suggestive on the level of narrative form and plays out the idea of renovation on multiple levels. It evokes James's observations about Italy as the original home of English Gothic horror, a home that Collins's relocates to London in his earlier fiction and restores to the Continent his later novels. This move points to *The Haunted Hotel*'s broader meditation on the genre he helped establish. Furthermore, in situating a geothic tale inside of a preserved Palladian exterior, Collins winks at the instability of generic boundaries and points to the Victorians' own tendency to blend aesthetic style across material and artistic forms to suit their desires.

Unlike *Basil*, *The Haunted Hotel* ends in the happy marriage of its protagonists, Henry and Agnes. Likewise, the burning of the Countess's play in the final chapter reverses Basil's decision to make public his family drama for the edification of a broad audience. But despite its seemingly conservative ending, the postscript to *The Haunted Hotel* gives sensation and its genre the last word. Returned to London, Henry brings the false teeth of the severed head found in the compartment above Agnes's room to the deceased Montbarry's dentist and confirms that he and his family's senses were not "sheer delusions." Closing the novel with a question he has already answered, Collins writes: "Is there no explanation of the mystery of The Haunted Hotel? Ask yourself if there is any explanation of the mystery of your own life and death.—Farewell." Rather than end with a reasoned examination of the novella's various textual clues, Collins directs his reader back to their own corporeality and implies that this should provide answer enough.

Although different in application, both *Basil* and *The Haunted Hotel* rely on architecturally mediated senses as a mode of suspense and source of formal innovation. In *Basil* the architectural division of hearing and seeing is deployed strategically to heighten narrative tension and becomes internalized in a series of textual partitions that anticipate the publishing structure of the serialized sensation novel. In *The Haunted Hotel* suspense is generated through a failure to acknowledge the sensory proof of the Palace Hotel's violent past. Its emphasis on the false evaluation of sensation in this commercial venue ironizes the late-Victorian devaluation of sensation fiction. For both novels, the hotel setting is key; not only does its architectural permeability and publicity produce the narrative conditions for the revelations that resolve suspense, it also serve as potent

symbol of economic expansion and consumption. As the architectural form of the hotel evolves, so does Collins's relationship to sensation fiction. In setting his narratives in this over-determined space, Collins is able to combine a thematic examination of Victorian class politics with generic experimentations that first anticipate the sensation form, and later, assess its value.

Ultimately, this chapter addressed how one author responded to an evolving cultural and built environment. The next examines how multiple authors respond to the same environment, the mid-nineteenth century courthouse. In addition to considering the social implications of architectural evolution, the following chapter will explore literary engagements with an architectural type's emergent geographies. Although it too is attentive to the lived experience of built space, it will shift its focus from sensation to affect, from hearing to feeling, and from a suspenseful genre to an overtly political one.

CHAPTER 3

PARTITIONS, PERFORMANCE, AND THE POWER OF AFFECT: THE DEAD FAINT IN THE COURTHOUSES OF GASKELL, ELIOT, AND YONGE

Just Feelings

If we believe the many Victorian novels that feature them as settings, courtrooms and courthouses were universally uncomfortable spaces. This is surprising given that by the middle of the nineteenth century "virtually every building used to stage trials in England was rebuilt or at least substantially altered" (Graham 3), at least 500 new provincial courts were established, and plans for London's palatial Royal Courts of Justice were underway.[48] Whether newly constructed or a holdover from a previous century, the British courts were spaces meant to evoke a particular set of feelings: fealty, obedience, discipline, rationality, and justice. Yet as is consistently borne out by a range of novels from the nineteenth century, courts also evoke a different set of feelings. For example, Dickens's Pickwick feels agitated when he realizes how many spectators are present for his breech of promise trial (*The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* 73), and Trollope's narrator catalogues the hard, painful benches and narrow spaces of the courthouse of *Phineas Redux*, and the shame of being viewed a "disagreeable excrescence on the officialities of the work at hand" (184-7). While intended as symbols for the order and the power of the law, what we discover when we look more closely at nineteenth-century courthouse narratives is the consistency with which these spaces are characterized by their disorder—for the uncontrolled physical and affective responses

[48] For an exhaustive history of the development of the architecture of the courthouse, see Clare Graham, *Ordering Law: The Architectural and Social History of the English Law Court to 1914*.

they induce. Defendants, witnesses, and spectators are regularly described as moaning, blushing, and struggling to maintain control over their bodies and equilibrium.

This chapter argues that these affective responses illuminate the political implications of nineteenth-century courthouse architecture, as well as provide a potential point of rupture within the dominant cultural narratives that produced these legal structures. It examines, in particular, one courthouse affect that was both a Victorian literary trope and real-life cultural script: the dead faint.[49] Focusing primarily on Mary's loss of consciousness after providing witness testimony in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and this episode's relationship to the novel's critique of the injustices of industrialization and its deleterious effects on early nineteenth-century communities, this chapter also addresses George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1858) and Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Trial* (1864). In doing so, it examines how the courtroom faint's repeated appearance across these three texts offers insights into the shifting social, legal, and economic landscape of Victorian culture.

While Mary Barton, Hetty Sorrel, and Aubrey May—a seamstress caught between lovers, a farmer's niece guilty of infanticide, and a pampered youngest son of a sprawling middle-class family—appear to have little in common, this chapter posits that their shared act of fainting in anticipation or response to the verdict of a murder trial is transformative at the level of character and form. More than a symbolic death and rebirth, the dead faint displaces the verdict as both a narrative and ethical resolution, as it forcefully translates the privileged rhetoric of the law into the physical registers of affect.

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[49] Two examples of different texts that feature a character fainting in court include Scott's *The Heart of the Midlothian* and Forster's *A Passage to India*. For more on the dead faint, or swoon, as a Victorian literary trope, see Thorpe. For an examination of the role fainting played in Victorian sexual assault trials and its status as a cultural script, see Bates.

Foregrounding the body, it draws attention to the architectural structures of the court—the railings, partitions, and separate rooms and passageways—that contain and reorder the communities invested in the trials, as well as highlight the forced adversarial positions in which loved ones are placed by the increasingly divided courtroom geography. Ultimately, I argue that a comparative reading of the fainting scenes of these politically disparate novels reveals the court as both a product and emblem of the specializing and alienating forces of industrialization and demonstrates that its structural violence extends beyond the trial, resulting in the restructuring family life and policing of gender roles.

For obvious reasons, the bulk of literary studies of trial narratives have historically focused on the linguistic elements of the trial, drawing connections between the rhetorical demands of the law and parallel developments in realism and the novel.[50] In particular, contemporary scholarship on Victorian trial narratives emphasizes the coevolution of legal and narrative forms. Jonathan Grossman argues that, “The rise of the alibi marked a crucial public recognition that the novelistic art of narrating intersected with the court” (24). Jan-Melissa Schramm argues that the fictional representation of trials functioned as a self-reflexive claim for literature’s “compassionate and equitable forum for the representation of material repressed or excluded by the law” and potential as a “supplement to the legal lexicon” (491). And Susan Sage Heinzelman suggests that the narrative development of free indirect speech was in part related to concurrent developments in the law that prioritized motive (230). However, this critical focus on the rhetorical elements of the legal trial elides the materiality of the space of the courthouse.

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[50] The most cited of these comparisons being Ian Watt’s work on the rise of the novel. He points to concurrent developments in individualism and complex court systems and connects the evolution of narrative realism to the epistemological demands of trials by jury.

Identifying the nineteenth-century courthouse as the stagecraft of state power and a concretization of its socioeconomic conditions, this chapter examines how the courthouse's form gives rise to a melodramatic mode in which affect and gesture provide commentary on these conditions. Given the court's function as the arbiter of guilt and innocence, it is only natural that trial scenes lend themselves to what Peter Brooks defines as the "intense emotional and ethical drama based on the manichaeistic struggle of good and evil" (12). Nevertheless, despite scholarship's comparison of legal proceedings to theater and courtroom to stage, the connection between the theatrical spatiality of the courthouse and the resultant melodramatic affects remains understudied. As Elaine Hadley explains in her survey of melodrama's critical function in Victorian culture, in the melodramatic mode "the body spoke…for those individuals without a sanctioned public voice" (107). Affect—a physical expression of an emotional response—is the form through which the body speaks;[51] one that I suggest can operate as a mode of critique, especially when enacted within a venue that polices speech through procedure and protocol. And although the immediacy implied by "affect" may at first blush appear antithetical to the implied scripting of melodrama, as a culturally determined physiological and emotive response to "forces or intensities," affect can be both authentic and melodramatic.

Neither the idle "fainting form" that George Eliot satirizes in her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," nor an example of a misogynistic motif that casts its

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[51] Definitions of affect vary widely across disciplines. In the introduction to their field defining anthology, Gregory J. Seigworth & Melissa Gregg illustrate the difficulty of defining affect, but they suggest that it is a product of 'an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities' (1), and is synonymous with '*forces of encounter*' (2). For my study of the representation of affect within Victorian literature, I draw upon Ann Cvetkovich's definition of affect as a 'bodily sensation' (24).

(typically) female sufferers as alternatively weak or manipulative,[52] the courtroom faints in the three novels addressed in this chapter are complex and specific condensations of their author's artistic and political preoccupations. Set within three different decades in the long nineteenth-century, the law courts fictionalized in each novel are embodiments of those periods' sociolegal landscape and as such, the narrative function and critical import of each fainting episode varies accordingly. With the exception of the following section, which traces the development of the courthouse as an architectural form, each section of this chapter focuses upon one of the three novels addressed. The first and longest examines Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* and argues that Gaskell's novel—set just as the construction of purpose-built courthouses was reaching its peak—connects the alienating forces of the highly segregated courtroom geography with industrialization's restructuring of communal and familial relations and disruption of pastoral and organic social networks, and critiques the punitive model of legal justice in favor of a model of Christian forgiveness. The next reads George Eliot's *Adam Bede* as, in part, a response to Gaskell's novel. I argue that Eliot's novel, set several decades before Gaskell's own, recuperates the communal ties that are restructured in the courtrooms of *Mary Barton* and proposes an alternative system of justice outside of legal and religious models, maintained through affective ties. This chapter then concludes with a brief reading of Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Trial*—whose plot is set twenty years after *Mary Barton*—in which I consider the influence of the mid-century cultural turn towards bourgeois family life and the ideology of separate spheres on that period's

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[52] Thorpe explains that within Victorian fiction, "The traditional swooning woman appears in two guises, one active and one passive, i.e., one an agent of action and the other an object. The passive woman faints out of fear, strain, or out of the sheer over-refinement of her sensibility. On the other hand the active woman uses the swoon as a weapon, out of guile and manipulative action" (106).

alterations in courthouse design and on Yonge's family-centric novel, as well as Yonge's recasting of courthouse affect as a measure of one's conformity to these values.

Industrialization and the Invention of the Courthouse

The first recorded indoor trials of English common law date back to the Norman castles of the thirteenth century; however, the purpose-built courthouse did not develop into a discrete architectural form until the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Before this time, any public space with enough capacity could be used to host trials; buildings dedicated solely to hosting the operations of the law were exceedingly rare (with the most notable exception being Old Bailey).[53] Despite the demands of seventeenth and eighteenth-century reformers for a new type of court, one that was suited to popular ideals of judicial independence and the rule of law (Graham 60), it was not until the major legal, cultural, and economic shifts that took place in the decades surrounding Queen Victoria's accession of the throne that architects could, as legal historian Linda Mulcahy puts it, "carve out a distinctive role for law in the Victorian state" ("Architectural Precedent" 532). While historians differ over the apex of this period of refurbishment and reinvention,[54] by any account, the space that we imagine when we think of the courthouse was born out of the nineteenth century and has seen few changes in its design since that era. But not all Victorian courts were the same, and courthouse structures varied according to the types of trials they hosted. Because this

[53] London and the adjoining county of Middlesex were exempt from the main assize system and held trials year round at the courts adjacent to Newgate Prison known as Old Bailey. With its first sessions house constructed in sixteenth century, the courts at Old Bailey have been rebuilt several times, especially in response to fears about the spread of "gaol fever" (Graham 52-3).
[54] Graham cites the period between 1790 and 1840 as, "an intense period of development" (3), while David Brownlee claims that, "The discussion of the architectural component of law reform began in earnest in the 1830s" (52).

chapter addresses novels that specifically feature assize trials, I provide in the following a history of the architectural development of the British courts of assize.

Originating with the birth of common law in the thirteenth century and in use until abolished by the Courts Act of 1971, the assizes were a signature feature of the English legal system and an established rhythm of nineteenth-century life. A clever conservation of resources, they marked the twice-yearly occasion wherein the judges of the common-law courts at Westminster would travel throughout the circuits that organized the country in order to adjudicate the complicated civil cases and serious criminal trials that could not be addressed by local magistrates at the quarter sessions. More than just the backbone of local legal calendars, they were also a source of seasonal entertainment, with balls and dinners held in honor of the visiting judges and their retinue of clerks, and vast crowds traveling from surrounding regions to witness the proceedings.

In the thirteenth century and early days of common law, the assizes were held in Norman castles, convenient symbols of the consolidated power of the state. It was only in the sixteenth century that newly constructed public halls began to replace decrepit castles as a shared space for important community gatherings. These multi-purpose venues continued to host assizes until the end of the eighteenth century, when a combination of factors rendered the public hall untenable as a trial venue. The period's rapid population growth; mass migrations of peoples from rural, agricultural regions to urban manufacturing ones; and rising crime rates and numbers of triable offenses (among other things) all contributed to an overtaxed assize calendar and necessitated the construction

of permanent courts.[55] At the same time, conditions were now favorable for the professionalization of the law and for newly moneyed industrialists to make their mark on the legal landscape and share in its influence on English culture. Whereas the aforementioned demographic developments warranted the invention of the purpose-built courthouse, the social advancements connected to the professionalization of the law and the advent of industrialization determined their form.

Colloquially termed the "lawyerization" of the court, the professionalization of the law began in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries and came to full fruition with the nineteenth century's expansion of the middle class. Among other things, it granted prosecutors and defense counsel increasingly important roles in nineteenth-century trials and contributed to what could be characterized as the constant trend towards the specialization and division of trial and court space. Of particular importance was an 1836 law that allowed defense counsel to summarize on the defendants' behalf, thereby converting what was previously a primarily prosecutorial trial into an adversarial one. As architectural historian Clare Graham explains, "The metaphor of the trial as drama must be as old as the trial itself, but the development of adversarial procedure gave it a new twist…the time had come for the lawyers to move to the centre stage" (Graham 127). This move was effected architecturally. In the previous centuries' public halls, judges and juries were often forced to retire to nearby inns and pubs, lawyers for the prosecution and defense shared a single table, and the viewing public was either crowded in at all sides or wandered in and out of trials at their leisure. The nineteenth-century courthouse was both more accommodating and more strictly partitioned. With a

[55] For a comprehensive history of the evolution of the English legal code in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Sir Leon Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law and its Administration from 1750*, v.1.

newfound sense of their significance to the practice of the law, lawyers and clerks began to demand their own designated areas within the court (Graham 148). As a result, purpose-built courthouses were in general much large than the public halls that preceded them and were designed to include dedicated legal offices and retiring rooms in an outer ring surrounding a central courtroom (Fig. 3.1). Separate circulation routes within this concentric design prevented the different categories of trial participants (lawyers, witnesses, and defendants) from interacting with the public and each other until the trial (Graham 3). The large table that barristers and lawyers had shared on the floor of the court was reduced in size to allow more space for legal counsel to present their case in the center of the room, commanding the attention of all present. The entire effect of this design was of a backstage and front stage, placing lawyers in the proverbial limelight (Graham 127).

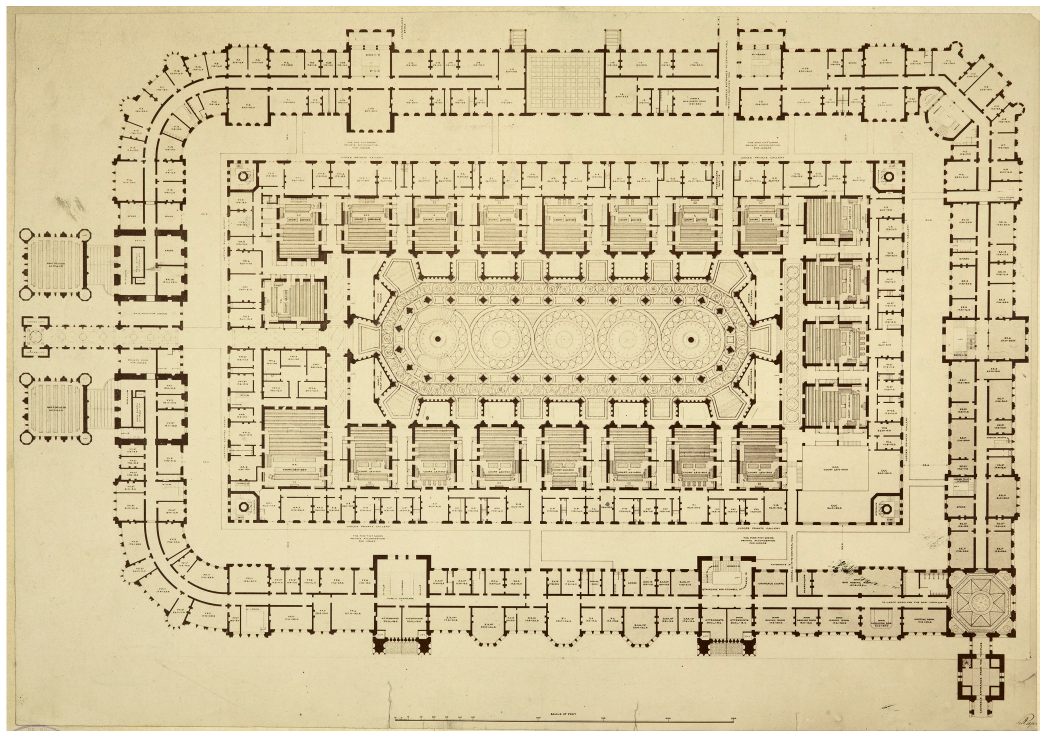

Figure 3.1: John Raphael Braddon, *Competition Design, Royal Courts of Justice*. Drawing. 1866. Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

Another example of the increased influence of lawyers can be found in the practice of confining the jury to the structure of the jury box. Although trial-by-jury dates back to 1215, the jury box was only introduced in the eighteenth century. Previous to this period the jury would "mingle with spectators" and "gather evidence" about the case (Mulcahy "Architects of Justice" 392-3). On one level, this sudden, literal, rise in stature and division from the crowd points to a broader cultural shift towards the dispassionate rationalism and liberalism of Enlightenment thought. On another, the enclosure of the jury offers a reflection of the consolidation of power in middle-class professionals. Coinciding with increased prominence of barristers in contest with the patriarchal authority of the judge, the jury box's fixed position of importance anticipated the expanded enfranchisement of the Reform Acts and the attending Chartist agitations of the following century. Parallel to the court's lawyers and barristers and situated between the judge and spectators, the jury box served as a physical embodiment of an emergent middle class.

The complexity of these increasingly specialized allocations of space and the enormity of the structures they ultimately required, would have made the construction of the first purpose-built assize courts' too expensive a public undertaking were it not for the financial support of factory owners and other moneyed elites who feared the sort of civil unrest documented in Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. Alexander Waterhouse's Manchester Assize Courts—a structure iconic for its Neo-Gothic exterior and its perfection of the centripetal courthouse design—was built after the publication of Gaskell's novel and after the strikes and riots fomented by the Reform Bill struggles of 1831-2 and economic

downturn of the late 1830s and early 1840s (Fig. 3.2).[56] Given his family connections to the manufacturing of cotton and his partial education in Manchester, legal historian Linda Mulcahy argues that it is unlikely that Waterhouse's design would have been untouched by the political turmoil that preceded its construction ("Architectural Precedent" 525-49). She posits that, "fears of civil unrest must have made expenditure on symbols of law particularly attractive to the ruling elites" ("Architectural Precedent" 533). Ultimately, Mulcahy suggests that the rapid expansion in urban courthouse construction that took place during the first decades of the nineteenth century should be considered a product of industrialists' efforts to shift the public's attention away from the privations of their laborers towards a validation of industrialization's "liberation of the individual from feudalism" ("Architectural Precedent" 526). I would add that this effort was perhaps ironic when we consider that, following Waterhouse's model, many mid and late-century courthouses featured Neo-Gothic edifices, such as George Edmund Street's New Law Courts (Fig. 3.3).[57]

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[56] For more on the import of Waterhouse's Manchester Assize Courts see Pevsner 57-8, and Muthesius 182-3.

[57] For more on the history of the Royal Courts of Justice, see David Browlee's *The Law Courts: The Architecture of George Edmund Street*.

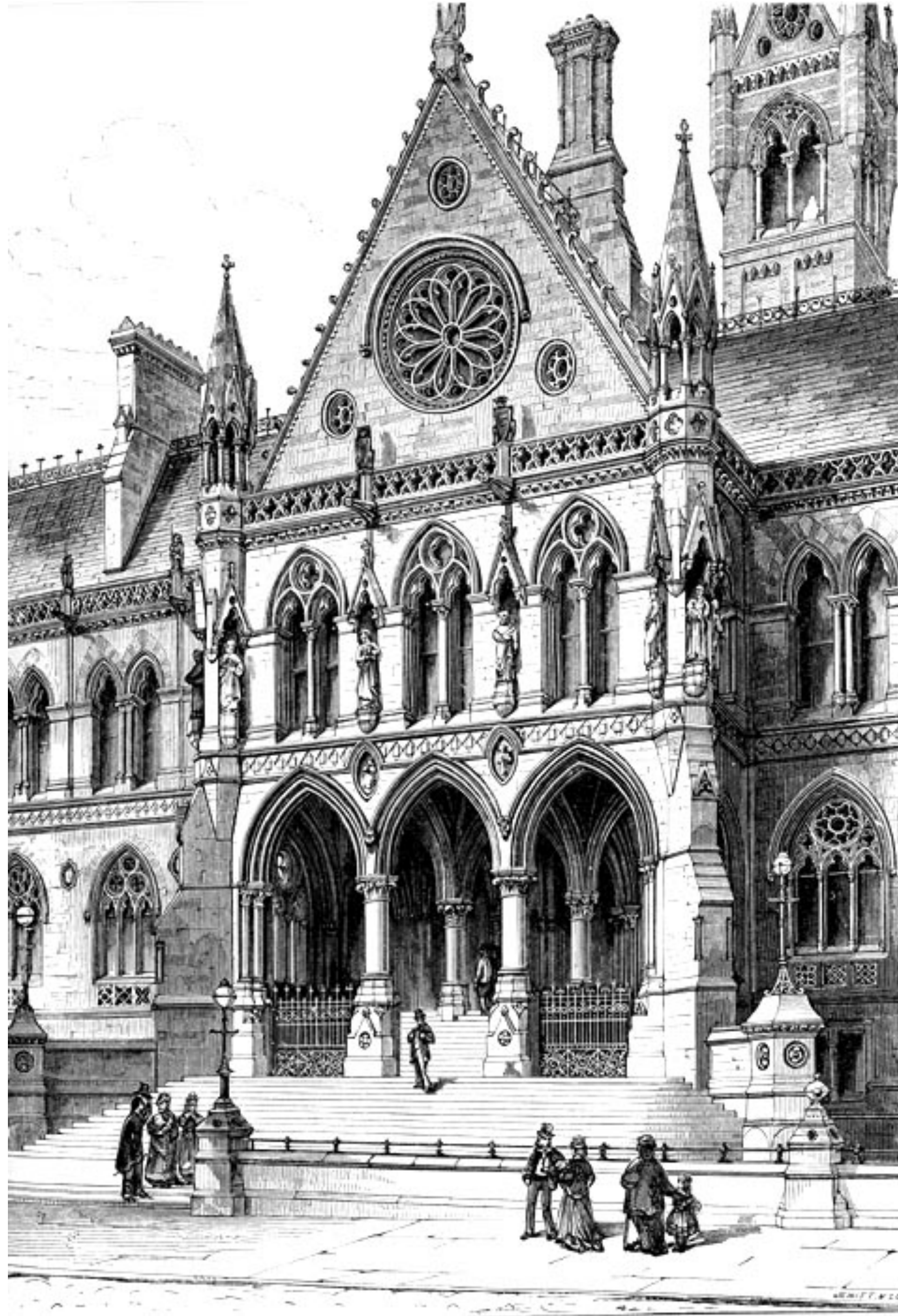

Figure 3.2: Charles Lock Eastlake, *Engraving of Manchester Assize Courts*. 1872. *Victorian Web*.

Figure 3.3: *G. E. Street's Law Courts ("The Royal Courts of Justice")*. Photograph. *Victorian Web*.

But even without the purpose-built courthouse's fiscal ties to factory owners, its interior structure is still marked by the nineteenth century's industrial ethos. Graham directly connects the development of the courthouse as a distinct architectural type with the changing conception of time as a measurable commodity to be used productively; she argues that as trial procedures became increasingly complex and the adversarial model drew out the length of individual trials, purpose-built courts became necessary to maintaining efficiency (68). The same separate circulation routes and zones that heightened the drama of the trial likewise reflected a division of labor that promoted a level of control over the spectacle (and the crowds drawn to it). Within the courtroom

itself, the apportioning of space by railings, avenues, and distances in both height and length was informed by the proceedings of the trial as well as by contemporary social and economic divisions (Figure 3.4). Noting the way in which the interior of the courthouse reflected the experiences of "those strangers who migrated to the towns for work and divorced themselves from traditional networks and bonds," Mulcahy writes:

> Just as Engels commented on the fact that the rich could travel from one part of Manchester to the other without going through the slums that dominated its centre, so too could insiders in the courthouse avoid contact with the uninitiated until the trial commenced. (549)

Shaped by the belief that productivity and social order could be attained through the specialization and fragmentation of both spaces and groups, the architectural geography of nineteenth-century courts of assize—like those built in Manchester—ultimately alienated trial participants from each other, and from the communities they belonged to, in order to more effectively govern the century's laboring masses. In disrupting conventional uses of space, the geography of the courtroom subsumed individual identities within legal categories and "perverted" familiar modes of conversation "so that confessions and highly personal stories which would normally be told in close and intimate spaces [were] conducted over much longer distances and in the presence of strangers" (Mulcahy "Architects of Justice" 386-7).

Figure 3.4: Edward Ingress Bell and Sir Aston Webb. *Victoria Law Courts, Birmingham*. 1900. Photograph. Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

Vivid descriptions of the physicality of court space—its dimensions and environment, the ways in which it governs the relations between bodies, and its ability to elicit an affective response from its inhabitants—are commonplace in Victorian trial narratives. As if mimicking the newspaper reportage that made nineteenth-century assize trials cultural touchstones, Victorian novelists precisely described the geography of the court and captured the simultaneously sensational and theatrical effects of this space. They carefully recorded various participants' positions and lines of sight, drew attention to the physical partitions of the court that distanced loved ones and kept spectators at bay, and recounted the closely intertwined set of emotional and physical responses elicited by this environment. It is in this shuttling between the architecture of the court and

characters' responses to it—between realism's dual fidelity to the thick description of the material world and the representation of individual experience—that the courtroom becomes legible as an affective space. The novels I examine in the following sections demonstrate the ways in which the court's ability to reconfigure social bonds radiate beyond its physical boundaries and ultimately reshape communities.

Mary Barton **and the Politics of Public Space**

From the earliest pages of her debut novel, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, Elizabeth Gaskell demands that her readers be sensitive to her characters' surroundings, connecting built environments and objectscapes with an affective and consequently political state of being. While introducing the Barton family home in the novel's second chapter, Gaskell carefully catalogues candles tucked into tin holders, odd-shaped shards of glass on which to rest dirty knives and forks, a "japanned tea-tray" ornamented with lovers embracing, and a table made of deal (14). With a precision that not only specifies the quality of a candle's wax or how an untrimmed houseplant might add privacy to a small, ground level dwelling, Gaskell's depiction of the Bartons' rooms also communicates the pleasure and comfort these surroundings impart. As the novel progresses, and as the economic downturn and slowing factory trade of the late 1830s and early 1840s worsens, the narrator returns to the family's cupboard to note its gradual loss of tea-caddies and other furnishings in exchange for food and opium. Connecting the desperation imparted by these losses to the built environment that registers them, the narrator likens the pain of John Barton's starvation to a form of torture credited to the Borgias in which a prisoner is locked in a room only to discover that "day by day…the

space between the walls of his apartment was narrowing, and then he understood the end" (164).

Critics have generally understood the verisimilitude of Gaskell's domestic descriptions as a means of eliciting the sympathies of her middle-class readership and a critique of a political and economic system that turns a blind eye to such deprivation.[58] However, this general emphasis on the novel's working-class homes limits the narrative's spatial and geographical range of concern. John Barton's suffering may be analogous to being locked in a shrinking room, but this architectural metaphor does not actually signal a constriction in narrative venues. Instead, the narrative outcomes of John's penal nightmare are a political assassination, a trial at the Liverpool assizes, and his family's emigration to Canada. As this section will make clear, the non-domestic, institutional structures portrayed in the latter half of the novel are equally steeped in sociopolitical critique. Specifically, the material conditions of the Liverpool court of assize are as important to the politics of the text as those of Manchester's domestic interiors.

Published anonymously by Chapman and Hall in October of 1848, *Mary Barton* is characterized by its double plot: the intersecting narratives of union-member John Barton's radicalization and subsequent murder of Harry Carson, and his daughter Mary's maturation into a heroine who must renounce her wealthy suitor (the same Harry Carson) for the humble and honest Jem Wilson. The two plots cross at the novel's climactic trial scene, when Jem is wrongly tried for Carson's murder and Mary journeys to Liverpool alone to secure Jem's alibi and testify to his character and her love for him, all the while keeping her father's guilt a secret. Although many Victorian readers applauded *Mary*

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[58] For more on the critical and popular reception of Gaskell's description of the homes of Manchester's poor, see Foster.

Barton's pathos in its depiction of the lives of the laboring poor, others found Gaskell's presentation of class tensions to be exaggerated, her treatment of the mill owners unjust, and the novel's resolution in Jem's trial, John's penitent death, and Mary's marriage to be 'twisted out of shape, to serve the didactic purpose of the author'.[59]

This last complaint has continued to haunt criticism of *Mary Barton*; in general, twentieth-century scholars characterized the novel as an uneven forging of two separate, incongruous narrative threads, with Mary's narrative ascendance in the latter half of the novel dismissed as a political capitulation—where a romantic and romanticized ending supplants a radical revision of capitalism's plot.[60] It is only within the last few decades that Mary's plot and the connected action of the assize trial have garnered critical reassessment, in part due to feminist scholars' claim that the trial dramatizes Victorian women's alienation from public speech and self-representation.[61] More recently, *Mary Barton*'s trial scene (and other trial narratives of the same period) has been reexamined for its critical engagement with the precepts of nineteenth-century realism.[62] As both Hilary Schor and Jonathan Grossman point out, in pitting the romantic narrative of Mary's testimony against the evidentiary narrative of the law, *Mary Barton* lays bare the representational pretense of the trial-form and ultimately discloses realism's own

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[59] The above quote comes from an unsigned review of the novel published in the *British Quarterly Review*. For a comprehensive overview of Victorian criticism of the novel, see *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Angus Easson (110).

[60] Raymond Williams's influential critique of the novel identifies John's murder of Harry Carson as projection of the middle-class's fear of violence from the labouring poor rather than a continuation of the imaginative sympathy that dominates the first half of the text. (*Culture and Society: 1780-1950,* 91).

[61] For more on Gaskell's trial scene, Mary's testimony, and female publicity and narrative authority, see Schor, *Scheherezade in the Marketplace: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel* and "Show-Trials: Character, Conviction and the Law in Victorian Fiction;" Trodd; Krueger; Hughes and Lund; and Struve.

[62] The most cited of these comparisons being Ian Watt's work on the rise of the novel (31). For contemporary scholarship on Victorian legal narratives see Grossman, Schramm, and Heinzelman.

artfulness.[63] Yet despite this new wealth of scholarship on the feminist and generic implications of Mary's testimony, Gaskell's careful depiction of the space and experience of the courthouse has been entirely neglected.

At the time Gaskell was writing *Mary Barton*, Manchester—the primary setting of the novel and the scene of the crime—did not yet have its own court of assize. Liverpool had just been designated the assize town for Lancashire in 1835 and a new courthouse, St George's Hall, was under construction for this purpose. In 1839 architect Harvey Lonsdale Elmes (1814-47) won the competition to design a new concert hall for Liverpool, and in 1840 he won the competition to design its new court of assize. Rather than construct two buildings, he decided to combine the structures (Graham 95) (Fig. 3.5). Thus, even if only accidentally, the new Liverpool Assizes perfectly encapsulated the dual nature of the nineteenth-century courthouse: its theatrical and industrial foundations. The massive St George's Hall, whose construction began in the same years that Gaskell's novel is set and was completed three years after its publication, featured a civil and criminal court of assize on either side of the building and a large concert hall at its center. Designed just before the Gothic Revival movement really took off, its Neo-Classical edifice was elaborately decorated with symbolic designs. The exterior artwork of St George's Hall connected the dispassion of the law with the influence of commerce. Sculptures on one side of the building celebrated the birth of *Justitia*, while the other side featured carvings celebrating the success of Liverpool merchants (Mulcahy 532). In other words, the interior of the court tacitly equated the law with performance, while its exterior made perfectly clear whom these performances served.

[63] See Schor, "Show Trials," 194 and Grossman119.

Figure 3.5: Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, *Sketch of Combined Buildings*. Drawing. *Victorian Web*.

Although the courtroom depicted in Gaskell's novel is unlikely to have been modeled after St George's Hall given that it was still under construction at the time of *Mary Barton*'s publication, it nonetheless shares many of its same architectural features, such as the separate retiring rooms and passageways discussed above, as well as the internal partitions and railings that increasingly distanced different classes of trial participants. Gaskell may have been familiar with the Knutsford Sessions House, completed in 1818. While smaller in scale than an assize court and charged with accommodating lower-profile trials, the Knutsford Session House also segregated its trial participants with railings, partitions, and separate entrances and hallways. Ultimately, I suggest that the ubiquity of these features in nineteenth-century courthouse construction renders the specific source of inspiration for *Mary Barton*'s court scene less important than the ways in which the novel's representational strategy anticipates the social project

of the court's assemblage of architectural characteristics and co-opts the architectural geography of the courtroom as a platform for cultural critique.

When Mary finally leaves the gritty confines of Manchester for Liverpool in order to hunt down Will Wilson and his alibi and to give testimony at the assizes, she does so in what might be the most Victorian of ways. Traveling by train for the very first time, Mary watches the smoky environs of the manufacturing town and "the familiar objects of her childhood" retreat into the distance with a feeling of what the narrator identifies as "Heimweh," or homesickness (273). Although the introduction of this German term is striking for its irregularity in a text noted for its fidelity to regional dialect, the emotion it evokes is not out of place. Rather, we might describe the entire structure of feeling of *Mary Barton* as one of homesickness. It is a novel whose plot (including the narratives of both John and Mary) traces, from Esther's disappearance in the opening pages to John's death in the conclusion, the dissolution of not only the Barton household but also every working class household around them. Mary's journey to the courthouse—a space designed to divide and reorder—is the culmination of the disintegration of Mary's paternal family and the site that promotes its reconstitution as a marital one.

Although the narrator initially describes the courthouse as an "awful place of rendezvous," where "The judge, the jury, the avenger of blood, the prisoner, the witnesses—all were gathered together within one building" (306), the unification invited by this building is immediately disrupted by the relocation of these parties to its different zones, revealing its characteristic architecture. Following Job Legh throughout the courthouse on his quest to discover whether Mary has secured Jem's alibi, the narrator recounts Legh's initial view of Mary and Mrs. Wilson through the doorway of the

witness room—a space only recently developed at the time of *Mary Barton*'s publication. Meanwhile, the defendant Jem remains confined by bar encircling the prisoner's dock, flanked by the crowd of gawking spectators packed tightly together by railings separating them from the floor of the court. As the trial begins and each witnesses is called, the narrator describes Mrs. Wilson and Mary's position in the elevated witness box and shifts between different audience members' perspectives, highlighting their shared focus on the court's center. Noting that "[a]ll eyes were directed towards Mary" and that "[t]he mellow sunlight streamed down that high window on her head" (312), Gaskell evokes for the modern reader the image of the spotlight and the entire effect of the chapter brings to mind the backstage/frontstage stagecraft of the courthouse.

Despite her emphasis on the theatricality of her protagonist's position, Gaskell is careful to establish that Mary's performance on the stand should not be viewed as a form of entertainment. Take for example her ventriloquism of a conversation between two clerks on the train to Liverpool. Their complaint that "the ladies (sweet souls) will come in shoals to hear a trial for murder…And then go home and groan over the Spanish ladies who take delight in bull-fights—'such unfeminine creatures,'" is clearly hypocritical given their own excitement to see the "factory girl" examined "in style" (274). The satire of this scene indicates Gaskell's disdain for those who would take pleasure in a courtroom drama and appears to align her with middle-class gender norms that privileged the didactic rather than the titillating nature of trials. The nineteenth-century court may have been one of the few places where "the dominant male gaze [was] reversed" and women were allowed to participate, but this participation was increasingly circumscribed by an emerging code of behavior that discouraged respectable (read: middle-class)

women from seeking entertainment in, or even attending, trials (Mulcahy, "Watching Women," 55-6). Mary's dismay upon learning that she was "all in print" (345) allows Gaskell to establish her protagonist's respectability and status as a heroine for middle-class readers despite her role in the trial. Moreover, in her rejection of the less-than-likeable Sally Leadbitter's suggestion that she might have costumed herself more carefully and "picked up a better beau than the prisoner" (345-6), Mary demonstrates her authenticity as a witness within a performative context.

Although Gaskell may well be ambivalent about the entertainment afforded by the trial, Mary's authenticity on the stand amplifies the melodrama of the trial and enables the very theatricality of courthouse design be repurposed as a critique of its more repressive social functions. As Alison Moulds points out, "Melodrama and authenticity need not be read as mutually exclusive" (83). In *Mary Barton*'s trial scene, melodrama is derived from the injustice of forcing Mary and Mrs. Wilson to testify against their respective lover and son. Pitted against the "pert" performative theatrics of the barrister's questions (313), and located adjacent to the judge's bench—facing the prisoner's dock over the heads of the lawyers commanding the floor below—both Mrs. Wilson and Mary are painfully aware of the crowd's and Jem's eyes upon them. In response Mrs. Wilson "moaned forth 'Oh! Jem, Jem! what mun I say'" and is instructed by him to tell the truth, which she does with the "fidelity of a little child" (310). While Mary, on the other hand, "covered her face with her hands, to hide the burning scarlet blushes, which even dyed her fingers" (314). Equally indicative of the women's honesty and humility, Mrs. Wilson's and Mary's affective responses to the environs of the court are "characteristic

feminine responses in melodrama, [but] they are also presented as *genuine* responses to the anxiety and trauma [each woman] feels" (Moulds 83).

In these moments of authentic theatricality both women engage with their surroundings as they would a stage, physically gesturing their opposition to the performance of the law. Following her testimony, Mrs. Wilson "could no longer compel her mother's heart to keep silence, and suddenly turning towards the judge," makes a final plea for her son's innocence (311). In a misreading of the spatial signification of courtroom roles (or rather, correct reading of a sedimented history of paternal judicial authority embodied in the elevated and ornate judicial bench), Mrs. Wilson ignores the barrister and jury facing her and addresses the only figure that shares her same topographical elevation. Identifying their parallel position and the mere "sword's length" between them (Mulcahy, 'Architects of Justice,' 390), Mrs. Wilson begs the judge to share her point of view regarding her son's goodness. Mary likewise turns towards the judge for her testimony. In doing so she dismisses the barrister, "partly to mark that her answer was not given to the monkeyfied man who questioned her," and to avoid facing Jem, "the form that contracted with the dread of the words he anticipated" (313-4). Whereas Moulds and others have posited that the newly evolved adversarial trial format of rival barristers was deployed by Gaskell "as a mechanism for exploring conflict between individuals, and the individual and society" (80), Mary and Mrs. Wilson's gestures point to the narrative mechanisms afforded by form of the court. Although once aligned with one another as an intimate circle, as participants in the trial, Jem, Mary, and Mrs. Wilson are forced into an opposition with each other made literal in the architectural design of the court. The emotional and psychological strain it produces is likewise made

manifest in these characters' gestures and engagement with the partitions that characterize this design. Jem spends much of the trial with his face buried in his arms on the front of the dock, Mrs. Wilson "clenched the sides of the witness-box in her efforts to make her parched tongue utter words" (310), and Mary first awaits her turn to testify with her head hidden in her arms in "an attitude of hopelessness" and later clutches at the rails of the spectators' area after her testimony as she loses "the composure, the very bodily strength" that upheld her throughout her time on the stand (315).

In each case, the court furnishings function as a type of scaffolding. Supporting these trial participants and holding them in their places, the railings and other structural partitions throw their suffering into relief and offer a background against which their affective response to their physical and functional position in the court can be registered. These partitions, while highlighting the court's ability to isolate and alienate these loved ones from each other, also operate as the ground against which Mrs. Wilson, Jem, and Mary each perform an almost mirrored set of gestures that indicate the connected feelings of the party. As a set of what Anna Gibbs might term "mimetic communications,"[64] these gestures express the empathy shared by these characters and give voice to the distress each feels at their oppositional roles within the trial. Establishing empathy through affect marks these characters' extra-legal relations as organic. Thus the staging of these intimately connected mimetic gestures and empathic affects against the edifice of the court promotes a reading of the relationships established by the trial as unnatural, inorganic, and inhumane. Moreover, as Recchio argues in his reading of John Barton's

[64] Gibbs coins the phrase, identifying mimesis as "complex communicative process in which other sensory and affective modalities are centrally involved," and suggesting mimetic communications "form the basis for a sense of 'belonging,' and, ultimately, of the polis, as what forms the affective bases of political orders" (191).

deathbed scene, Gaskell's "emphasis on physical and psychological suffering" offers "her middle class readers the affective experience of the shadow social war Engels identifies, and it thereby invites them to think about the extent of their own culpability" (291). In addition to providing an internal critique of the trial, these shared affective responses model the suspense and agony the reader should feel, linking the knowledge of Jem's innocence with a sense of the injustice of the entire legal system.

If Mary, Jem, and Mrs. Wilson's clenched hands and hidden faces provide a measure of the influence of the court on social bonds, Mary's melodramatic faint is not merely an intensification of these gestures. Rather, it is a dually affective and symbolic expression of the period's legal violences against the Chartist movement and the working classes, legal violences screened by the growing prominence of the spectacle of the houses of the law over their potential punitive end in public hanging. Following her testimony, Mary joins the crowd of spectators, "catching hold of some rails as if she feared some bodily force would be employed to remove her" (316). The narrator continues:

> She thought the feeling of something hard compressed within her hand would help her to listen, for it was such pain, such weary pain in her head, to strive to attend what was being said. […] Then again, for a brief second, the court stood still, and she could see the judge, sitting up there like an idol, with his trappings, so rigid and stiff; and Jem, opposite, looking at her, as if to say, Am I to die for what you know your -----. Then she checked herself, and by a great struggle brought herself round to an instant's sanity. (316)

Here Mary distorts the railings' function as a means of keeping her separate from the action of the court to a means of compartmentalizing her own internal struggle. Once again, they are scaffolds for Mary's affective response to the court, and they are the site upon which Gaskell dramatizes this narrative episode's ultimate restructuring and

reordering of the family, a process initiated in Mrs. Wilson and Mary's testimonies. Embracing both the impulse to separate her father's guilt from Jem's innocence, and the desire to maintain her connection with him, Mary is divided between her identity as a daughter and as a lover, and as a result repeatedly mutters "'I must not go mad. I must not, indeed...'" (317). When Will arrives and releases her from her painful position of being the only one able to save Jem—so long as she commits her father to the prison scaffold—the narrator describes her as crying out "I *am* mad" and being "instantly seized with convulsions" so that she must be taken out of the court.

Traditionally, Mary's loss of consciousness has been understood by critics as either a feminised response to patriarchal oppression,[65] or as "crisis in narration" and stylistic failure on Gaskell's part.[66] I argue that we might instead read Mary's faint in two non-mutually-exclusive ways: first, as an affective resistance to the courtroom pressures of compartmentalizing and refiguring the self, and one's relationships, under the rubrics of the law; and second, as a conversion of the performative violence of courtroom rhetoric—its power to find a man guilty and sentence him to death—into a physical dumb show of violence. Regarding the former, Mary's faint in the stead of her revelation of her father's guilt upstages the remaining operations of the law and decenters our attention as readers away from the sanctioned performance of the trial to its effect on the (literally, physically) marginalized communities personally invested in its results. It operates as a resistance to a legal system—and by extension an entire political state of being—dominated by the unfeeling divisions, classifications, and pretensions at transparency

[65] Krueger argues that Mary's fainting fit is an, "escape into madness," which she claims is an escape from "patriarchal appropriations" (346).
[66] Grossman suggests the swoon is caused by "the logical breakdown that occurs when Gaskell mixes together two different narrative epistemologies" (122).

embodied in the architectural geography of the courthouse. Regarding the latter, Mary's faint while supported by the railings of the court is a parody of Jem or her father's own potential hanging. Presaged by the periperformative imperative that she must not go mad, Mary's faint produces a revealing slippage in its connection of madness, or an absence of rationality, with both telling the truth and with the dead faint. As Eve Sedgwick points out, the periperformative can "be the site of powerful energies that often warp, transform, and displace, if they do not overthrow, the supposed authorizing centrality of that same performative" (75-9). Mary's faint's ironic compression of irrationality with death obliquely indicates a critique of a legal system, which, despite its shift in spectacles of justice from public hangings (a practice ended in 1868) to the trials at assize, favored capital punishment over the forgiveness promoted by Mr. Carson's espousal of the Gospel of Luke at the novel's close and would sentence a man to death in a new building rather than address the privations that motivated the murder of Carson's son. As Peter Brooks notes, in a passage that could be mistaken for being about *Mary Barton*, "Among the repressions broken through by melodramatic rhetoric is that of class domination, suggesting that a poor persecuted girl can confront her powerful oppressor with the truth about their moral conditions" (44). The truth that Mary's melodramatic affect reveals is an industrialized legal state that disposes of its laborers one way or another, either through starvation or on the scaffold.

Because Gaskell's novel advocates for a Unitarian model of Christian justice, founded upon forgiveness and the belief that it is the act rather than the individual that is good or evil, Jem cannot be sacrificed in payment for Harry Carson's death. The satisfaction of the elder Carson's vengeance would sully his forgiveness of his son's true

killer. However, while the novel's moralistic and didactic conclusion is made possible by Jem's escape from hanging—due to his cousin Will's symbolically charged leap over the railings of the spectators' gallery to seize the witness-box and provide an alibi—these conciliatory, religious ends cannot entirely supplant the transformative and ultimately destructive influence of the courthouse on the community touched by Jem's trial. Instead, the court's performative force and its reordering of social bonds along the inorganic divisions in labor and specialized trial function is rechanneled into the restructuring of Mary's family, and ultimately, identity.

Following Jem's exoneration in the eyes of the law, the narrative of *Mary Barton* has no choice but to leave the confines of the courthouse. However, as the novel's conclusion makes clear, the influence of the court is not so easily left behind. Much as Jem discovers that the trial has damaged his former good character beyond recovery when the crowd leaving the courthouse "kept their garments tight about them…for about him there still hung the taint of the murderer" (322), Mary and her Manchester community soon discover that the trial has made it impossible for them to return their former patterns of coexistence. The specializing and divisive ethos of the industrial courthouse has reconfigured their social bonds both within and outside of the courtroom, and the effects radiate beyond this legal structure's physical boundaries.

The cynosure of the affective register of courtroom structures and narrative form, Mary's faint at the exact moment of Jem's exoneration and the climax of the novel converts the aims of the trial into her undoing. Described as being "where no words of peace, no soothing helpful tidings could reach her" (323), Mary remains on the brink between life and death for days. In a state of delirium and calling out to her father to save

Jem, Mary imagines herself battered by the sea again. That Mary's watery swoon is meant to signal a rebirth is brought home when she finally awakens and the narrator describes her mind as "in the tender state of a lately-born infant's." Upon seeing Jem's face first, "[Mary] smiled gently, as a baby does when it sees its mother tending its little cot; and continued her innocent, infantine gaze into his face, as if the sight gave her much unconscious pleasure" (335-6). Significantly replacing the maternal with the marital, Mary awakens not as a Barton but as a Wilson. Even though the marriage ceremony takes place later, outside the narrative and after her father's death, the change in Mary's social identity was de facto enacted by the swoon, if not de jure. As a result of her marriage, Mary is transformed from the heroine of the novel's opening into a legal non-entity. No longer part of network of community connections that extended through and beyond her patriarchal family, as a married woman she is now just one of two family members (their identities not inquired after, for they are just figures in a ledger) permitted to travel free of charge to Canada with Jem (362-3). The geographic relocation of the couple to Britain's imperial outpost hides in plain sight the isolation intrinsic to Mary's new legal state as a wife. The courtroom's oppressive logic of division extends to the bourgeois marriage contract; Mary's narrative outcome manifests its reconstruction of communal life along the lines of the middle-class family and indicates its ultimate colonization of every segment of British society (a theme addressed in the previous chapter).

Mary's undoing as an independent heroine and her loss of connection to her community parallels her community's dissolution and loss of connection to the pre-industrial, natural environment. At the same time Mary experiences illness and rebirth in Liverpool, Jem's aunt Alice Wilson declines and dies in Manchester. While both women

are described as children during their illnesses, Mary's dreams of the wind and the waves are in stark contrast to Alice's dementia and cognitive return to the placid world of her childhood. Vastly different from the grim environs of Manchester and the watery labor of Liverpool, Alice's visions of her mother and sister gathering medicinal plants in the heath are the only remnants of a utopian, pastoral past that disappear with Alice's death. Alice's maternally fostered skill as a healer and herbalist allowed her to travel throughout her community and cross between homes. Her mobility, both spatial and social, operated as an organic network of neighborly relations within her Manchester community and as a tie between this community and the land they no longer worked. With her death this connection between her community and the natural world is all but severed—only barely sustained by Job's environmentalists' collection of fossils, its ossified remains—as is a type of knowledge different from the professionalized kind housed within the court.

As Alice's death and Mary's marriage demonstrate, the courthouse, more than a setting for the novel's climax, operates as an architectural allegory for the deleterious effects wrought by industrialization's pervasive ethos of specialization and alienation on the communities either subsumed by industrial sprawl or drawn to industrial centers for work. Closing with Mary and Jem settled in colonial Canada, Gaskell offers a seeming symmetry to the opening of *Mary Barton* and its Green Heys Fields setting, a pre-industrial social and natural landscape supportive of a communal life on the point of extinction at the novel's beginning. But in Canada, the narrator reveals, "[t]he old primeval trees are felled and gone for many a mile around" (378). Despite the promise of a fresh start outside of the British empire's industrial center, as Gaskell's novel suggests and Eliot's and Yonge's novels prove in the following sections, the colonies—the future

sites of new industrial centers—are already marked by the court as sites of transportation and, as such, subject to its compartmentalizing ethos. The inherent structural violence of the courthouse extends far beyond the space of the trial; there is no return to Green Heys Fields.

Adam Bede, Courthouse Nostalgia, and the Performance of "Fellow-feeling"

In a letter addressed to Elizabeth Gaskell, dated the 11th of November, 1859, George Eliot revealed that she reread *Mary Barton* while writing *Adam Bede* (1859) and drew inspiration from "those earlier chapters" of the novel; furthermore, she hoped her own novels would be good enough to earn Gaskell's readership, believing that they shared a similar "*feeling* towards Life and Art" (my emphasis, Eliot, *Critical Heritage* 488). Eliot need not have worried; Gaskell praised *Adam Bede*, citing that she had "never read anything so complete, and beautiful in fiction" (*Critical Heritage* 488). Frequently compared in both Victorian and contemporary criticism,[67] we might trace the influence of more than those early chapters of *Mary Barton* in *Adam Bede*'s ethical framework and political implications. Like *Mary Barton*, *Adam Bede* also pivots between legal and religious structures of justice. But rather than promote the same model of Christian forgiveness that Gaskell's novel advocates, Eliot's narrative forwards a secular model of empathy and reconciliation, one contingent on affective connections unmediated by the social alienation and fragmentation enacted by industrialization and relatedly, the purpose-built courts.

[67] For more on Victorians' comparisons of the two texts, see editor Angus Easson's commentary in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage* 44. For contemporary comparisons, particularly related to the two novels' trial scenes, see Krueger and Schor's "Show-Trials."

Still, while Eliot's secular "fellow-feeling" operates as a counterforce to the un-feeling, coldly rational, and overly formulaic rule of law, her representation of this moral worldview is perhaps more eulogy than prescription. Set sixty years in the past and forty years prior to the narrative action of *Mary Barton*, *Adam Bede* is a retrospective novel whose narrative takes place on the cusp of the industrialization of England. Set in the pastoral communities surrounding the village of Hayslope, the plot's scope encompasses the summer of 1799 through the following spring. It recounts the visit of Dinah Morris, a young Methodist preacher, to her aunt and uncle at Hall Farm and her enchantment of the community despite its wariness of "th' Methodies" (7), as well the tragic outcome of the courtship of Hetty Sorel, Dinah's beautiful but vain cousin, by the titular protagonist Adam Bede, a skilled carpenter and respected member of the community. Hetty, whose clandestine affair with the local estate-heir Captain Arthur Donnithorne results in a pregnancy, hides her condition despite her engagement to Adam and flees just before the wedding only to give birth and leave her illegitimate baby for dead in a field. Captured and brought to trial, Hetty is found guilty of infanticide and is transported while Adam and Dinah, each touched by the other's involvement in the trial, fall in love and eventually wed.

Well received by its Victorian readers, *Adam Bede*'s combination of a sensational plot of seduction and murder with a nostalgic portrait of "the rhythms and rituals of the small agricultural community" (Martin *vii*) might be understood as a recuperation of the communal ties and connections to the natural world that Gaskell's novel sees as being eroded by the restructuring of existing social forms.[68] Set against a backdrop of pastoral

[68] For more on the history and reception of Eliot's *Adam Bede*, see Martin, and Graver.

traditions and patterns, Eliot's novel examines extra-legal models of judgment and justice within this intimate rural community and sets up Dinah and Adam as representatives of two ethical alternatives to the punishment exacted by the law.

Dinah, whose Methodism is introduced in the second chapter, concludes her first open-air sermon on the Hayslope Green with the prayer "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (28). Repeating the gospel that ultimately elicits Mr. Carson's forgiveness in *Mary Barton*, Dinah eschews earthly judgment for divine justice and preaches Christian charity and the resignation of one's soul to the will of God. But as several characters point out, Dinah's Methodism is better suited to industrial communities, like her native Snowfield, than the rural community of Hayslope. The diurnal demands of agricultural life cannot support the regular meetings of the Methodists, and Dinah's complete reliance on the text of Bible mystifies this largely illiterate community.

Adam, on the other hand, favors a secular and empathic form of justice, and it is he whom Eliot champions as an ethical model; however, only after he has been transformed by Hetty's trial. In the novel's beginning Adam is impatient with the failings of others, and though he himself is virtuous and upright, the naturalness with which he comes by these qualities leaves him "hard" and unsympathetic to those who struggle to do the right thing. But once he learns that Hetty's family will not stand by her at her trial because they are too ashamed of her actions, Adam decides that he will go in their stead, explaining, "We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes: I'll never be hard again'" (385). Keeping his resolution, Adam develops

a capacity for what Eliot terms "fellow-feeling" (190), a secular extension of Christian forgiveness.

Interrupting the narrative in the first chapter of the second book, titled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little," the narrator gives voice to Adam as an old man, explaining, "'I've seen pretty clear, ever since I was a young un, as religion's something else besides notions. It isn't with notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings" (163). Appearing at least seventy-six times in Eliot's novel, the corporeal, material, and spiritual "feeling" is set in opposition to the immateriality of the religious doctrine that Dinah endorses. Referring to both physical sensation and empathic connection, "feeling" is often paired with familial relations; for example "cousinly feeling" or "motherly feeling." "Fellow-feeling," in particular, is connected to empathy with those humble "fellow mortals" who must be taken as they are (150-1). Posing the question, "Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey?" (190), the narrator proposes a secular paradigm for judgment and provides its test in Hetty's trial, where the optical limitations of the court and the gendered expectation that "feeling" manifest itself in melodramatic affect prevents the spectators, judge, and jury from extending Hetty the same mercy Adam is willing to grant her.

Taking place in March of 1800 and held in "a grand old hall, now destroyed by fire," the venue for Hetty's trial follows the pattern of those public halls, discussed above, that had already grown outdated the century before. Eliot calls attention to the antiquatedness of this space. She writes:

> The mid-day light that fell on the close pavement of human heads, was shed through a line of high pointed windows, variegated with the mellow tints of old

> painted glass. Grim dusty armour hung in high relief in front of the dark oaken gallery at the farther end; and under the broad arch of the great mullioned window opposite was spread a curtain of old tapestry, covered with dim melancholy figures, like a dozing indistinct dream of the past. It was a place that through the rest of the year was haunted with the shadowy memories of old kings and queens, unhappy, discrowned, imprisoned; but to-day all those shadows had fled, and not a soul in the vast hall felt the presence of any but a living sorrow, which was quivering in warm hearts. (386)

Predating the purpose-built court of *Mary Barton*, the venue for Hetty's trial gathers her community together, with spectators crowded together at all sides and even "women in fine clothes…sitting near the judge" (384). The proximity of the crowd appears to transform them into one being. Bartle Massey explains that "it was like *one* sob" when Martin Poyser left the witness stand (my emphasis, 384), while the narrator highlights the spectators' closely clustered heads, syncopated heartbeats, and the single "thill" that goes through them during the testimony of John Olding—the man who finds Hetty's baby's dead body—, as well as the shared "sigh of disappointment" from those who hoped for a recommendation to leniency. Both accounts indicate the crowd's affective connection, one that is unmediated by architectural partitions and courtroom divisions.

Only Hetty is set apart from the crowd, positioned behind the prisoner's bar with just the chaplain o' the gaol. And while she is partially to blame for creating distance between herself and her family and friends—first, in her desire to be a lady, and second, in her limited display of emotion at the trial—the dark and dim furnishings of the court do not foster an empathic and affective connection between Hetty and those who are charged with her judgment. Though she shivers at the sound of her uncle's name and trembles at the testimony of Olding, to the more distant crowd of spectators she appears unmoved, physically and emotionally. Her affect, or seeming lack-there-of, results in a guilty verdict, because:

> [T]he sympathy of the court was not with the prisoner: the unnaturalness of her crime stood out the more harshly by the side of her hard immovability and obstinate silence. Even the verdict, to distant eyes, had not appeared to move her; but those who were near saw her trembling" (391).

In her reading of this scene, Anthea Trodd identifies Hetty's "abnormal lack of domestic feelings" as the reason she does not elicit the sympathy of her community (137). While the narrator's description of Hetty's crime as unnatural certainly indicates that her failure to appropriately perform the gender roles of mother and fiancée is in part to blame for her guilty verdict, its juxtaposition with her seemingly unaffected behavior implies that Hetty's fate is as much decided by her failure to correctly perform the gendered part of the female trial participant. Her seemingly stoic behavior in the face of witness testimonies about her baby's birth and death does not conform to a nineteenth-century construction of ideal womanhood grounded in maternal affection; however, Hetty is not without feeling.

In drawing attention to the physical proximity necessary for a spectator to detect Hetty's affective response to the trial, Eliot indicates that the "fellow-feeling" that binds communities cannot be established solely through the figuratively and literally limited perspective of the court. With the light from the windows falling on the spectators' heads instead of Hetty's, the crowd cannot see that she does exhibit stereotypically gendered responses to the melodrama of the trial. They are too far away to notice that, "The blood rushed to Hetty's face, and then fled back again" as she waited for the sentence, and cannot anticipate her "shriek" and dead faint when she is told that she shall be hanged (392). Only Adam, who decides to stand by Hetty (once again figuratively and literally, as he positions himself just barely outside of the prisoner's dock), empathizes with and reaches to catch her in her "fainting fit" (392).

If the "fit" here seems a little less than sympathetic for its connotative proximity to a "hysterical fit" or feigned emotion,[69] it is not any less significant or symbolic an affect. If anything, its failure to resonate with the crowd and physically connect Hetty with Adam points the limitations of "fellow-feeling" within the architectural and narrative structures of the law. Always already a theatrical venue, even before the purpose-built courthouse promoted the spectacle of the trial, the courtroom enforces a scripted performance of legal justice. Because Hetty's faint takes place after the sentence instead of before it, it fails to supplant the conclusion offered by the verdict and only echoes its fatal ends rather than mimics them. Significantly, Hetty is sentenced to hang on the very day she was meant to marry Adam, a narrative detail that wryly suggests that there are really only two options for women. Although the scene in which Dinah convinces Hetty to confess and save her soul through prayer is the point of genesis for the entire novel, Dinah's religious overtures do nothing to alter the outcome of Hetty's trial.[70] Likewise, although Arthur secures a pardon that keeps Hetty from hanging, she nevertheless dies after having been transported. Carried unconscious out of the court and only revived long enough to explain her actions, Hetty is ushered out of the narrative in order to secure a romantic resolution for Dinah and Adam. Her belated faint is, if anything, symbolic of both a social death resulting from her failure to become a wife and mother, in that order, and her inability during the trial to connect with her community through a timely, or adequately melodramatic, affective expression of remorse.

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[69] Bates explores the overlapping terms used to describe a woman's loss of consciousness in a legal setting (such as "'fainting,' 'insensibility,' 'swooning,' or 'syncope'") and the ways in which they were connected to differing levels of veracity. She notes that the "fainting fit" and "hysterical fit" overlapped and suggested an overreaction (456-7).

[70] Eliot credited her original idea for the story to an 1839 conversation with her aunt Elizabeth Tomlin Evans, a Methodist preacher who prayed with another woman guilty of infanticide, Mary Voce, throughout the night prior to her hanging. (Martin "Introduction" *xii*)

This is perhaps less of a shortcoming on Hetty's part than an indication of the futility of such an exercise in the first place. Despite the antiquity and communal shape of Hetty's trial venue, its furnishings of suits of armor and royal ghosts nonetheless emphasize a feudal violence, one that will not be abated with the coming century; rather, it will be commoditized under the auspices of industrialization. Even if the grand old hall's mullioned windows are suggestive of the Gothic forms that were resurrected by nineteenth-century architects in response to the unfeeling utilitarianism of industrialization, the Victorian courthouses that wore these medieval facades nevertheless featured interiors that embodied an industrial ethos. Eliot's use of an authentically medieval hall appears to ironize this architectural contradiction. Playing on the temporal tensions between her novel's setting and publication date, the narrator opens "The Verdict" chapter with a description of the court that highlights its disuse and decay. "Old," "grim," "dusty," "dim," and "haunted," form a type of refrain in this passage. This cataloguing of moldering features builds momentum, cresting with a recollection of the "shadowy memories" of crimes of past monarchs, only for these shadows to be abruptly dispatched by a call to the present and those who are "living" and "warm." Despite their antonymic relationship, the living and dead inhabit the same space physically and grammatically in this passage, forcibly connected by a semi-colon. Within a single sentence, Eliot ironically reproduces the novel's own backwards-glancing engagement with time's forward march—for Eliot constantly reminds us that because Adam "was in his prime half a century ago, you must expect some of his characteristics to be obsolete" (149). Her depiction of Hetty's trial venue operates as a metaphor for the narrative's broader meditation on the fate of fellow-feeling on the cusp of the coming century's

alterations and alienations from the pastoral rhythms that govern the text. If the trial's community of spectators can find "affective attunement" amongst themselves, if not with Hetty, the end of the novel does not guarantee the continuation of this attunement. With the urban centers of industrialism just off-page—the site of Dinah's un-narrated ministrations—but readily available as a point of comparison to Eliot's Victorian readers, the syncopated heartbeats and closely-gathered heads of this outdated trial space would have provided a stark contrast to the modernized trials of that readership's own era.

In Eliot's epilogue to the novel—set in 1807, seven years after Hetty's trial and the marriage of Dinah and Adam—Hayslope is still the pastoral, close-knit community that it was at the novel's open. The Bede's home with "the buff walls and the soft grey thatch" is largely unchanged and the Poysers still run Hall Farm, but little else has been untouched by the passage of time. Dinah's open-air sermons have been forbidden by the Methodist Conference and her ministrations are limited to the sphere of her home and children, a precursor to the fate of women discussed in the following section; Adam has taken over the lumber-yard where he was formerly employed, and he is presumably employing the various technological and economic innovations he dreamed of while only a foreman. While it was Adam's belief in "[feeling as] a sort of knowledge" that secured Dinah affections and cemented his role as the moral center of this novel (456), it is not his feeling that this epilogue emphasizes. Rather, in its portrait of Adam's prosperous family and business, the novel's closing pages identify its protagonist as early examples of the industrious and innovative class that would come to dominate the economic and social landscape of the century to come; Adam and Dinah are prototypical of the type of bourgeois family discussed in the following section of this chapter. Perhaps this is no

more evident than in Dinah's insistence that she "always used the watch" that Arthur gave her as a token of his thanks for her kindness to Hetty. Graham, in pointing to the relationship between the nineteenth century's increased reliance on clocks and the development of the modern courthouse, notes that, "Urbanization and industrialization… replace the rhythms of the soil with the abstract and uniform gradations of the clockface" (106). Dinah's watch, as the enduring symbol of the influence of Hetty's trial on the lives of that Hayslope community, indicates not only the inevitable evolution of courthouse structures but also the inevitable industrial development of Britain and its disruption and restructuring of pastoral communities and patterns of life.

***The Trial*, Courthouse Hysteria, and the Construction of Separate Spheres**

Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Trial* (1864) and *Mary Barton* do not share the same genealogical connection that *Adam Bede* and *Mary Barton* possess. Nonetheless, Yonge's climactic courthouse scene and thematic engagement with justice, both judicial and divine, offers a counterpoint to Gaskell's critique of the industrialized court and a measure of the change in England's sociolegal landscape between the early 1840s of Mary's world and the 1860s of Yonge's May clan. In particular, *The Trial* reflects the burgeoning of the separate spheres ideology—a byproduct of industrialization—and represents a growing antipathy towards women's participation in, and attendance at, trials.

If *Mary Barton*'s plot and publication date straddle the peak of the nineteenth century's period of courthouse refurbishment and construction, Yonge's novel coincided with the slowed construction of new courts of assize in England's metropolitan centers

and the increase in provincial court construction. By this period legal reforms addressing the inefficiency of an overtaxed, biannual assize schedule resulted in the diversification of courthouse types; police courts and civil courts left only the most serious crimes to be tried at the assizes (Graham 316). Despite the shrinking role of the assizes in the Victorian legal system, newly constructed provincial courts of assizes were still considered "a suitable force for the invention of tradition" (Graham 267). As both Graham and Mulcahy note, the tradition now under construction was aimed at excluding women and children from trials. Mulcahy explains:

> The masculine domain of the courthouse began to be seen as one which needed protecting from the corrupting influence of the feminine which thrived on morbid curiosity, the courting of attention by flamboyant dress, and a tendency to heighten the theatrical elements of the trial by excessive responses to evidence. ("Witnessing Women" 68)

The latter complaint about female behavior was particularly influential and directly connected to the literary and cultural trope of the "'swooning' female." As Victoria Bates notes in her examination of the role fainting played in Victorian sexual assault trials and Victorian legal culture more broadly, by the end of the century "Judges began to criticize the sway that a fainting female held over jurors at the same time that literary culture did the same" (470). In part a response to these critiques, mid and late-century court spaces were designed to limit women's physical access to trials; architects now "segregated women from men in the court and its environs" (Mulcahy, "Witnessing Women" 69). Additionally, these gender-based segregations were viewed as a form of protection for the bourgeois family. As Graham explains, designated waiting rooms and lavatories for women and the distancing of public court entrances from those of trial participants indicated the desire to transform the previously very public space of the court to one in

which the exposure of women and children to criminal elements could be controlled and minimized (Graham 303).

The same fetisization of family life and circumscription of women to the domestic sphere that shaped these mid-century developments in courthouse design also shapes the plot of *The Trial*, Charlotte Mary Yonge's sequel to her very popular *The Daisy Chain* (1856).[71] Returning to the middle-class May family approximately ten years after the events of *The Daisy Chain*, *The Trial* recounts the maturation and marriages of the now adult, or nearly adult, May children. Highly episodic in structure and reflective of the author's devotion to the Oxford Movement, the novel's many narrative threads are connected thematically through the various "trials" that different characters are able to endure by virtue of their strong faith and devotion to the Church of England. The most prominent of these trials is the criminal trial of Leonard Ward—the best friend of Aubrey, the youngest May son—for the murder of his uncle. Unlike Gaskell and Eliot, Yonge's trial scene offers no critique of the architectural and legal structures that underpin the justice of the courts. Instead, the courtroom faint's potential as political commentary is subsumed by the narrative function of Leonard's trial as a test of religious fervor and masculine endurance and an endorsement of gender and class-based behavioral norms; likewise, any punitive connotation affiliated with Leonard's ultimate emigration to New Zealand is transmuted into a divine call to missionary work.

Opening with a poem from the perspective of a prisoner in the dock, credited to the Rev. G. E. Monsell, Yonge's titular chapter quickly establishes the difference between that epigraph's "thronging faces" eager for the "sport" of a trial and the

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[71] See Wagner "Novelist with a Reserved Mission" for more on the contemporary critical reception of Yonge.

courthouse crowd described by the novel's narrator. Though there are initially many "mere loungers, who craved nothing but excitement" when Leonard Ward takes his place within the prisoner's dock, those who had been "wild to be present, felt their hearts fail them," and even the judge is affected by the "awed and anxious" feeling that pervades the court (196). This shift in the crowd from expectant excitement to dismay and compassion for the defendant is brought about by Leonard's affect, his expressions and gestures of humble resignation. Despite his assumption of the dejected pose of crossed-arm, bowed-head pose shared by Jem and Hetty, Leonard's "perfect quiescence" and stoic silence throughout the trial is not interpreted by the crowd as obstinance, as in the case of Hetty. Rather, Leonard's largely immobile expression—only altered by Dr. May and his youngest son Aubrey's presence on the stand—is an indication to his community of his gentlemanly qualities and, to Yonge's readership, of his innocence. His reserved manner mirrors that of the idealized Dr. May, whom the narrator describes on the witness stand as having "brought tone, look, and manner to the grave impartiality which even the most sensitive man is drilled into assuming in public; but he durst not cast one glance in the direction of the prisoner" (200). Unwilling to look across the room at Leonard, Dr. May avoids both acknowledging their adversarial positions and his own emotions for the boy, and performs an affectless-ness suited to the behavioral norms of Victorian middle-class masculinity and to a Tractarian religious reserve.[72]

The mature masculinity associated with Leonard's and Dr. May's shared affective reserve is further underscored by Aubrey May's turn on the witness stand and by he and his relatives' response to the verdict. Ironically strengthened by a shared passion for

[72] For more on Yonge's Tractarianism and its relationship to religious reserve, see Colon.

fossils—symbols for the frailty of the connection between this mid-century Victorian community and the natural world—Leonard and Aubrey's friendship is striking for the differing rates at which the two boys mature.[73] Unlike Leonard, who is frequently complemented by the Mays for his athleticism and vigor, Aubrey takes the witness stand in a fragile state. The narrator explains that:

> The long waiting, after his nerves had been wound up, had been a severe ordeal, and his delicacy of constitution and home breeding had rendered him peculiarly susceptible…The boy was indeed braced to resolution, but the resolution was equally visible with the agitation in the awe-stricken brow, varying colour, tightened breath, and involuntary shiver, as he took the oath. (202-3)

Barely keeping it together on the stand, Aubrey's determination to exonerate his friend is challenged by the effeminacy with which he is characterized for the first half of the novel, a product of his elder sister's "home breeding" and cosseting. "Giddy" and "flushed" after leaving the stand, Aubrey must be supported by his elder brother Tom, a character whose complete lack of affect initially leads characters to misjudge him as ironical but which later suggests his fitness as one of the novel's heroes. Reseated with his family in the spectator stands, Aubrey awaits the outcome of the trial with "throbs of heart well-nigh audible," only to fall into a "dead faint," a "senseless weight," against his brother Tom when the jury returns with a verdict of guilty (211).

Notably, Aubrey's courtroom faint does not place him and his feelings for Leonard at odds with either the spectators or the officials of the court. Both the judge and jury feel unwillingly compelled by the nature of the evidence to convict Leonard, and it is with a "trembling hand" and lips "purple with the struggle to contend with and suppress his emotions" that the judge puts on his black hat to the "universal weeping and sobbing

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[73] For an alternate reading of the role of fossils play in this text, see Chen.

throughout the court" (212). Yonge, on the side of the movement to limit the exposure of women and children to the trauma of court, is careful to depict the trial's female spectators as "*on the verge of hysterics*" and the young Gertrude May as "choking between the agony of contagious feeling and the dread of [her elder sister's] displeasure" and later regretting her desire to attend in the first place (my emphasis, 212). Aubrey's faint—significantly characterized as a "swoon"—within this context is an indication of his immaturity and effeminacy, especially given the mid-to-late century affiliation of the swoon with hysteria (Bates 456). At the same time that Aubrey's swoon renders the courtroom as inappropriate for women and children, it also serves as a moment of transformation, marking the sudden end of Aubrey's youth and a turning point in the novel. After the trial Aubrey is promptly shipped off on a Continental tour with his brother and returns a hale and hearty young man with military ambitions. No longer the same marker for the injustices of the court of Gaskell and Eliot's novels, *The Trial*'s courtroom swoon is an affective trope coopted by Yonge in support of the sociolegal and cultural order embodied within the architectural geography of the mid-century provincial assize court.

Leonard's public acceptance of his sentence from the prisoner's dock—wherein he recasts his death-sentence from a legal punishment for a crime he did not commit to an earthly manifestation of divine justice for his hot-temper and failure to get along with his elder brother and man of the family—ultimately aligns legal and religious models of justice within this novel and equates both with the mores and patriarchal demands of the bourgeois family. As an aside, although likely coincidental, this narrative alignment of religious and legal judicial frameworks is in keeping with the actual structures of the

courts at the time of the novel's publication; as Pevsner notes, the 1860s "mark the climax of the High Victorian Gothic" (68), an architectural movement first endorsed by the Oxford Movement. Within the logic of Yonge's novel—a barely veiled (if that) piece of propaganda for the Tractarian movement—Leonard's humble submission to his imprisonment, tempered with the admission that "'it seems like child's play to go through such a trial as mine'" (231), signals his redemption and worthiness for missionary work. Still, it is only after Leonard has served time in prison that the narrative follows through on its oft-repeated claim that "while there is Justice in Heaven, the true criminal cannot go free" (190) with the improbable deathbed confession of the real killer Sam Axeworthy years later, in Paris, to Tom May of all people. This confession secures Leonard's freedom and, in a bizarre conversion of the transportation plot, allows him to pursue a career as a missionary in New Zealand. Tom, meanwhile, is rewarded for his discovery of the true murderer with a marriage to Leonard's sister Averil.

Ultimately, none of the characters tried in Gaskell, Eliot, or Yonge's novels are reintegrated back into their communities, guilty or innocent. All are relocated to imperial outposts, demonstrating the failure of Victorian legal system to rehabilitate the communities divided by the operations of the court. In *Mary Barton*, it is the family that bears the brunt of the court's compartmentalizing violence. The Manchester families who occupy Gaskell's social novel either die as a result of industrialization's dispassion for its laborers or are effectively exiled by a legal structure developed as a buttress to this system. Although Mary's dead faint fails to effect change within this narrative, it nevertheless demands that Gaskell's readers feel the interrelation of economic and legal oppression. I argued that in *Mary Barton* Gaskell deploys the structural divisions of the

court in order to frame a critique of industrialization's estranging influence on working-class communities, a critique that is legible because it is the forces that of industrialization that produced this new, and newly divided, architectural geography.

Adam Bede also addresses the effects of industrialization on family and community in its telegraphic presentation of Adam and Dinah as a proto-bourgeois couple. Likewise, it employs the architectural structure of an outdated public hall and temporary court of assize in its critical backwards glance at the pastoral communities eroded by industrialization. In the case of Eliot's novel, I suggested that the antiquity of the court space is used to highlight the limits of "fellow feeling," her model for secular, extralegal justice. I argued that the failure of Hetty's affect to communicate remorse and her fainting fit's inability to supplant her guilty verdict indicate the limited perspective of a legal structure that demands a melodramatic performance of gendered scripts.

Finally, in my brief examination of *The Trial*, I continued to explore the nineteenth-century's evolving intersection of gender, performance, and courthouse affect. I examined Yonge's Anglo-Catholic conversion of the Christian forgiveness expounded Gaskell and secular empathy forwarded by Eliot into a program of virtuous Christian suffering and deistic vengeance. I argued that in Yonge's novel the critical work of the courtroom swoon is coopted and defanged by a bourgeois society who, by mid-century, were comfortable with the restructuring of Victorian communal life made emblematic by the Victorian courthouse.

Throughout this chapter I have argued that—in the melodramatic trial scenes of *Mary Barton*, *Adam Bede*, and *The Trial*—affect and, more specifically, the over-determined trope of the courtroom faint offer both a register of the politics of the

nineteenth-century courthouse and a potential mode of critique of this form. As in the previous chapter of this dissertation, I examined the architectural history of a particular building type through a period of socioeconomic upheaval and tracked the impact of industrialization on the organization of communal and family life. In particular, what this chapter has teased out in its consideration of how three novels of the same genre—the trial narrative—deploy the same gendered affect across time, is the contemporaneous rise of the bourgeois family and the exclusion of (many, but not all) women from the public sphere. On a broader level, this chapter considered how gesture, movement, and affect within a particular built environment have the potential to serve as a form of commentary on that environment's material conditions and political foundations. This has led me to examine the performative aspect of a built public space that is not explicitly theatrical. In the following chapter I turn my attention to theaters to ask a different set of questions about performance. Although individual performances will remain central to my close readings, the chapter as a whole will consider the performance of literary realism within a set of generically heterogeneous novels.

CHAPTER 4

ILLUSION, DISILLUSION: STAGE EFFECTS AND SOCIETAL FICTIONS IN THE VICTORIAN THEATER

"The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass" - Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Realism, Reality, and Mechanisms of Cultural Critique

Rediscovered in 1999, Bram Stoker's first novel, *The Primrose Path* (1875), tells the story of protagonist Jerry's move from Dublin to London with his devoted wife and young children to take up the position of head carpenter for a working-class theater. Tellingly introduced to his new place of employment by way of a dress rehearsal of Faust, Jerry makes friends with the actor playing Mephistopheles and is later assigned to refurbish the run-down theater, a space he describes as marred by "too much tarnished gilding…and too little reality."[74] These not-so-subtle indications that the theater's veneer of opulence might mask an ugly reality are later realized when Jerry is visited by newly-married, wealthy acquaintances from Dublin desiring a tour of the theater's backstage and special effects. Taking the couple down to the cellars to show them "how the demons came up through the ground," Jerry's detailed tutorial on the workings of the traps allows the bride to trick him into standing on one so that she might trigger it without warning for her own amusement. When Jerry falls and injures himself against the machinery of the trap, the woman and her husband flee the scene and leave Jerry bleeding on the stage, only to be discovered later by the theater manager, who labels him a drunk. Lamed by the special effects he labored to restore, Jerry meets his manager's expectations and becomes

[74] *The Primrose Path* was originally published in five installments in *The Shamrock*, beginning on February 6th, 1875 and ending on March 6th, 1875.

an alcoholic. Melodramatic in the extreme, and essentially propaganda for the temperance movement, the narrative concludes with a drunken, furious Jerry murdering his wife with a hammer and slicing his own throat with a chisel after supposed friends convince him that she has had an affair.

Notably predating Stoker's own move to London and employment as Henry Irving's theater manager at the Lyceum, *The Primrose Path*'s canny treatment of its setting offers an anecdotal example of the evocativeness of the Victorian theater, the cultural salience of its stage effects, and its availability as a narrative nexus for the period's complicated intersections of imperial, class, and gender politics. In the case of *The Primrose Path*, the political implications of Stoker's theatrical setting are especially fraught: it is after all an English theater crew and bar owner who encourage the Irish Jerry's drinking and manipulate him into killing his wife, while Jerry's maiming in the machinery of the stage traps comes at the hands of a fellow Irishwoman (and former employee of Jerry's mother) whose marriage to an industrialist allowed her to give up the trade of haberdashery for a bourgeois lifestyle. Furthermore, the centrality of stagecraft as a narrative device in Stoker's novel—as a means of revealing both the political unconscious of the novel and thematizing earnest Jerry's failure to identify artifice despite his professional exposure to the theater's trade in illusion—points to the potential for a narrative repurposing of stage effects as mechanisms of cultural commentary.

As this chapter will demonstrate, Victorian theaters were palimpsestic structures that paradoxically invited projections of a consolidated British public and unified national culture, even as their physical forms indicated the extent to which the public was divided by material and social inequalities and the culture predicated upon inter-continental

exchanges and imperial influences. However short, pulpy, or critically neglected Stoker's novel may be,[75] I suggest that it nevertheless hints at this interplay between collectivity and conflict, illusion and disillusion. Taking up the issues and narrative strategies raised by *The Primrose Path*, I examine their extension through two of the more canonical, but generically heterogeneous, novels of the Victorian era: Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Published nearly forty years apart and disparate in content and style, *Villette* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* may at first appear strange bedfellows;[76] however, both novels share (along with Stoker's) one or more climactic plot-turns either set in or fomented by theater spaces. I analyze the narrative affordances provided by these densely performative spaces: the expediencies of the theater as a setting, and the critical capacity of the concretions of representation created by the narrative depiction of nineteenth-century stagecraft.

Focusing primarily on *Villette,* I consider the narrative function of "The Concert" and "Vashti" chapters within the larger structure of the novel and the allusive nature of the gothic figures that arrive on the heels of these theatrical outings. This reading is paired with a short section addressing *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that likewise investigates the role of the theater in Wilde's novel and considers the connection between Sibyl's sudden realization that stage scenery is little more than garish paint and the gruesome transformation of Dorian's portrait. Reading Brontë's, Wilde's, and even Stoker's, employment of the theater as a site that promises connection and fulfillment but

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[75] There is little on this text. Joseph Valente briefly discusses it in his *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood*; otherwise, *The Primrose Path* is simply cited as an example of Stoker's earlier work and generally dismissed an unworthy of examination.

[76] Scholarship that addresses both texts is scant. Helen H. Davis's article "'I Seemed to Hold Two Lives': Disclosing Circumnarration in *Villette* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" is a rare exception.

only delivers frustration and loss, I identify these scenes as narrative microcosms of their novels' dominant patterns of isolation and disappointment. In Brontë and Wilde's novels in particular, stage effects intervene in, and suspend, their protagonists' rare instances of social and emotional fulfillment and are subsequently internalized as gothic productions of their disillusioned psyches. As such, I suggest that these scenes serve as the framework for these novels' more general critiques of Victorian society.

Drawing upon the architectural history of Victorian theater and its implication in nineteenth-century nationalist projects, discussed in the following section, I argue that this critique is established through the friction between the sociability of the auditorium and the artifice of Victorian stagecraft. Both *Villette* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* demonstrate the ways in which the fantasy of a consolidated public was mapped onto the Victorian theater; in their depictions of the theater and subsequent internalizations of its technologies of representation, however, both Brontë and Wilde foreground the theater's dependence on illusion in order to draw attention to the very artificiality and limitations of this consolidation. Moreover, I argue that this metatheatrical critique invokes the narrative machinery necessary to position the problems of Victorian identity politics against the dominant cultural scripts and narrative conventions of the Victorian novel. In the novels addressed in this chapter, the representation and internalization of the theater disrupts the existing narrative mode; narrative realism is distorted by the staging of theatrical realism. The ironic juxtaposition of these two technologies of representations—each with their own projections of British culture and society—draws back the curtain on the extent to which they are exclusionary. Casting narrative realism and theatrical realism as another's foils, the very forms of these novels are destabilized in order to make space

for the sorts of marginalized narratives foreclosed by the normative precepts of Victorian fiction. Ultimately, I argue that on the level of form, the reinscription of theatrical realism in the realist novel produces the generic hybridity characteristic of both Brontë and Wilde's texts. In doing so, it subverts realist narrative expectations and illuminates the ways in which both forms participated in the construction of imperialist, classist, and heteronormative cultural narratives.

Nineteenth-century theater and theater culture have become major topics of interest in Victorian studies within last three decades, recently giving rise to a subfield self-styled as "new theatre history." The impetus for this recent spate of scholarship on nineteenth-century theater culture is generally corrective; the Victorian theater, especially melodrama, was neglected throughout much of the twentieth century, due in large part to modernists' dismissal of Victorian drama for its perceived lack of literary quality. Recovering Victorian theater's status as "perhaps the most widespread arena of popular culture" (Mazer 210), contemporary scholars are critical of the previous century's pat distinctions between high and low art, legitimate and illegitimate theater. Instead, new work in the field addresses audience behavior, theater economy, and theatrical genres as entry points for assessing the significance of the theater to Victorian culture as a whole.[77] Unsurprisingly, performance studies is a dominant vein of scholarship within "new theatre history," especially as a more flexible, and less repressive, framework for understanding Victorian self-fashioning and social relations.[78] This chapter likewise has a foot in the field of "new theatre history" for its attention to the material histories of

[77] For some examples of "new theatre history" see Allan Stuart Jackson, Tracy C. Davis, Katherine Newey 119-134, and Kerry Powell's edited *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*.
[78] See for example, Auerbach *Private Theatricals,* Litvak, Vlock, Voskuil and Weltman.

Victorian theater architecture and technology and for its consideration of the way these histories are implicated in national and imperial projects; however, my work primarily focuses on the cultural affiliations and assumptions theater spaces evoked and the ways in which these affiliations could be coopted by Victorian novelists as a narrative strategy.

The following three sections address: the social and architectural history of the Victorian theater; Brontë's constellation of national, religious, and class identities in the nineteenth-century theater as part of *Villette*'s broader meditation on the exclusion of single, middle-class women from conventional marriage-plot narratives; and Wilde's somewhat opaque critique of fin de siècle class, imperial, and sexual politics embedded within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s more specific interests in aesthetics. Although I only discuss them briefly, primarily as bookends to my reading of *Villette*, Wilde and Stoker's portraits of late-century working-class theaters nevertheless provide a crucial complement, and complication, to Brontë's depiction of the mid-century monumental theaters that served as symbols of a bourgeois national identity throughout the capitals of Europe. Although their narrative treatments of the theater operate in similar ways, the working-class venues of Stoker and Wilde's novels help to illustrate the rhizomatic history and development of Victorian theater culture that is otherwise obscured by my necessarily limited and somewhat linear retelling of this history. Likewise, these authors' Irish identities,[79] and Wilde's homosexuality, raise a separate (but not unrelated) set of concerns surrounding issues of imperial, class, and gender identities than Brontë's interests in religion and female life. Ultimately, this chapter aims to raise questions about how one medium of representation can coopt another as a means of self-reflexive

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[79] It is worth noting that Brontë's father was also Irish, but an investigation of Brontë's relationship to her Irish heritage is outside of the scope of this chapter.

critique, and how the performance of genre might be understood as a form of narrative stagecraft.

Surface and symbol: The Victorian Theater

Unlike the courthouses of the previous chapter, purpose-built theaters were not exactly new to the Victorians; English purpose-built theaters date back to the early modern era, with the 1576 construction of James Burbage's the Theatre in Shoreditch.[80] Nevertheless, the extensive renovations to existing theater structures and frequent spates in new theater construction that took place throughout the long nineteenth century ensured that Victorian playhouses shared only a passing resemblance to their architectural ancestors. From opera houses to music halls, theaters and other similar performance spaces were larger, more numerous and more diverse in the Victorian era than ever before. Between the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, in just under four decades, the number of theaters in Britain nearly doubled from between 150 and 200 to over 300.[81] In roughly the same period their size doubled as well. Thanks to developments in the production of structural iron, by mid-century there were six London theaters that could each seat audiences of well over 3,000. Surprisingly, only one of these, Drury Lane, was located in the historic West End theater district (Booth 60-1). The rest were situated outside of London's fashionable quarters, either further east or in the suburbs, part of a new body of theaters constructed to accommodate a growing middle and working class audience. Outside of London, nineteenth-century

[80] For more on the early history of the British purpose-built theater see Howard 14 and Mackintosh 7.

[81] These figures only account for the "legitimate theatres" measured by Mackintosh 20; but if they fail to account for the many other types of illegitimate performance spaces, they are nonetheless indicative of the rapid growth in theater numbers in a small period of time.

improvements in railway and ocean travel facilitated global touring and promoted the construction of new provincial and colonial theaters.[82] As a result of these developments, more people had access to theaters in the nineteenth century than in any period prior. This section outlines the elements of design, décor, and stagecraft that influenced the nineteenth-century public's theatergoing experience. In particular it examines how the sociability of the auditorium, the symbolism of theater décor, and the realism achieved by Victorian stagecraft promoted the fiction of a consolidated public and positioned theaters as emblems of a national culture bolstered by bourgeois consumerism and imperial aspirations.

From the beginnings of British theater history in the sixteenth century until the late nineteenth century, when technological advancements in gas and electric lighting allowed for dimming and effective directed lighting,[83] auditoriums were better lit than their stages. This was especially the case in nineteenth-century theaters, when massive gas-lit chandeliers and decorative sconces replaced the candles and lanterns of earlier eras. Naturally, this meant that auditoriums were social spaces and the audience as much a source of entertainment as whatever was being performed on stage. Innovations in theater design were frequently centered on the related tasks of improving audience visibility and "clarifying the social semiotics of the auditorium" (Carlson 142). Inspired by Italian and French designs, English theater auditoriums were slowly converted to adopt the box seating of the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice,[84] the horseshoe-shaped

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[82] Booth 20, Auerbach "Before…" 22.

[83] According to Russell Jackson, Henry Irving popularized the dimmed auditorium in Britain, but Richard Wagner pioneered the practice earlier on the Continent (57).

[84] Carlson note that, "The idea of dividing open galleries into boxes for the aristocracy is attributed to Benedetto Ferrari, who designed the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice in 1637. During the following century rows of boxes lining the auditorium walls became standard in European

auditorium of La Scala in Milan (Hall-Witt 103), and the royal box as focal point as in the court and private theaters of eighteenth-century France (Carlson 172). Mostly adopted by British theaters in the eighteenth century, these developments in design framed and foregrounded the aristocracy and ruling classes. With the expansion of the middle class in the nineteenth century, the geography of the auditorium became more complex and codified, and indicative of the sharply divided socioeconomic landscape. More comfortable sections of stall seating were carved out of the pit for middle class ticket holders.[85] And while wealthier patrons continued to enjoy private boxes and a dress circle, working-class ticket holders were relegated to the increasingly remote upper galleries, a development visible in an illustration of the new Covent Garden Theater (Figure 4.1). By the century's end theaters were being renovated to establish separate entrances, exits, lobbies, and restrooms for each seating area and attending class of patron.[86] Even working class theaters, whose numbers swelled in the nineteenth century, emulated the hierarchical seating divisions of theaters in the West End, despite the fact that their boxes and dress circles were rarely frequented by the wealthy.

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theatres, and this architectural feature remained common until well into the twentieth century" (142).

[85] For more on the development of theater stalls, see Booth 64, Mackintosh 26.

[86] Booth notes that Her Majesty's was renovated in 1897 for just this purpose (64).

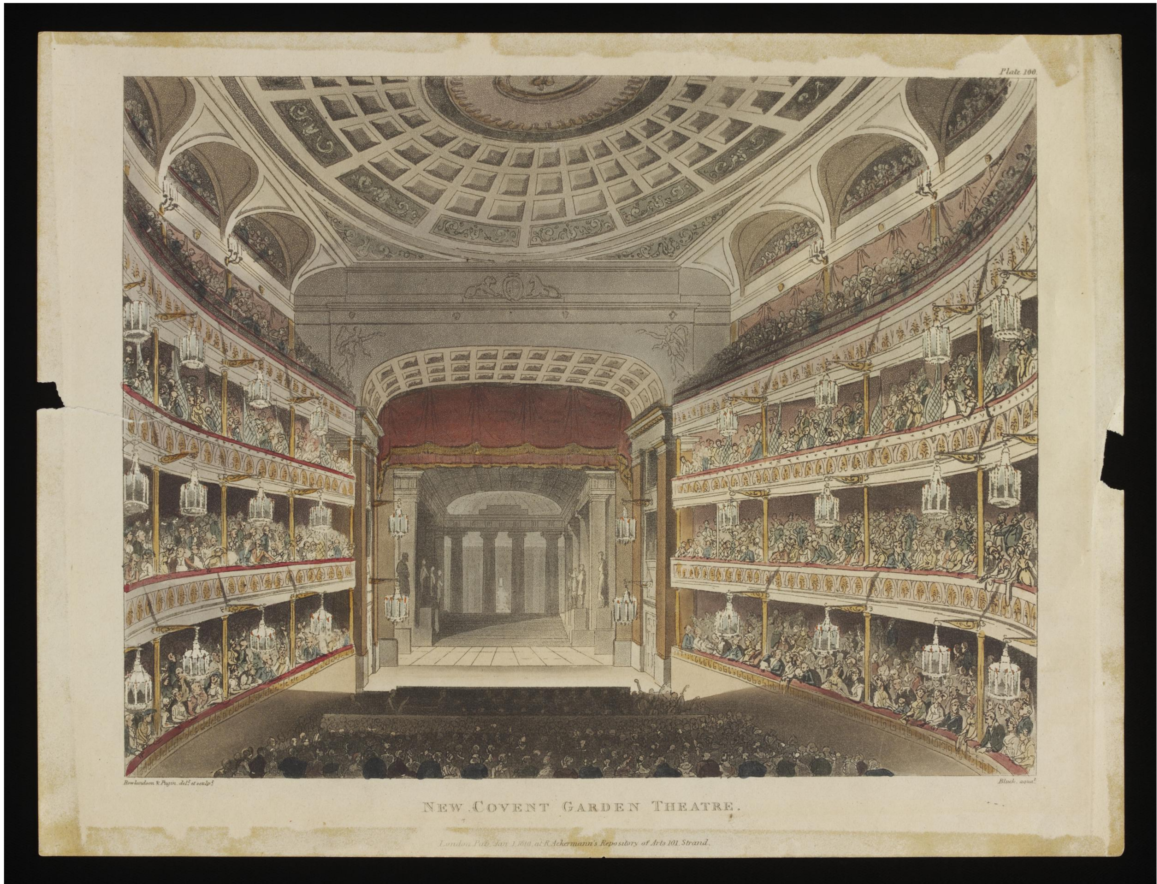

Figure 4.1: Rowlandson & Pugin. *New Covent Garden Theatre*. 1810. Print. *Ackermann*, 1810. © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Ironically, the tension produced by the shared visibility of theater audiences and the transparency with which the classes were segregated was critical to establishing the theater as an emblem of a consolidated public and national culture. This was particularly the case with Covent Garden and Drury Lane, the original royal patent theaters and the only ones permitted to perform spoken, or "serious" drama until the Theatre Act of 1843 ended their monopoly. When massive fires leveled the two theaters in 1808 and 1809 respectively, an opportunity for extensive reconstruction projects emerged. For example, the new, expanded Covent Garden of 1809 featured a range of seating to accommodate a "broad cross section of the London community," including new luxury boxes each with their own anteroom and upper galleries with cramped "pigeon-holes" that only offered

views of the actors' legs.[87] It also featured higher prices, which led to a series of riots—the Old Price or O.P. Riots—that "expose[d] the divide between high and low" *and* "unified a heterogeneous theatre going public through ritualized conflict (Robinson)." As Terry F. Robinson explains, "the growing representation of middle and lower orders [in the audience] meant that, if only by virtue of sheer numbers, these audience members began conceiving of their patronage as central to the welfare of 'National Theatre,'" a term that only became popular with the advent of the riots. So even as Covent Garden and Drury Lane became sites of contention and emblems of class segregation and the disenfranchisement of the poor, they also served as mediums through which the general public, especially the middle classes, could articulate their investment in national culture and, by extension, the nation. The version of national culture produced by the O.P. Riots was a nostalgic and xenophobic one; it privileged Renaissance drama and bristled at the foreign productions and performers that then dominated (and yet continued to have a presence on) the English stage (Robinson). It also embraced bourgeois respectability. Middle-class audiences, in the aftermath of the riots that gave them a political platform, pointedly adopted an attitude of "respectful silence" and polite decorum in order to differentiate their behavior from the loud chatter and exhibitionist characteristic of the eighteenth-century aristocracy.[88]

This brief account of the foundational role patent theaters played in constructing nineteenth-century national culture does not, of course, represent the diverse and rich performative landscape of music halls and burlesque and pantomime theaters that accommodated working-class audiences before the Theater Act of 1843. Although

[87] For a complete history of the reconstruction of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, as well as the Old Price Riots, see Robinson.
[88] For more on the evolution of audience behavior and the rise of "quiet listening," see Hall-Witt.

Victorian theater became no less diverse after 1843 (if anything, what was formerly considered lowbrow entertainment was absorbed by mainstream culture),[89] the sudden legal availability of unadulterated performances of Shakespeare's plays—already conscripted into national culture during the riots—marked both a degree of democratization in the theater and the importance of its continued role in a homogenizing nationalist project (Newey 125). Take, for example, Wilde's satirical portrayal of the Jewish theater manager in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, whose boast that his "five bankruptcies were entirely due to 'The Bard'" is an obvious gambit at aligning his ethnically and religiously-othered identity with what he believes to be Dorian and Lord Henry's unimpeachable Englishness (57). For working-class theaters like his, the most direct path to respectability and cultural inclusion would have been through staging standards like *Romeo and Juliet*, a situation that remains relatively unchanged even a century later.

If the interplay between auditorium inclusiveness and division and the homogenization of theatrical productions through absorption and appropriation ultimately mirrored the nineteenth century's problematic consolidation of the British public under the banner of national culture, theater décor and furnishings likewise reflected the period's complex negotiations of Britain's increasingly imperial identity. Although late eighteenth-century English theater architects may have looked toward France and Versailles for inspiration,[90] eventually the light colors and "delicate designs" of Georgian theater were replaced by the darker colors and more ornate fittings of the Victorian era as

[89] For more on the diversity of Victorian popular theater and music halls, see Davis and Holland, Bailey, and Kift.
[90] Carlson 182. According to Carlson, "Fashionable English theatres of the nineteenth century most often looked to French decorative motifs from the previous century, then widely considered the ultimate expression of refined elegance" (191).

theater managers turned their gaze from the continent to the colonies for inspiration.[91] In addition to costuming their theater interiors in colonial furnishings, theater managers also relied on the exoticism of the East to transport their patrons to the realm of fantasy; by the end of century, an "Indian entrance hall, a Japanese vestibule, [or] a Moorish smoking room" were commonplace (Carlson 191).

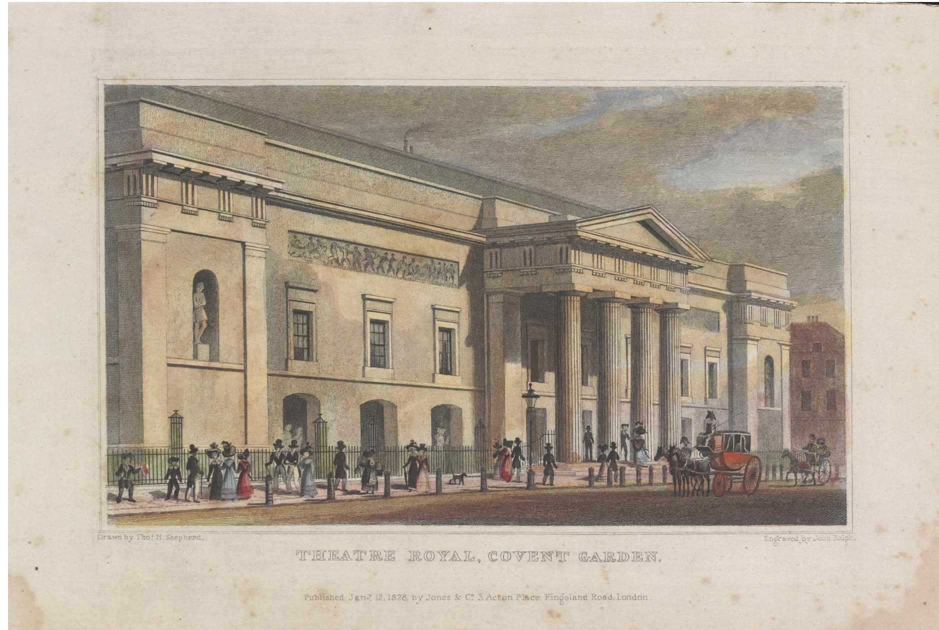

Figure 4.2: John Rolph, *Theatre Royal, Covent Garden*. 1828. Engraving. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Meanwhile, the exteriors of opera houses and other major theaters were designed to underscore their position as public monuments (Carlson 182), as exemplified in the entrance to the Royal Opera House Covent Garden ("New Covent Garden") (Figure 4.2). And although almost every major European city in this period featured one of these monumental theaters, each was intended as an emblem of national superiority, a perhaps ironic development given the profound influence of the pan-European exchange in architectural ideologies and theatrical productions on the Victorian theater. Not limited to

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[91] For more on period specific color schemes and décor, see Booth 63.

impressive entrances and faux-exotic furnishings, Britain's imperial aspirations were also represented on the stage in the form of archaeological realism. Taking the Victorian theater by storm in the latter half of the century, the trend in recreating contemporary archaeological digs and historic scenes prompted stage managers and set designers to produce exact replicas of ancient buildings and dress (Booth 96). Inspired by nineteenth-century archaeological discoveries made possible by imperial conquest, these reproductions of often-exotic locales allowed audiences to consume imperialist fantasies of exploration and acquisition.

On stage, realism dominated Victorian theater culture in the form of realistic stage effects. That dominion extended beyond the reproduction of famous digs and empires to the more quotidian—i.e. street, business, and domestic scenes—and the fantastic. By the nineteenth century, the forestages of early modern theaters had almost completely receded behind proscenium arches that increasingly resembled massive gold picture frames (Booth 71).[92] Combined with the artistic elements of expertly painted backdrops, beautifully crafted set pieces, and focused lighting, the mechanical elements of traps, flies, and even treadmills allowed for the staging of highly convincing hauntings, train wrecks, and horse chases (Figure 4.3). As Victorian audiences enjoyed the sumptuous surroundings of the auditorium, beneath the stage and behind the scenes large crews navigated mazes of traps, ropes, and bridges that evoked the "tween-decks area of a ship" (Booth 78). Verging on the cinematic, and producing the illusion that the audience was no longer in a theater at all, stage effects were crucial the development of the realistic "stage picture," and reflected a general cultural and aesthetic embrace of realism in

[92] As Russell Jackson notes, the "picture frame" stage was made literal, when "In 1880 Sir Squire Bancroft altered the Haymarket Theatre in London, placing a gilded picture frame round the proscenium opening" (57).

multiple media, such as painting and (obviously more important for this project) literature.

Figure 4.3: "A Glance Behind the Curtain." *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. October 1854. Newsprint. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

In all their verisimilitude and popularity with audiences, Victorian stage effects can also be credited with helping consolidate the public and arouse bourgeois consumerism. Specifically addressing mid-century sensation dramas' ability to thrill their audiences, Lynn Voskuil claims that this collective response "constituted a kind of affective adhesive that massed [spectators] to each other in an inchoate but tenacious incarnation of the nineteenth-century English public sphere" (64). She traces the roots of this "affective adhesive" to the remarkable realism of mid-century stage technologies that thrilled audiences, and to the stage sets that carefully replicated the furnishings of Victorian streets and homes.[93] Moreover, citing George Henry Lewes's observation that Victorian theater culture was "premised on the skill of watching oneself and others," Voskuil connects the visual culture of the theater to the visual culture of the Great Exhibition and the growth of modern commodity culture (Voskuil 76). She argues that in fostering "collective self-consciousness," the theater "guaranteed the efficient growth of…conspicuous consumption" (69). Conspicuous consumption of the sort Voskuil addresses is certainly on display in the nineteenth-century society of Brontë's *Villette*. Although *Villette* takes place in a fictional French-Belgian speaking city instead of London, the following section will demonstrate that the close cultural connection between the Victorian theater and the Great Exhibition is tightly woven into the fabric of Brontë's text, as it examines what it means to be marginalized, nearly ostracized from public life and wholly alienated by a doctrinally-inflected national culture.

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[93] As Voskuil notes: "In their precision, Victorian sets were spectacles of nineteenth century commodity culture, their builders using and replicating the familiar objects that filled Victorian streets and homes as well as the grander manufactured items (like trains) that propelled Victorian industry…all these were reproduced in meticulous detail on stages revolutionized by the same technologies that produced the ever proliferating commodities" (79).

Spectacles of Sincere Worship: Performing National Identity in *Villette*

On June 24th, 1851, Charlotte Brontë wrote her friend Ellen Nussey a brief account of the activities filling her days during a month-long trip to London. Between dinners and breakfasts, a declined invitation to a party and an engagement to visit with "Mrs. Gaskell," Brontë records what must have been an exciting weekend, even if only for its connection to so many current political and social sensations. She writes:

> On Saturday I went to hear and see Rachel; a wonderful sight, terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet, and revealed a glimpse of hell. I shall never forget it. She made me shudder to the marrow of my bones; in her some fiend has certainly taken up an incarnate home. She is not a woman; she is a snake; she is the ---. On Sunday I went to the Spanish Ambassador Chapel, where Cardinal Wiseman, in his archiepiscopal robes and mitre, held in confirmation. The whole scene was impiously theatrical. Yesterday (Monday) I was sent for at ten to breakfast with Mr. Rogers, the patriarch-poet. […] After Breakfast Sir David Brewster came to take us to the Crystal Palace. (Letter 519, *The Brontës: Life and Letters* 521).

Here is a telling reversal of associations, where a Catholic service is little more than theater and a theater performance offers a "glimpse of hell" to reveal the devil herself. Capped off efficiently with a trip to the Crystal Palace—which Brontë elsewhere compares to "a bazaar or fair as Eastern genii might have created" (Letter 514, *The Brontës: Life and Letters* 216)—Brontë's letter to Nussey condenses a series of events into a set of thematic entanglements that are played out in her final novel *Villette*. In this section I examine the constellation of religion, nationalism, and bourgeois consumerism in the theatrical venues of *Villette*'s "The Concert" and "Vashti" chapters. I argue that Brontë strategically disrupts the projections of cultural unity and collectivity fostered by these venues through a recasting of nineteenth-century stage effects into a series of Gothic tropes: the figure of the nun, the comparison of Madame Walravens to an evil fairy, and the hallucinatory quality of the park festival. Although the novel ostensibly

critiques the culture of the fictional Belgian-Catholic Labassecour, I argue that it also levels a tacit criticism at English culture through its allusive portrayal of the theater and its protagonist's ultimate marginalization in this space. Moreover, its unconventional ending points to the narrative failures of the nineteenth-century British novel.

Begun the same year as Brontë's London trip, but mainly composed between March and November of 1852, *Villette* was published by Smith, Elder in 1853. Generally accepted to be in part based on her experiences as a student and teacher in Brussels, Brontë's last novel provides a first-person account of protagonist Lucy Snowe's emigration from England to the titular town of Villette (capital of Labassecour) after the dissolution of her family and the death of her employer. Finding work as an English teacher in the pensionnat of Madame Beck, Lucy nonetheless feels alienated as a Protestant in a majority-Catholic society. Faced with either constant scrutiny or the threat of conversion, Lucy finds temporary succor in the renewed company of her long-lost friends and countrymen the (aptly, homonymically named) Brettons, and in her friendship with fellow-teacher and later love interest M. Paul. This companionship is but short-lived; in *Villette*, whose setting Eva Badowska trenchantly identifies as a consumer's paradise (1513), financial concerns trump national and romantic affiliations. Although Lucy eventually attains professional and commercial success by opening her own school, her happiness is frustrated by her estrangement from the upwardly mobile Brettons and by the supposed (but unconfirmed) death of her benefactor and fiancé, M. Paul.[94] In the end, Lucy is so marginalized that the novel closes not with any account of

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[94] Brontë famously tempered the tragic ending of *Villette*, allowing the reader to decide whether M. Paul perished at sea or not, in order to please her father and meet his desire for a happy ending. For an extensive discussion and overview of the scholarship pertaining to *Villette*'s indeterminate ending, see Lawson.

her future, but rather the futures of those characters who tried to keep her from finding love, acceptance, and companionship in M. Paul, and who leveraged Lucy's religious difference in order to protect their own financial interests. Ultimately, in *Villette*'s conclusion—pointedly and intentionally unlike *Jane Eyre*'s—the two most coveted resolutions to nineteenth-century realist fiction, romantic and economic fulfillment, are left at odds with each other.[95]

As I suggest in the introduction to this chapter, the dominant narrative pattern of *Villette* is its cycle of Lucy's repeated isolation and loss. Each of the novel's three volumes opens in the comfortable safety of a familiar environment and closes with Lucy alienated and alone. The first volume opens in the Brettons' English home during one of Lucy's childhood visits and recounts a series of subsequent losses of family and friends; it eventually closes with Lucy lost and weary in a stormy Villette, eventually collapsing on the steps of Catholic church after confessing her despondency to the priest. The second volume opens in an uncanny replica of her childhood bedroom at the Brettons' and signals a significant restaging of the previous volume. Despite achieving her greatest level of intimacy with the Brettons, this middle volume concludes with a cooling of relations between Lucy and her friends and the painful realization that her friendship with Dr. Bretton will never be more than just that. Although the final volume does not return to the Bretton home, it does open with Lucy finally feeling at home at the Rue Fossette and fostering a relationship with M. Paul, albeit a doomed one. Unlike the domestic and domestic-educational spaces that are the sites of each volume's beginning and end,

[95] In another letter to Ellen Nussey, Brontë explains her last protagonist's intentionally frosty demeanor and grim life. Brontë writes, "As to the character of Lucy Snowe, my intention from the first was that she should not occupy the pedestal to which *Jane Eyre* was raised by some injudicious admirers. She is where I meant her to be, and where no charge of self-laudation can touch her" (Letter 624, *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, 314).

purpose-built theaters serve as significant spaces of illusive connectivity and disillusioned alienation. Emplotted within the novel's second volume and the physical middle of the text, the chapters in which Lucy visits these theatrical spaces are the peak of her relationship with the British Protestant Brettons. They serve as a departure from her characteristic isolation and a canvas against which she projects her desired absorption into the Bretton clan. However, the heightened publicity of these venues both marks the apotheosis of Lucy's sense of social fulfillment and inclusion within Villette *and* serves as a physical articulation of a society inhospitable to Lucy's frustrated desire for a sense of belonging; their design and décor evoke an intersecting set of religious, national, and class affiliations that Lucy identifies as foreign and alienating.

Many scholars have noted the prevalence of theatricality in *Villette*, and with good reason; besides trips to the two explicitly theatrical spaces addressed in this chapter, the novel is punctuated by other notable instances of performance: Lucy's figurative performance of authority as a teacher on the *estrade*—or stage—of the classroom; her literal performance in the school play at the Rue Fossette; and the dramatic nature of her drug-induced wanderings through a festival in the park have all garnered critical attention.[96] But like of much of contemporary scholarship on Victorian theater culture, this vein of *Villette* scholarship has emphasized the performative element of the theater over its venues. Diane Hoeveler's examination of Brontë's attentiveness to the material realities of the nineteenth-century theater is the rare exception. Her reading of the novel's gothic tropes as an "internalization and critique of gothic theatrical technology" informs

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[96] See for example Joseph Litvak's "Scenes of Writing, Scenes of Instruction: Authority and Subversion in *Villette*;" Anne W. Jackson's "It 'Might Gift Me with a World of Delight': Charlotte Brontë and the Pleasures of Acting;" and Anita Levy's "Public Spaces, Private Eyes: Gender and the Social Work of Aesthetics in Charlotte Brontë's Villette."

my own analysis; however, her conclusion that this narrative strategy is a projection of Brontë's desire to "believe that all of life's experiences ultimately occur within the mind" (n.p.) leaves aside the novel's engagement with "matter[s] of public interest" and its critique of the narrative norms of Victorian realism.

Despite Brontë's own letter to her publisher claiming "*Villette* touches on no matter of public interest. I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is no use trying" (Letter 592 *The Brontës: Life and Letters* 282), scholars have noted the novel's engagement with several prominent nineteenth-century political issues, particularly those referenced in Brontë's letter to Nussey. For example, several scholars have pointed to the novel's use of mid-nineteenth century anti-Catholic rhetoric (vitriol instigated by Cardinal Wiseman's appointment as the Archbishop of Westminster in 1850, widely regarded as an act of papal aggression) as constructing an English nationality as Protestant.[97] Meanwhile, others have connected the "catalogue of objects" populating the world of Villette to the industrial, imperial showcase of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and have argued that the novel interrogates the conspicuous consumption of mid-century middle-class life.[98] It is significant, if not entirely unsurprising, that both of these contemporary public issues are played out in one of the novel's most public spaces, the performance venue of the first explicitly theatrical chapter, "The Concert."

In this chapter Lucy is invited to join the Brettons for a royal concert and charity auction and introduced for the first time to both public entertainment and a purpose-built theatre venue (unlike the temporary stage erected for the school play). Arriving in their carriage, Lucy notes the concert's location in the heart of the city's commercial district

[97] For more on the narrative implications of *Villette*'s anti-Catholic strain see Clark-Beattie, Heady and Longmuir. For a counter-reading of religion in the novel, see Wong.
[98] See Badowska and Glen.

and describes her surprise at "[h]ow brilliant seemed the shops! How glad, gay, and abundant glowed the tide of life along the pavement" (278). Pulling up to the "great illuminated building," she is so overwhelmed by her crowded and bright surroundings that she only passively finds herself mounting the "majestic staircase" to a pair of "great doors closed solemnly" (278). Claiming that she "hardly noticed by what magic these doors were made to roll back," she discovers behind them a grand hall with "sweeping circular walls, and domed hollow ceiling," whose interior reveals a triangulation of the theater, the church, and the consumer's paradise, a translation of Brontë's experiences in London and letter to Nussey. Lucy sees it as:

> …all dead gold (*thus with nice art was it stained*), relieved by cornicing, fluting and garlandry, either bright, *like gold* burnished, or snow-white, *like alabaster* …wherever drapery hung, wherever carpets were spread, or cushions placed, the sole colour employed was deep crimson. Pendant from the dome, flamed a mass that dazzled me—a mass, I thought, of rock-crystal, sparkling with facets, streaming with drops, ablaze with stars, and gorgeously tinged with dews of gems dissolved, or fragments of rainbows shivered. It was only the chandelier, reader, but for me it seemed the *work of eastern genii:* I almost looked to see if a huge, dark cloudy hand—that of the Slave of the Lamp—were not hovering in the lustrous and perfumed atmosphere of the cupola, guarding its wondrous treasure. (emphasis added, 279)

Although scholars almost unanimously agree that the later "Vashti" chapter was inspired by Brontë's experience of having seen the famous actress Rachel Félix perform on the London stage in the summer of 1851,[99] we might also trace the influence of that performance in Lucy's above description of the great hall of "The Concert." Furnished in a distinctly Victorian color palette of crimson, gold, and ivory, and with a superabundance of decorative elements (Booth 63), the *grande salle* of Villette bears a striking resemblance to the St. James's Theatre—where Brontë likely watched Rachel

[99] See Surridge.

perform—suggesting Brontë modeled the concert venue on that particular theater (Figure 4.3),[100] which therefor a reading of this concert hall as an explicitly theatrical space. Rendered with a striking mix of confused enchantment and sharp observation, Lucy's portrayal of the *grande salle* and its commercial environs is also clearly evocative of the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Indeed, Lucy's invocation of the "eastern genii" in her description of the chandelier, the first form of gas-powered auditorium illumination (Booth 83), trades in the exact same orientalist imagery that Brontë used relate her experience of the Great Exhibition in her letters,[101] while the sparkling, prismatic crystals hanging from the chandelier's boughs echo contemporary accounts of the sun's effect on the massive glass exhibition hall.

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[100] Despite the critical consensus that Brontë modeled Vashti on Rachel Felix, this scholarship has yet to examine in what specific theater Brontë would have seen the actress play. Given her regular season at the St. James's theater during Brontë's summer in London, it is likely that this was the venue that shaped Brontë's theatrical encounter with the famous actress. For more on Felix's career, see Stokes. As an interesting aside, several of Wilde's plays were also staged at the St. James's. For more on these productions, see Paul C. Wadleigh's "*Earnest* at St. James's Theatre" and Lucie Sutherland's "'The Power of Attraction: the Staging of Wilde and his Contemporaries at the St. James's Theatre, 1892-1895."

[101] Referring to the chandelier description, Heather Glen notes that, not only would the reference to *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* have been familiar to Victorian readers as a description of the Great Exhibition, but that the figure of the genii also has resonances with Brontë's juvenilia (226).

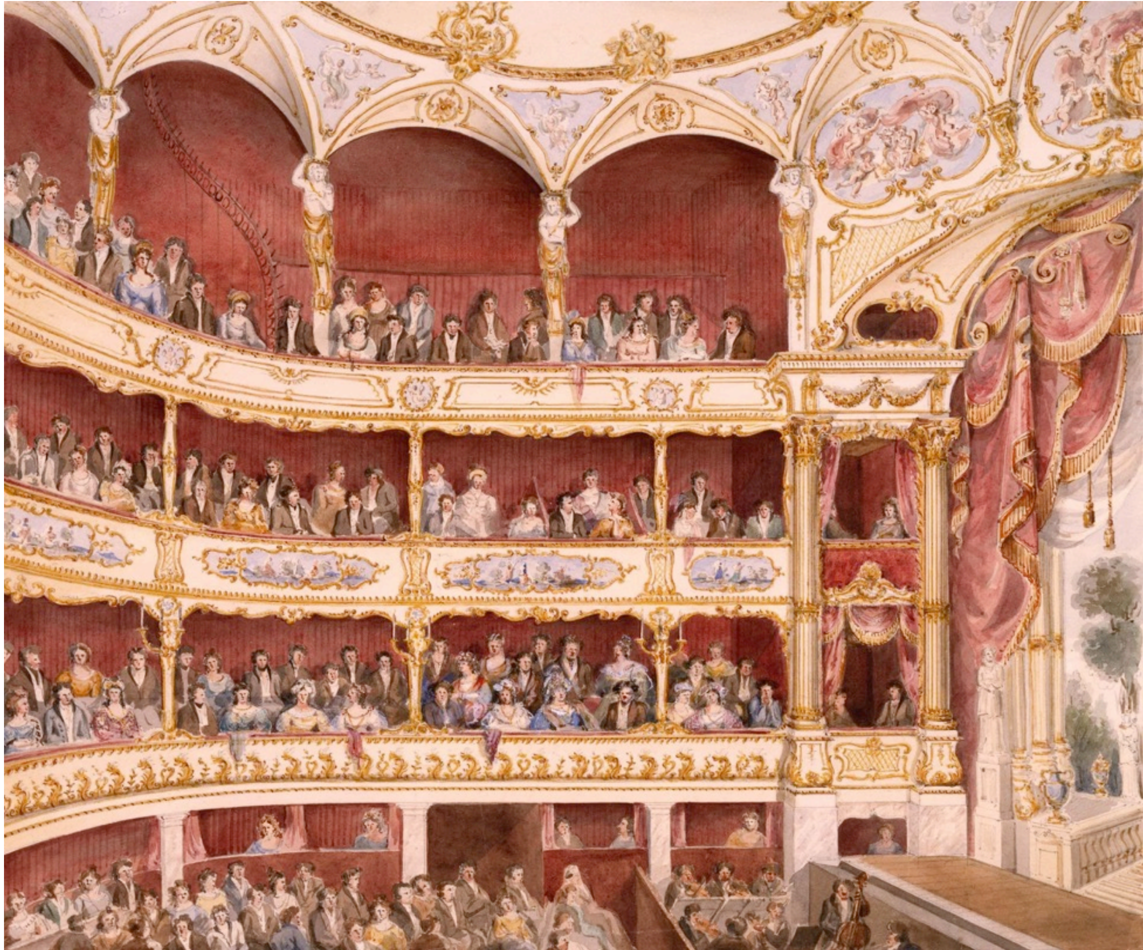

Figure 4.4: John Gregory Crace, "Interior of St James's Theatre." 1835. Watercolor. Wikimedia Commons

Anticipating Voskuil's connection of theatrical and commercial culture discussed previously, Brontë's canny merging of the theater with the Exhibition would very likely have resonated with her readers. A brief illustration: in an amusing theater review published in the *Leader* in May of 1851 by George Henry Lewes (under the pseudonym Vivian) only a month before Brontë's London visit complains of a "portly Manchester Manufacturer" mistaking his excitement for "The French Plays!" as impatience to go "up for the Great Exhibition" (421).[102] But even if Brontë's readers missed the allusion to the

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[102] The full quote is worth the citation: "The French Plays! how *could* I stay in the country and miss those? It was not to be thought of! Something of my keen and eager anticipation must have

Great Exhibition, they nonetheless would not have missed the consumerism encouraged by this theatrical space. In "The Concert," a spectacle of commodities supplants the attractions onstage; Lucy and the Brettons spend most of their time admiring the "grand toilette" of their fellow audience members in the well-lit, horseshoe shaped auditorium and are rewarded for it with the cigar box and lady's "blue and silver turban" that Lucy and Dr. John respectively win in the lottery after the show (293).

However, if the concert hall's "magic" doors and genii's lamp chandelier evoke what Voskuil identifies as the "mystifying mechanisms of consumer culture" (69) enacted by the Exhibition's transformation of commodities into a "medium of representation" (75-7), Lucy's initial observation that the golden walls are only "stained with nice art," that their cornices and flutings are only "*like* gold" or "*like* alabaster," foregrounds the artificiality of this relationship and her own cynicism towards consumer culture. Reading the auditorium and its inhabitants as all surface and no depth, Lucy observes that the native women of Villette were "models of a peculiar style of beauty…never seen in England: a solid, firm-set, sculptural style," and identifies a particular woman as being very much like the "white column, capitalled with gilding, which rose at her side" (280). Virtually melting into their surroundings, these feminine icons of Labassecourian identity are, for Lucy, indistinguishable from the furnishings of the concert hall and—given Mrs. Bretton's comment that the column-like beauty is no more than a "mighty doll in wood and wax, kid and satin" (281)—about as artificial.

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been translated by my expressive face, for a portly Manchester Manufacturer who sat in the carriage asked me if I were 'going up for the Great Exhibition?' The Exhibition indeed! I--who don't know a steam-engine from a turning lathe--and who am devoted to the Drama, pen and pencil-case--I rush up for this Monster Polytechnic!" (Lewes 421).

This unification of the artificiality of the auditorium with the consumerism on display offers insight into why Lucy, a willing participant in the voyeurism of the concert, is nonetheless uncomfortable with its reciprocity. Her discomfort is initially demonstrated through her resistance to Lewes's formulation of going to the theater to watch oneself by famously failing to recognize her own reflection when she and the Brettons pass by a massive mirror on their way to their seats (279).[103] Having claimed only moments before that she "was not conscious whither" they were headed, Lucy first identifies the party in the mirror entirely by their clothes and takes herself for a stranger because she is wearing a new gown expressly ordered by Mrs. Bretton for the occasion—the amusingly exclamatory "pink dress!" This incident presages the connection of theater dress and theater architecture forged by the "sculptural" beauty above, and emphasizes Lucy's lack of familiarity with both. Later, when Ginevra Fanshawe turns her opera glasses back at the Bretton party and Lucy shrinks back into shadows, or when M. Paul levels a sardonic stare at her new outfit and she sinks her face into the sleeve of Dr. John's coat, Lucy's passive failure to identify herself is transformed into actively avoiding identification by others. Ironically, Dr. John's misreading of Lucy's turn towards his sleeve as an effort to escape "these crowding burghers" (bourgeoisie), if not literally correct, hits the truth. Lucy regularly identifies Madame Beck and Zelie St. Pierre as bourgeois in order to distinguish herself from these women with whom she shares a profession and approximate class position; she just as regularly predicates this distinction on the women's obsession with fashion, a quality closely associated in the novel with the luxuries of the Belgian and the Catholic Church. Having initially rejected

[103] Keryn Carter reads this evasion as a refusal to "reflect in the surface of the text an image of herself as a 'woman' formed to the shape demanded by masculine desire" (6); however, I read it as an initial unwillingness to participate in the specular mechanics of consumer culture.

the dress with the claim that she "would as soon clothe myself in the costume of a Chinese lady of rank" (276), Lucy clearly construes the brightly hued garment, and the venue that demands it, as both bourgeois and alien to her.

The Brettons are of course responsible for her new gown, but Lucy nonetheless ignores their complicity in the bourgeois consumer culture of the theater and instead frames their difference from the crowd (and hence her alignment with them) around their English identities. Having already decided that Dr. John is "a true young English gentleman" with a "not unbenignant" countenance (128), Lucy declares during the concert that Mrs. Bretton is a model "English, middle-class gentlewoman" (289). Notably, middle-class is not equivalent with bourgeois by Lucy's terms; nor is Englishness necessarily guaranteed by nativity. Ginevra Fanshawe's body may be distinguished as legibly English at the concert, but her "little spectacle" of wearing the middle-class Dr. John's bracelet while flirting with the aristocratic Count de Hamal is dismissed by Lucy as a product of her foreign education, one that Lucy believes fosters bourgeois acquisitiveness and has likewise resulted in Ginevra's flippant inability to tell Romanism and Protestantism apart.

Religion is foundational to Lucy's sense of national identity. Brontë translates the allusively English theater into an emblem of Labassecourian national culture through a conflation of religion and nationality, and the concert hall ultimately operates as a narrative stand-in for the Catholic Church that alienates Lucy in volumes one and three. Compare the gaudy gold dome of the auditorium to the only other domed structure in the novel, "THE DOME" of St. Paul's Cathedral looming over London in the novel's sixth chapter. Lucy describes it as "solemn," "dark-blue," and "dim," a figure that moves her

"inner self" and shakes her spirit's "always-fettered wings half loose" (111). Unlike the sublime St. Paul's, which appeals to Lucy's soul, the dome of the theater appeals to the senses. Its effusion of floral garlandry and excess of cushions and drapery echoes an earlier assessment of the Rue Fossette's "chains [of] flowers" and attention to "sensual indulgence" as markers of "a subtle essence of Romanism" (194).

Besides the Brettons, the only other individual with whom Lucy identifies in this space is the King of Labassecour. She finds in him a fellow sufferer of "Hypochondria" and postulates, "it was the foreign crown pressing the King's brows which bent them to that particular and painful fold" (283). This is suggestive less of Lucy's potential connection with Villette society than her belief in the King's own alterity within it. As Kate Lawson notes, Brontë likely modeled Villette's King on King Leopold I, whom she saw at a concert she attended in Brussels in 1843, and who was a Protestant leader in a majority Catholic country. Lucy's claim that she can detect in him a suffering invisible to every Labassecourian present implies a connection forged by a shared foreignness predicated not by nativity but by religion, while her projection of her own past bout of depression onto the King foreshadows the return of her loneliness and isolation (284). Lucy's conflation of religious, national, and ultimately, class identities—of bourgeois Belgian Catholicism vs. the middle-class respectability of English Protestantism—blinds Lucy to the Brettons' own bourgeois tendencies and buoys her hopes of a continued friendship even after her upcoming return to Madame Beck's school. But "The Concert" marks the apex of the party's intimacy. Lucy secures Dr. John's promise that he will write, and write he does; however, any intensification beyond this point is foreclosed.

The first indication that Lucy and Dr. John's correspondence will not meet the romantic ends that Lucy so clearly desires (and vehemently represses) arrives in the form of the nun-like figure "gliding out from the direction of the black recess haunted by the malefactor cloaks" (315-6) while she reads over Dr. John's first letter in the privacy of the school attic. Pointing to the flickering lights and ominous noises of the attic scene, and the "stock presence" of female ghosts and nuns on the early nineteenth-century British stage, Hoeveler identifies in the nun a direct allusion to Victorian theatrical effects and magic lantern shows. The apparition's subsequent appearances only strengthen the connection: the figure hides behind an obviously theatrical "scarlet curtain" when Lucy fetches her dress for the Vashti performance (327); a bright ray of white light shines down, as if from the moon, and illuminates the nun's later intrusion on Lucy's burial of Dr. John's letters in a manner that evokes the use of limelight (368-9);[104] and the strange sounds of a swaying tree and the ringing of a prayer bell (common sound effects) summon the nun for the final time, interrupting Lucy and M. Paul's first truly intimate conversation.

Like the nun, the other literary gothic elements of the text also bear traces of nineteenth-century stagecraft and special effects. The theater fire that ignites at the climax of Vashti's performance would have been immediately recognizable to Victorian readers as an all-too-real and terrifying possibility; as Booth puts it, "Ever since the adoption of gas as a means of illuminating the stage in the first half of the nineteenth century, every theatre in Britain had become a potential death trap" (68). Lucy's characterization of Madame Walravens as an "evil fairy" who appears from an upper

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[104] Limelight was introduced to the theater in 1837 and by mid-century was an "indispensable part of stage lighting" (Booth 86).

story hidden behind a painted panel, and whose exit coincides with a “peal of thunder, and a flash of lightning” (461-2), calls to mind both the traps and flies used for the appearance of ghosts and fairies on stage and the theatrical trope of the storm (Fig. 5). And the fête in the park’s collection of “altar and temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphinx...the wonders and symbols of Egypt” (525) reflects the mid-century fad of ensuring that exotic historical sets as archaeologically correct as possible.[105]

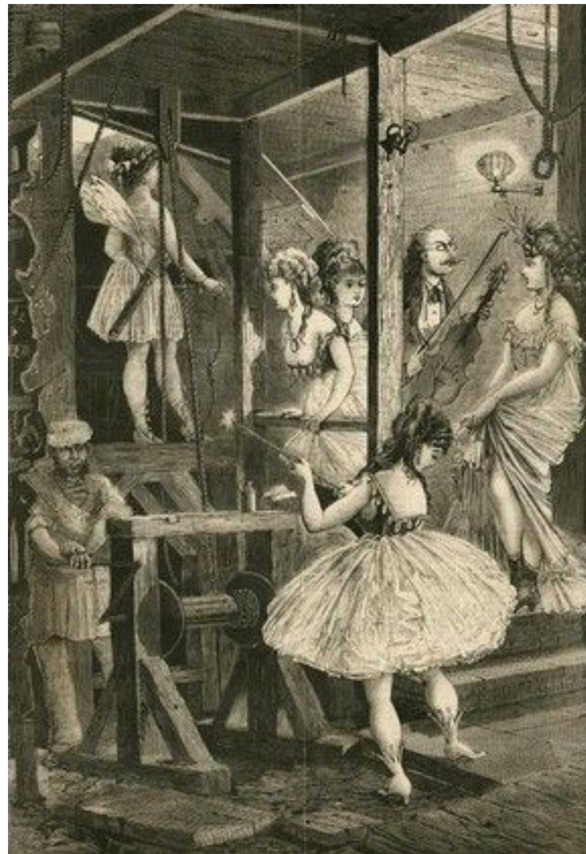

Figure 4.5: *Newspaper Illustration of a Star Trap*. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Notably, none of these gothic intrusions take place before Lucy’s introduction to theatrical entertainment, and each episode either precipitates a rift in, or calls attention to, an outside pressure on Lucy’s affiliation with and romantic attachment to Dr. John and

[105] Booth 96. Heather Glen, on the other hand, connects the jumble of archaeological structures in the park to the “extraordinary jumble on display at the Crystal Palace” (214).

M. Paul, respectively. For example, despite Dr. John and Lucy bond over the spectacle of the concert/theater, his reaction to what he terms the "spectral illusion" of the nun reveals the material distance between them. Diagnosing the vision as a side effect of her loneliness after parting from him and his mother, Dr. Bretton does not then invite increased intimacy with Lucy, but rather instructs her to "cultivate happiness" (321). This advice appears as little more than mockery to Lucy; she inwardly laments that "Happiness is not a potato, to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure" (321), and openly challenges Dr. John to acknowledge that his happiness is a product of circumstance rather than cultivation. Spectral or not, the nun is a jarring reminder, one made more terrible to Lucy for its overt Catholicism, of the isolation that single, middle-class women without families faced at mid-century, in England or elsewhere.[106] Furthermore, the nun's private appearance, and perversion of the Catholic-coded indulgences of the concert venue into Gothic decadence, suggests that this reinscription of theatrical effect projects a counter-narrative to the collective pleasures of the theater auditorium, one that emphasizes isolation and privation.

When the nun reappears a few weeks later, as Lucy prepares to accompany Dr. John to an opera to which she was only invited as an afterthought, the spectral figure foreshadows the ultimate demise of their friendship. Like the theater of "The Concert," the opera hall in the "Vashti" chapter is crowded with Villette society and decorated in crimson, and echoes Brontë's 1851 letter to Nussey regarding Rachel Felix, depicting the actress Vashti as demon, devil, and hell. As in "The Concert," Lucy again projects herself onto a staged figure; however, this time it is with Vashti and not with the King of

[106] For more on *Villette* as political commentary on the mid-century panic over "excess" women and emigrant spinsters, see Longmuir.

Labassecour. Recently reminded by the nun that it is her gendered class position, in addition to her national-cum-religious identity, that marginalizes her within Villette society, this projection is grounded in Lucy's admiration of Vashti's passionate female power rather than in the shared depression and dispossession of the Protestant hypochondriac.[107]

Turning to Dr. John during the performance, Lucy discovers in him a different response to Vashti's performance than her own. Inwardly exclaiming, "Cool young Briton! The pale cliffs of his own England do not look down on the tides of the channel more calmly than he watched the Pythian inspiration of that night," Lucy presses him for his opinion and is disappointed to learn, "he judged her as a woman, not as an artist: it was a branding judgment" (331). A reversal of her previous invocation of Dr. John's English identity as a means of affiliation, Lucy's use of the singular possessive in "*his* own England" reveals her sudden disillusionment with a friendship predicated entirely upon her too-rigid construction of national identity as constituted via a shared religion, a construction which failed to fully account for the intersections of gender and class.

When the gaslight fire breaks out in the theater moments later, the stalls that had neatly ordered the bourgeois patrons to whom they catered are immersed in chaos, and the literal and figurative class boundaries of the theater are abandoned. Saving a woman nearly trampled by the mob, Dr. John is reintroduced to his and Lucy's childhood companion Polly Home—now titled the Countess Paulina Mary Home de Bassompierre. Although Dr. John and Paulina's father may identify each other as English in their first exchange, the de Bassompierres' new French name, and Lucy's later realization that Dr.

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[107] See Surridge's reading of the fiery Vashti as a narrative double for cold and quiet Lucy Snowe.

John's infatuation first with Ginevra Fanshawe and later Paulina are telling of his social ambitions, underscore how national affiliations are not excluded from class considerations. Dr. John is happy to abandon his friendship with the stridently English Lucy to better court the wealthy and cosmopolitan Paulina. He does not share in Lucy's aversion to Labassecourian bourgeois values and social climbing. After the events at the opera, Lucy does not hear from the Brettons (mother or son) for seven weeks; supplanted in their affections by a beautiful woman with a dowry, she is left to bury her letters under the watchful eye of the nun.

Lucy's estrangement from her countrymen in the end of the second volume resets the novel's narrative rhythm. Loss is again met with potential connection and her break with the Brettons foments her relationship with M. Paul. However, even if Lucy can learn to look past schematic differences in religion and nationality, she still underestimates the influence of bourgeois consumerism, and covetousness more generally, on her personal life. The pattern established by the appearance of the nun after Lucy's brief affiliation with the Brettons is repeated in her stilted romance with the moody professor. The nun (later affiliated with M. Paul's first love Justin Marie), Madame Walravens, and Lucy's dazed trip to the park are all gothic irruptions within the text's otherwise realist narrative. These irruptions are not just evocative of the theaters that precipitate them, but as it turns out, actual performances in costuming, direction, and illusion. In the case of M. Paul, the interference of these gothic elements in his relationship with Lucy is neither incidental nor predicated by their difference in position and perspective, as it is in the case of John Bretton. Instead, Madame Beck and Père Silas manipulate these illusions in order to protect their financial interest in M. Paul; they may not create the nun, but they certainly

manage the narrative that prevents Lucy from examining the strange figure further. In the end, although Lucy wins M. Paul's heart and a promise of marriage, she cannot overcome "the whole conjuration, the secret junta" (533) of Madam Beck, Père Silas, and Madame Walravens and prevent him from voyaging to the Caribbean in their interest.

In her final novel Brontë holds out the promise of romantic fulfillment, a promise extended with the exorcism of the nun after the fête in the park and tantalizingly followed by Lucy's engagement; however, this fulfillment is never realized, for the theatrics have not ended. The roar of the tempest—evoking the common theatrical trope of the shipwreck and echoing its earlier use as a metaphor for the dissolution of Lucy's family—is the closing action of the text. Lucy's future is supplanted by the fates of the junta, positioned as a sort of postscript and closing commentary on the un-narratibility of a single woman's life within the framework of Victorian fiction. In the darkest of Brontë's novels, the fantastic elements typically found on the Victorian theater's stages are reinscripted within Lucy's private life as gothic apparitions whose arrival presages the interference of Villette's regime of bourgeois consumerism in Lucy's personal life. Like nearly everything else in these theatrical spaces, any potential reversal of the novel's dominant narrative structure of alienation and loss is revealed to be nothing more than illusion. Undercutting and cutting across the alliances forged by national identity or romantic sensibility are the affiliations of class and bourgeois values, affiliations closely linked to the Victorian novel as a form. Brontë's deployment of the special effects of the theater—which, as noted above, were also closely linked to the technologies of commodity culture—ultimately foregrounds the illusory nature of the collectivity

promised by nationalism *and* novelistic resolutions, particularly as it applies to "a woman *without*."[108]

This attention to the novel's resolution and its resistance to narrative convention is key to appreciating the internalizations of Victorian stagecraft as gothic irruptions within the realist genre. As Heather Glen notes, "[Lucy's] narrative cannot assume the configurations of a realism that presupposes that all inhabit the same reassuring world" (257). I suggest that Brontë ironically disrupts the "configurations of realism" through the juxtaposition of narrative realism and theatrical realism; held in counterpoint and reflecting each other, these technologies of representation distort each other and their projections of British culture. Although Brontë masks her critique of British society through Lucy's displacement in the Belgian-Catholic Labassecour, this removal is precipitated by narrative circumstances that already reveal the fictiveness of a consolidated British public and cohesive national culture and, I argue, only serves as a fairly transparent scapegoat.

Like Brontë, Oscar Wilde also transposes corruptive influences onto a Francophone culture in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*—this time in the form of a book—as a screen for his engagement with the moral hypocrisy of a consolidated British public.[109] In the following section, I examine how Wilde draws upon a narrative strategy similar to Brontë's as he deploys Victorian theater culture and stagecraft as a means of critiquing late-Victorian class, imperial, and sexual politics.

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[108] As Gilbert and Gubar famously dubbed Lucy (400); however, their reading of Brontë's feminism in the novel is more optimistic than mine, emphasizing the open-endedness of Lucy's refusal to confirm M. Paul's death rather than my focus on the marginalization implied by her absence from the narrative epilogue.
[109] For more on the negative influence of French culture in the novel, see Raby.

“All art is quite useless”: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and The Failure of Empathy

If class and consumerism are the prevailing organizing principles in Brönte’s *Villette*, these issues are only amplified in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Class conflict dominates Wilde’s novel; Lucy may dither over the differences between the Belgian bourgeoisie and English middle class, but *Dorian Gray*’s narrative landscape is markedly divided between the opera houses, parks, and drawing rooms of the English aristocracy and the dingy playhouses, docks, and opium dens of its laboring classes. Yet despite its depiction of the distance between rich and poor—a distance made literal in the narrative’s charting of characters’ movements across London—the politics of Wilde’s novel are not nearly so sharply defined. If Lucy’s exclusion from the concluding lines of *Villette* functions a critique of the marginalization of a “woman *without*,” and the novel as a whole attempts to dismantle the fiction that any sort of coherent national culture exists outside of consumerism, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is both more pointed and less specific than Brontë’s novel in its critique of Victorian society. Violent deaths, not social isolation, are the consequences of the class antinomies and late-Victorian sexual and imperial politics that propel this novel’s plot.[110] However, any cultural critique elicited by these casualties is complicated by the narrative’s investment in an aestheticism that benefits from the exploitation of marginalized populations and inhibits the empathy of the text’s aristocratic victimizers.

[110] Due to Wilde’s own homosexuality, a great deal, if not the majority, of the scholarship on the novel has focused on its sexual politics and its homoerotic subtext. For just a few examples of scholarship that takes Dorian and Basil’s homosexuality as given, see Carroll, Davies, and Eells.

Originally published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in July of 1890, and later revised and published as a book in 1891,[111] *The Picture Dorian Gray* was a literary sensation for its subversive content and flippant attitudes towards the respectability politics of the English middle class. Opening with a preface composed of aphorisms about the nature of art, beauty, realism, and performance, the novel tells the story of its titular protagonist's Faustian bargain to preserve his youth and beauty by having his sins writ across his portrait's face rather than his own. Taking pleasure in the transformation of his likeness, Dorian indulges in sexual, narcotic, and fetishistic vices, leaving a trail of victims in his wake: his jilted fiancée Sybil, an actress who commits suicide after Dorian dumps her over a poor performance; Basil Hallward, Dorian's portraitist whom he murders to keep his supernatural secret safe; Alan Campbell, a friend who takes his own life after being blackmailed by Dorian (presumably for his homosexuality) into disposing of Basil's body; and James Vane, Sibyl's brother, who is accidentally shot and killed while stalking Dorian at his country estate. After James's haunting death, Dorian finally resolves to be good but is disappointed to discover he cannot reverse the portrait's record of his wrongdoings. In attempting to destroy the portrait by stabbing it with a knife, Dorian ends his own life.

Part late-century revision of the silver fork novel, part romance, and part gothic thriller, Wilde's only novel pushes against "the boundaries of realistic representation and the limits of bourgeois values" (Riquelme 611).[112] As Kerry Powell suggests, this generic hybridity and challenge to the conventions of realism is most legible in the pervasive

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[111] For the purposes of this argument, this section addresses only the revised book version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, although I take Ian Small's critique that too much of the criticism on the novel is imprecise about the differences between the periodical and book versions of the text.

[112] For more scholarship on the generic hybridity of the novel, see Hannon and Waldrep.

theatricality of the novel; however, both he and Voskuil attach this theatricality to Wilde's own performative identity rather than the literal performance—Sibyl's bad acting—that is central to the novel in terms of emplotment.[113] I argue that it is the events surrounding Sibyl's failed performance that precipitate the literary gothic mode and surrealistic excesses that derail any realist impulses of the plot. Although its synesthetic descriptions and epigrammatic conversations offer an early indication of its stylistic rejection of Victorian realism, it is not until after Dorian leaves Sibyl heartbroken backstage that the narrative register decidedly shifts from conventional romance to catalogue of decadence. The working-class theater in which Sibyl performs serves as a catalyst for Dorian's simultaneously public and private performances—performances that ironically stage the political unconscious of the novel via its aesthetic antithesis.

Prior to Sibyl's failed performance and subsequent death, *Dorian Gray* is essentially the bildungsroman of the aesthete. Indeed, Dorian only meets Sibyl Vane because Lord Henry, his closest friend and mentor in dissipation, has instilled in him a "passion for sensations" that leads him to wander eastward from posh west London in search of new experiences. Stumbling into "labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares," Dorian discovers a working-class theater managed by the "hideous Jew" noted earlier in this chapter. Amused and disgusted by the manager's servility, Dorian takes a box in the "tawdry affair" of the theater. Describing his surroundings as dominated by "a vulgar-drop scene" and an auditorium "all cupids and cornucopias like a third-rate wedding cake," Dorian highlights the demographics of the theater through the geography

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[113] Powell describes *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as "a novel whose entire form and structure are theatrically based and *subversive* of the reality principle, and whose characters, above all, must finally be regarded as reincarnations of their maker—multiplications of Wilde's own frustrated personality" (104). For more on Voskuil's reading of Wilde's persona as emblematic of Victorian performativity, see Voskuil, "Wilde and Performativity" (361).

of its audience, noting that "The gallery and pit were fairly full, but the two rows of dingy stalls were quite empty, and there was hardly a person in what I suppose they called the dress-circle. Women went about with oranges and ginger beer, and there was a terrible consumption of nuts going on" (52-3). With its by-then outdated sets and décor, and expensive seats always left empty, this working-class theater emulated those monumental theaters that dominated the landscape of Victorian theater culture at mid-century to its own detriment. Joking that "It must have been like the palmy days of British drama" (54), Lord Henry sarcastically equates this déclassé theater's patrons with early modern "groundlings," thus highlighting the theater's anachronistic nature and implying a lack of aesthetic relevance within a late-century artistic context that borrowed heavily from continental composers, such as Wagner, and Japanese printmakers.[114]

Amusingly, we learn moments later that the staples of this playhouse are from those palmy days; it specializes in Shakespeare's classics. Dorian has seen Sibyl in *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *Cymbeline*. As noted in the above section on theater history, the legal availability of Shakespeare's plays in non-patent theaters after 1843 was key to the production of British national culture. These plays are also fundamental to Dorian's love for Sibyl. Delighted that she "Never" plays herself (58), Dorian only cares for Sibyl when she is literally performing the consolidation of British culture through the projection of a shared history and erasure of material difference. By transforming herself into the generically aristocratic heroines of Shakespeare's plays, Sibyl masks her own specific working-class identity as the illegitimate daughter of a

[114] The narrator describes the shadows of birds on a curtain as "producing a momentary Japanese effect" on the first page of chapter 1 (3), while Lady Henry explains, "'I like Wagner's music better than anybody's. It is so loud that one can talk the whole time without other people hearing what one says'" (49). Given Wagner's profound influence on theatrical design and operatic composition (Carlson 194), Lady Henry's backhanded compliment can be read as satirical.

failed actress. This transformation extends to her audience and results in the homogenization of the crowd; as Dorian explains, "'These common, rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures, become quite different when she is on the stage. They sit silently and watch her…She spiritualizes them, and one feels that they are the same flesh and blood as one's self'" (86). With their silent spectatorship, Sibyl's audience practices the "quiet listening" that Hall-Witt connects to the late-century societal embrace of bourgeois respectability. That Dorian requires Sibyl's talents to connect with this crowd reveals the ephemerality of a consolidated national culture and its predication on the erasure of class lines, or, at the very least, on the emulation of the middle-class by their aristocratic and impoverished compatriots. Furthermore, his admiration of her abilities discloses his own investment in romantic narratives, including the illusion of collective society, and desire to connect with the crowd despite Lord Henry's retort, "'The same flesh and blood as one's self! Oh, I hope not!'" (86).

Lord Henry need not worry. When Dorian invites him and Basil to see Sibyl perform, she fails to keep up the act and the sordid class realities of the theater become legible again. Looking out into the theater auditorium before the performance, with his aristocratic friends beside him, Dorian has a heightened awareness of the working-class audience. He is distracted by "shrill" and "discontent" laughs of the women in the pit, the conversations across the theater between "tawdry girls" and the youths who "had taken off their coats and waistcoats and hung them over the side of the gallery," and he connects his discomfort in this space, manifest as a "terribly oppressive" heat, with the set's "huge sunlight flamed like a monstrous dahlia with petals of yellow fire" (85). The

casual disorder in the auditorium and intrusiveness of the set presage Sibyl's failure to focus the audience's attention and catalyze them into a unified public. She acts terribly—"like a wooden doll" as Lord Henry puts it (89), in an echo of Mrs. Bretton's assessment of a Labassecourian girl—and can only explain after the show:

> The painted scenes were my world. I knew nothing but shadows, and I thought them real. You came—oh, my beautiful love!—and you freed my soul from prison. You taught me what reality really is. To-night, for the first time in my life, I saw through the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played. To-night, for the first time, I became conscious that the Romeo was hideous, and old, and painted, that the moonlight in the orchard was false, that the scenery was vulgar, and that the words I had to speak were unreal, were not my words, were not what I wanted to say. (90)

Sibyl's introduction to a real "Prince Charming," in the form of a wealthy aristocrat who can rescue her from a life of poverty, brings into stark relief the shoddiness of this east end theater's stagecraft. Even as she continues to rely on romantic narrative tropes to make sense of her relationship with Dorian, Sibyl realizes her framework for romantic love is no more than fantasy. Thus, her decision to act badly serves as a rejection of the staged and scripted romances that had helped forge a national culture and consolidated public; even if Sibyl remains unaware of the political implications of this "empty pageant," her "absurdly artificial" acting ironically undermines theatrical realism's illusion of authenticity by being too real.

While Dorian's love teaches Sibyl what "reality really is," her love only leads Dorian to double-down on the importance of "effect," something he cruelly suggests Sibyl is lacking after her poor performance. Embarrassed that Sibyl's performance failed to distract Lord Henry and Basil from the tawdriness of its venue, Dorian breaks off the engagement and coolly dismisses her grief with the reflection that "Sibyl Vane seemed to him to be absurdly melodramatic" (92). This insult marks the end of Dorian's desire to

feel unity with the audience of Sibyl's performances. By late-century melodrama was associated with crass consumerism, women, and the poor (Hadley 188). No longer the political tool addressed in the previous chapter, melodrama was viewed as the antithesis of aestheticism and a lower form of art. Fleeing the girl and wandering westward, reversing his absent movement towards the little theater, Dorian passes suddenly from the signs of poverty in the form of "evil houses" and "grotesque children huddled upon doorsteps" to the bustle of Covent Garden at dawn (92-3). Although he focuses on the pleasures of fresh flowers and freely offered cherries, the location of this moment of reverie is not incidental. Dorian has subconsciously sought solace from Sibyl's insistence on reality in the shadow of one of the original patent theaters of London. Demonstrating his continued commitment to the theatrical despite his disillusion in its unifying potential, Dorian now seeks out entertainment in a venue whose size and arrangement of galleries and pigeonholes will keep the realities of the lower classes out of sight. When Lord Henry informs Dorian of Sibyl's suicide the following day, he reinforces Dorian's apathetic aestheticism. He offers a trip to the opera as a form of consolation and reframes Sibyl's death as appealing to a sense of "dramatic effect." Evoking Lewes, Lord Henry argues that "Suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play; or, rather, we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthralls us" (105).

Indeed, Sibyl's death does transform Dorian into actor and spectator in a much more literal way than Lord Henry anticipates. In the first indication of the text's gothic and surrealist departure from a heretofore (somewhat) conventional Victorian romance, Dorian's portrait has changed overnight and he is transformed into a spectator of his own

secret self. The theatricality internalized in this transformation is underscored by both the painted medium of Dorian's likeness and by his literal staging of the painting. After Sibyl rejects the "painted scenes" of the stage, Dorian becomes invested in one of his own. Scene-painters were critical members of Victorian theater crews charged with creating the background and foundation of theatrical effect.[115] Basil is no scene-painter, but Dorian's painting becomes the ground upon which the novel's Gothicism, surrealism, and generic hybridity is realized. Recognizing that "there would be a real pleasure in watching it" (110), Dorian hides the portrait behind a curtain of a "purple-and-gold pall" in the attic of his home, occasionally visiting it as if going to a show (144).

Having dispatched with Dorian and Sibyl's romance, the novel is no longer bound by the narrative linearity of courtship and marriage, nor the easy equation of love with morality and its exclusion of alternative forms of desire. The chapter following Dorian's creation of a private attic theater, Chapter XI, is remarkable for its disorienting account of the influence of the French "yellow book" on Dorian's life and the interests he develops as a result. Encompassing a vague period of "several years" it eschews plot for a litany of fetishes—many of them based in performance and private theatrics—that contribute to the continued decay of his portrait. Attracted to the rituals of the Catholic church and described as hosting "curious concerts" featuring "mad gypsies," "grave yellow-shawled Tunisians," "grinning negroes," and "slim turbaned Indians" (135-7), Dorian becomes a collector of "the strangest instruments that could be found, either in the tombs of dead nations or among the few savage tribes that have survived contact with Western civilizations" (137). At his most overtly theatrical, he appears at a costume ball in a

[115] Booth 81.

“dress covered with five hundred and sixty pearls” (138), and as a result he becomes enthralled with precious jewels and their mythical properties. Closing with an account of Dorian’s forebears, both genetic and literary, and pondering the possibility that his moral degeneracy was a result of “some strange poisonous germ [that] crept from body to body till it had reached his own” (146), the chapter fuses the tropes of the late-Victorian imperial Gothic novel with an aestheticism steeped in colonial violence and a religious and moral apathy.

Although Dorian’s theatrical hobbies are intended to distract him from his more taboo vices (an opium habit and the sexual exploitation of young women and young men), “from time to time strange rumors about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs” (130). Establishing the portrait as a theater of not so much the soul but of societal norms, Wilde is able to reveal the inconsistency and hypocrisy of late-century morality through the painting’s continued transformation and Dorian’s static appearance and social position. The consequences of Dorian’s illicit actions are only visited on those who do not share in his wealth, beauty, and privilege. Sibyl and James Vanes’s deaths are closely connected to their poverty, while Basil’s and Allan’s deaths can be in large part attributed to their implied homosexuality; likewise, Dorian’s various victims in and around the opium den, as well as Chapter XI’s compendium of imported luxury goods, points to the ways in which the wealthy benefited from imperialism at the expense of both colonial and domestic subjects.

Despite Dorian’s demise through the destruction of the portrait, the novel does not offer a satisfying resolution to these injustices. Dorian may have finally set out to “be good,” but he quickly realizes that, as Lord Henry predicted, he is only motivated by

vanity and “that passion to act a part” (227). Although the outcome may be the same—Dorian can no longer prey on young men like Adrian Singleton, or village girls like Hetty Merton—Lord Henry faces no repercussions for teaching him to value performance over reality, aesthetics over ethics. It is he, after all, who says, “But don’t waste your tears over Sibyl Vane. She was less real than you are” (107), a solipsistic dismissal that points to the problem of forging a consolidated public through theatrical and literary realisms. The experiences of marginalized communities are written out of cultural scripts.

With his witty, aphoristic observations, Lord Henry is the antithesis of a moral authority. Nevertheless, it is his voice that dominates the text and offers what might be viewed as Wilde’s most trenchant criticisms of late-Victorian society. But as much as Lord Henry lobs insults at the “standard of one’s age” he is not motivated to change them for others. Directly before Sibyl’s performance Lord Henry claims “One’s own life—that is the important thing. As for the lives of one’s neighbors…they are not one’s concern” (83). As he explains in the end of the novel, “All ways end at the same point…Disillusion” (211). But disillusion, the reality of social and material inequality, does not necessarily lead to empathy or political consciousness.

Each of the novels in this chapter calls upon the social semiotics of the Victorian theater and repurposes stage effects and the dominance of theatrical realism as a mechanism for cultural commentary. Sharing a narrative arc of potential romantic connection and fulfillment followed by disillusion and loss, both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Villette* situate their plot turns in a theatrical venue and in so doing, imbricate theatrical and literary realisms. The result is a generic hybridity that points to the limits of the realist novel and its stock narratives for the representation of marginalized

communities. The following chapter also examines genre and form and the limits of realist fiction; but instead of identifying the subjects that are excluded from the happy endings of so many Victorian novels, it addresses a space that appears unnarratable within Victorian realist fiction: the hospital.

CHAPTER 5

MEDICINE AT THE MARGINS: THE UNNARRATABILITY OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY HOSPITAL

"No good is ever done to society by the pictorial representation of its diseases." – John Ruskin, "Fiction, Fair and Foul" (1881)

Untold Agonies

"In my rambles through the streets of London, after evening has set in, I have often paused beneath the windows of some public hospital, and pictured to myself the gloomy and mournful scenes that were passing within" (309). So begins Charles Dickens's uncollected sketch "The Hospital Patient" (1836), a dreary tale in which our narrator recounts a previous visit to the "casualty ward" of the hospital to witness the police interview of a man accused of battery. There he encounters a space inhabited entirely by injured, disfigured, and dying women; a space where "The dim light which burnt in the spacious room, increased rather than diminished the ghastly appearance of the hapless creatures in the beds, which were ranged in two long rows on either side" (Dickens 311). At the upper end of the row lay the victim, a "young woman of about two or three and twenty," "dying fast" (311). The scene that follows is certainly "gloomy and mournful" enough, as well as a potential source of inspiration for Nancy's fate in *Oliver Twist* (published just six months later). The dying woman, brutally beaten and greatly distressed, refuses to blame her lover and attacker and claims to have inflicted the wounds herself. In a last moment of appropriately Dickensian pathos, she begs the men to contact her "poor old father"—who had wished five years before that she had died as a child—and cries out "Oh, I wish I had! I wish I had!" before succumbing to her death.

Despite this vivid and memorable encounter a year earlier, the narrator who begins “The Hospital Patient” with the meditative ramble that led him to the exterior of the public hospital, emphasizes the mystery that shrouds the structure. Having paused at the windows of the building, he explains:

> The sudden moving of a taper as its feeble ray shot from window after window, until its light gradually disappeared, as if it were carried further back into the room to the bedside of some suffering patient, has been enough to awaken a whole crowd of reflections…Who can tell the anguish of those weary hours…? Who but those who have felt it, can imagine the sense of loneliness and desolation which must be the portion of those who in the hour of dangerous illness are left to be tended by strangers, --what hands, be they ever so gentle, can wipe the clammy brow, or smooth the restless bed, like those of a mother, wife, or child? (309-10)

With his singular knack, Dickens captures and even anticipates the popular image and idea of the hospital in Victorian culture. Although two decades too early, Dickens’s description of the taper moving across the windows calls to mind “The Lady with the Lamp,” that image of Florence Nightingale as the nursing hero of the Crimean War popularized by the *Illustrated London News* (Figure 5.1), Longfellow’s 1857 poem “Santa Filomena,” and much later, Henrietta Rae’s 1891 painting (Figure 5.2). Additionally, his assumptions about the inferiority of the care provided by a stranger, compared to that provided by family members, was in keeping with healthcare practices that continued well into the end of the nineteenth century. Because Victorian hospitals often treated their indigent patients as anonymous test subjects for new surgeries and treatments, those who could afford it were treated at home.[116] But what, to me, is most striking in this passage are the questions that press upon our narrator, his stated inability to “tell the anguish,” to “imagine the sense” of those within despite the previous

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[116] As Michael Worboys explains, “Hospital patients were often treated by doctors as mere bodies, in part because they lost certain rights on entry to state or voluntary institutions and in part because they were often of the lowest social caste” (29).

experience he is about to relate. As Jason Tougaw points out, in medical narratives "The physical and emotional trauma of the subject becomes a rhetorical bid for the sympathy of the observer" (13). The narrator's questions in "The Hospital Patient" are intended to arouse the compassion of his readers. However, the fact that they remain rhetorical and unanswerable, that he is unable to empathize and "imagine the sense" of the physical and emotional traumas of the patients, also points to a problem of narration and the unnarratability of the nineteenth-century hospital.

Figure 5.1: "Florence Nightingale." *Illustrated London News*, 24 February 1855. Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 5.2: *The Lady with the Lamp (Miss Nightingale At Scutari, 1854)*. Popular lithograph reproduction of a painting of Nightingale by Henrietta Rae, 1891. Wikimedia Commons

Hospitals were a key component of nineteenth-century social welfare. Dickens demonstrates his familiarity with their institutional aims, even as his narrator struggles to empathize with their inhabitants. He writes, “The hospital is a refuge and resting-place for hundreds, who but for such institutions must die in streets and doorways; *but what can be the feelings of outcasts like these*, when they are stretched on the bed of sickness with scarcely a hope of recovery?” (emphasis added, Dickens 310). As a space for outcasts—individuals located on the literal, physical thresholds of society—hospitals existed outside of the realm of experience for the majority of Dickens’s readers.[117] Although he frequently wrote about the lives of the poor, and even lectured to help raised funds for charitable hospitals at different points throughout his career, after “The Hospital Patient” Dickens rarely returns to the subject. There are few literary representations of hospitals in his work.[118] But this is not unusual; hospitals, it turns out, are relatively uncommon in Victorian fiction.

Illness, on the other hand, is a Victorian literary commonplace because it creates narrative and the conditions for character development. In Dickens it is “the *sine qua non* both of restored or reconstructed identity, and of narrative structure and closure” (Bailin 79). However, Victorian narratives of illness largely take place in domestic sickrooms, where there are friends and relations to protect against a too radical transformation of identity in the narrative crucible of illness. The nineteenth-century hospital, on the other hand, is doubly destabilizing, liminal and anonymous. Its inmates are largely unknown to their caretakers and their deaths too frequent to elicit more than a passing interest. The

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[117] Keir Waddington states, “contemporary estimates suggest that less than 1% of the population were familiar with the routine of hospital life” (258).

[118] *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend* offer two exceptions; however, I would argue that the hospital is not narratively central to either novel. For more on Dickens’s fundraising for hospitals, see Kosky, Hawes.

narrator of Dickens's sketch may wonder about the thoughts and feelings of the hospital's inhabitants as he loiters outside the building, but as we later learn, when given the chance he could not face them. The sketch ends with the narrator explaining, "We turned away [from the dying girl]; it was no sight for strangers to look upon. The nurse bent over the girl for a few seconds, and then drew the sheet over her face. It covered a corpse" (312). Surrounded only by strangers and the man who took her life, the nameless girl is transformed into a lifeless object; the titular figure is converted from nobody into nothing. Unmarried and alienated from her paternal family, her short life and unceremonious death is barely the stuff of fiction; it serves as little more than a parable of the fate of fallen women.

The relationship between nineteenth century literature and medicine has garnered a great deal of critical attention in the last two decades, likely a result of a more general turn toward the connections between Victorian literature and science. Recent literary criticism on the subject has addressed such topics as the representation of medical practitioners in Victorian fiction, the centrality of illness to the production of narrative, and the epistemological crosspollination between medical science and literary realism (and romanticism as well).[119] More often than not, these topics overlap. For example, Tabitha Sparks's work treats the doctor as a "figural stand-in for the encroachment of empirical knowledge on a morally formulated artistic genre" (8), and plots the decline of the marriage plot against the rise of the bachelor doctor. Likewise, Tougaw interprets the doctor-patient relationship as a stand-in for the relationship between reader and novel, and traces the generic parallels between the case history and the British novel.

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[119] For more on medical practitioners, see Sparks, Swenson, and Smith. For more on illness and the production of narrative, see Wright, Bailin, and Vrettos. For more the shared epistemologies of medical science and literary realism see Tougaw, and Caldwell.

Yet, with the exception of Miriam Bailin's scholarship on the symbolic space of the domestic sickroom in Victorian fiction, the narrative effects of medical venues on Victorian literature remain understudied. In particular, public medical venues—like the hospital—have garnered little attention from Victorian literary studies. This might well be explained by the elusiveness of these spaces within nineteenth-century fiction. Fictional representations of the hospital from the perspective of a patient are virtually non-existent. As Keir Waddington notes, "When the hospital appeared in novels…it was used as a location, not as the focus of the narrative," and "the fictional hospital was often merely a landmark in the narrative or a place where characters briefly went" (254). Typically, these medical landmarks are relegated to the margins of Victorian fiction—either just geographically or temporally peripheral to the narrative—or they are supplanted by the closely related (and later absorbed) operating theater. This is despite the fact that the number of hospitals grew exponentially in the nineteenth century and the design and administration of these institutions were part of the public discourse.

This chapter examines the unnarratability of the experience of the nineteenth-century hospital within the Victorian novel. Exploring the narrative marginalization of the hospital within Victorian fiction through George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871) and Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Body Snatcher" (1884) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), this chapter balances the relative absence of the hospital within these works of fiction with the centrality of the hospital in W. E. Henley's "In Hospital," a collection of 28 poems written from the perspective of a hospital patient composed between 1873-5 and first published as an entire series in *A Book of Verses* (1888). Reading all three works against the history of the nineteenth-century hospital, I consider how the social and

physical environment of the hospital influenced its narratability within these works' disparate generic and poetic forms.

As the following section will demonstrate, hospital architecture evolved during the Victorian era in order to better facilitate proper ventilation and sanitation and the careful attendance of middle and upper class patients by medical professionals in lieu of family members. But despite the sanitary and administrative efforts of reformers, hospitals were nonetheless stigmatized throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century due to their role as a last resort and, often, final destination for the lonely and destitute. Although his subject is eighteenth-century France and not nineteenth-century Britain, Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) offers key insights into the evolution of medical care and has been influential for contemporary studies of Victorian medicine and culture.[120] Like Dickens, Foucault recognizes the hospital as a space designed for indigent outcasts, "a system of options that reveals the way in which a group, in order to protect itself, practises exclusions" (17). Echoing Dickens's own uncertainties about the experience of those in hospital and the absence of a grounding family structure, Foucault asks:

> [H]ow in this necessary proximity can one 'correct the malign effluvium that exudes from the bodies of the sick, from gangrenous limbs, decayed bones, contagious ulcers, and putrid fevers? And, in any case, can one efface the unfortunate impression that the sight of these places, which for many are nothing more than 'temples of death', will have on a sick man or woman, removed from the familiar surroundings of his home and family? (18)

These questions indicate the challenge the hospital environment presents to the treatment of individuals. Juxtaposing the literal atmosphere of "malign effluvium" and the

[120] For example, Meegan Kennedy's monograph *Revising the Clinic: Vision and Representation in Victorian Medical Narrative and the Novel* invokes the former text in its title and topic, the clinical gaze.

figurative atmosphere of "unfortunate impression[s]," Foucault connects the deleterious physical and emotional effects of the hospital's dual atmospheres and reveals them to be inseparable. Further implicating the hospital's absence of a domestic environment in the death or despair of its patients, he pits hospitalization—what he calls "[t]his loneliness in a crowd" (18)—against the family, what he elsewhere describes as "the natural locus of disease" (49). For Foucault, the latter is a source of "gentle, spontaneous care, expressive of love and a common desire for a cure" (19), whereas the former operates in service of the dehumanizing gaze of the clinician, "a tacit form of violence, all the more abusive for its silence, upon a sick body that demands to be comforted" (102). Despite his general emphasis on the relationship between empiricism and medical professionalism, I suggest Foucault's work also discloses a fundamental social antagonism between hospital and home that—due in part to its origins in historical and class-based medical practices and the Victorian redistribution of alms from outdoor to indoor relief—came to be expressed in the Victorian era as an atmospheric antagonism. The "malign effluvia" of the hospital was interpreted as a failure of domestic management, and its grim anonymity the antithesis of the warm embrace of the family.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that an attention to atmospheres—both literal and figurative—allows us to recover the Victorian literary hospital through its most critical design elements even if it must be excised from the text as a space whose interior can only be experienced by those outside of the middle-class family and, as a result, outside of the marriage plots and family dramas that dominated much of Victorian fiction. In the Victorian medical literature addressed in this chapter, atmosphere operates as a vehicle for exploring the problems the hospital posed as a repository for society's outcasts and

laboratory for scientific and political progress. Whether on or off the page, the hospital serves as a symbol for shifting social formations and social contagion, the instability of identity and class position, and the grim conditions of working class life. Because this space is so over-determined, the various threads of my argument weave in and out of each section of this chapter, constructing a web of associations. The next section glosses the history of British hospital architecture and design, and picks out the hospital's relationship to family, class, and national politics. It is followed by a reading of the geographic marginalization of the hospital in Eliot's *Middlemarch* as a commentary on provincial social conservatism and the resistance to foreign influence and political change. Next, I take up the operating and dissecting theaters in Stevenson's "The Body Snatcher" and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as narratable surrogates for the hospital and address their temporal marginalization in these texts as an exploration of the existential threat medical research posed to Victorian identity formations. Finally, I read W. E. Henley's focused poetic representation of the hospital as a response to its marginalization in fiction and the subsequent erasure of the emotional and physical dimensions of (mainly working class) patient experiences; moreover, I suggest Henley's work provides a tentative, but ultimately failed, model for redressing the Victorian antagonism between hospital and home. All three readings address the narrative effects of a Victorian atmospheric framework for understanding and representing the experience of the hospital. Collectively, they provide suggestive clues as to why the hospital, whose Victorian atmospheric affiliations remain today despite continued scientific discovery and architectural innovation, has been best captured within the contained narrative

framework of a series of poems or serial television instead of the diffuse environment of the often loose and baggy Victorian novel.

Designing Health

Like the other structures addressed in this dissertation, the hospital is both ancient and brand new. As a purpose-built structure where the very ill—from all walks of life—receive surgical and medical care, the hospital dates back the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. However, in the earliest days of English history, "hospital" was a more general term than in its current usage.[121] Prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries, "hospital" could refer either to the religious institutions that cared for the sick (typically sufferers of leprosy), or to the almshouses that provided lodgings for travelers, the elderly, and the poor. Although the latter meaning continued to have currency up until the middle of the nineteenth century (take for example Hiram's Hospital in Trollope's *The Warden*), the number of institutions that cared specifically for the sick was drastically reduced under Henry VIII's rule. The suppression of Catholic monasteries meant a halt to institutionalized medical care. As Thomson and Goldin explain, "From 1536 to 1544, London lacked all forms of social assistance" and this "intolerable situation" was only rectified when wealthy Londoners, under the aegis of the lord mayor, petitioned the king and offered to fund the operation of the city hospitals at their expense; thus, St Mary of Bethlehem (more infamously known as Bedlam), St

[121] "Infirmary" has been at times been used interchangeably with hospital; however, "infirmary" usually denoted an institution that cared for the sick and injured of a specific population, like the navy. See Stevenson, Christine. *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture*, 3.

Bartholomew's, and St Thomas's were reestablished by royal charter.[122] Bedlam, of course, catered to the mentally ill and was notorious for its cruel treatment of patients and for the entertainment it provided to members of the upper classes. The latter two hospitals, St Bartholomew's (also known as St Barts or just Barts) and St Thomas's, both provided medical care for the poor and lying in wards for unwed women. Both continue to exist as hospitals today, but only St Barts occupies its original site.

During the eighteenth century the secularization of medical care that began with the Dissolution of the Monasteries expanded to include newly founded "voluntary hospitals," philanthropic institutions supported by the donations of wealthy merchants and charitable petitions. While some were dedicated specifically to orphaned children or "incurables," or were specialist hospitals furthering research, the vast majority were general hospitals.[123] Like their predecessors voluntary hospitals also provided free or deeply discounted medical care "for those above pauperism who would have gained most from a state medical service" (Fraser 82). Their number grew dramatically over the next hundred or so years. Architectural historians estimate that by the end of the eighteenth century there numbered about thirty general, voluntary hospitals in England, and by the middle of the nineteenth century there were upwards of 250.[124] The eighteenth century

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[122] For a more complete survey of the architectural history of the hospital, see Thompson and Goldin's *The Hospital: A Social and Architectural History*, Richardson, Goodall, and Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' *English Hospitals 1660-1948: A Survey of Their Architecture and Design*, Risse's *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals*, and Arnold's *The Spaces of the Hospital: Spatiality and Urban Change in London 1680-1820*.
[123] "The first voluntary hospital to open its doors was the Westminster Infirmary in London in 1720. It was soon followed by a spate of others; Guy's Hospital in London (1726), the Edinburgh Infirmary (1729), St. George's Hospital in London (1733), the Winchester Infirmary (1736), the Bristol Infirmary (1737), London Hospital (1740) and Middlesex Hospital, also in London (1740). All except Guy's resulted from 'alliances against misery' composed of civic-minded businessmen, lawyers, and teachers, as well as physicians and surgeons" (Risse 239).
[124] See Hickman 7, Richardson et al. 1.

also witnessed the establishment of military hospitals as a neutral territory for the sick and injured and as a symbol of a coherent national identity.[125] But despite England's investment in military medical care, Europe's capitals of medical research and advancement were Paris and Edinburgh (a dominance acknowledged within British literature and reflected in the texts addressed in this chapter).

In the nineteenth century, the workhouse infirmary joined the voluntary hospital and military hospital as a source of institutionalized medical care. Following the Poor Law Amendment of 1834, hundreds of workhouses were built in an effort to reform the system of poor relief.[126] Unlike the earlier model of "outdoor relief" that gave money, food, or other goods directly to poor families, the workhouse represented a form of "indoor relief" that forced them to enter institutions. Intended to deter able-bodied paupers from seeking parish support, the conditions of workhouses were harsher than those of the poorest laborers. The buildings themselves often resembled prisons, dividing occupants by age and gender. Notably, the buildings' "secluded locations…physically removed paupers to the margins of society" (Newman 125). As Charlotte Newman explains, "For those on the brink of pauperism, often due to circumstances beyond their control, the workhouse became a shameful and harrowing prospect—one to avoid at all costs" (123). But despite their architectural aim to eradicate idleness and reduce the cost of poor relief, workhouses also provided essential services: they housed and fed children, the elderly, and the infirm, and even offered free education and medical care. By the

[125] Risse points to John Pringle (1707-82) as the "father of military medicine" and field hospitals (243), and Arnold argues, "The construction of the royal hospitals in Chelsea and then Greenwich are the beginnings of the production of more complex spatialities that endorse the hegemonic value of a coherent national identity" (125).
[126] For more on workhouse history, see Charlotte Newman's "To Punish or Protect: The New Poor Law and the English Workhouse" and Derek Fraser's *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution*.

middle of the century, it was becoming clear that the workhouse system failed to prevent pauperism and served more sick paupers than able-bodied. As Derek Fraser notes, by 1861 the majority of hospital beds were in workhouses and "[f]rom 1866 the term 'state hospital' was widely used to describe workhouse infirmaries" (84-5).[127] Following the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 London officials authorized the construction of new purpose-built workhouse infirmaries and "[i]n London alone the 1870s saw the institution of twenty new workhouse infirmary 'hospitals' providing over 10,000 bed spaces" (Taylor, *Hospital and Asylum Architecture* 10). Thus the workhouse infirmary began to more closely resemble the general hospital; eventually, the former institution was absorbed and supplanted by the latter. And although the distinction between the two remained intact throughout the nineteenth century, the shameful, penal characteristics associated with the workhouse colored the public perception of the hospital.

At the same time that more hospitals and infirmaries were being constructed, Victorian lawmakers and politicians were being forced to confront the challenges of public health. This was a period of widespread infections; smallpox, cholera, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis all plagued metropolitan centers. The sanitary reform movement that stemmed, in part, from Chadwick's 1842 report drew the public's attention to the living conditions of the laboring classes and made the connection between illness and the environment. This connection extended to the space of the hospital. As Dana Arnold points out, "By the early nineteenth century hospital design was becoming part of a national discourse about institutional architecture. It was becoming an accepted

[127] "The scale to which workhouses had become a public hospital system may be gauged from the estimate that of 65,000 hospital beds available in England and Wales in1861, 50,000 or over 81 percent were provided by workhouse sick wards, the rest by voluntary hospitals" (Fraser 85).

norm that different environments affected the treatment and recovery rates of patients" (118-9). According to mid nineteenth-century medical experts and reformers, the hospital, in its current state of design, was not conducive to health.[128] By 1863 the Scottish surgeon Sir James Simpson had coined the term "hospitalism" to describe what was then understood as the dangerous atmosphere that emanated from these spaces and spread illness instead of treating it (Hickman 125). From a nineteenth century perspective, the problem with contemporary hospital designs was a lack of proper ventilation. Despite being a period of major discoveries in the spread of disease and theories of contagion, many Victorians continued to believe in the dangers of miasmas, or poisoned air produced by decaying organic matter.[129] As a result, new hospital designs featured building layouts, heating devices, and even window fixtures that were considered especially conducive to circulating air, and many reformers insisted that hospitals should be constructed on high ground outside of city centers.[130]

Florence Nightingale, the period's most prominent and best-remembered hospital reformer, also subscribed to the importance of a healthy hospital atmosphere. Nightingale became involved in the campaign for hospital reform as a result of her experiences as the nursing supervisor for the military hospital at Scutari during the Crimean War. Scutari, a former military barracks that had been repurposed for the war, lacked efficient drainage and proper ventilation, and was cramped and crowded. As a result of these conditions, many more soldiers died in hospital at Scutari than in Renkioi, a pre-fabricated and

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[128] See Richardson et al. 11; Stevenson 4;

[129] For more on the origins and complexity of the sanitary reform movement and nineteenth centuries of disease and contagion, see Michael Worboys's *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865-1900.*

[130] Risse 6, Hickman 131.

modular hospital designed especially for the Crimean conflict and in response to Scutari's sanitary shortcomings (Figure 5.3).

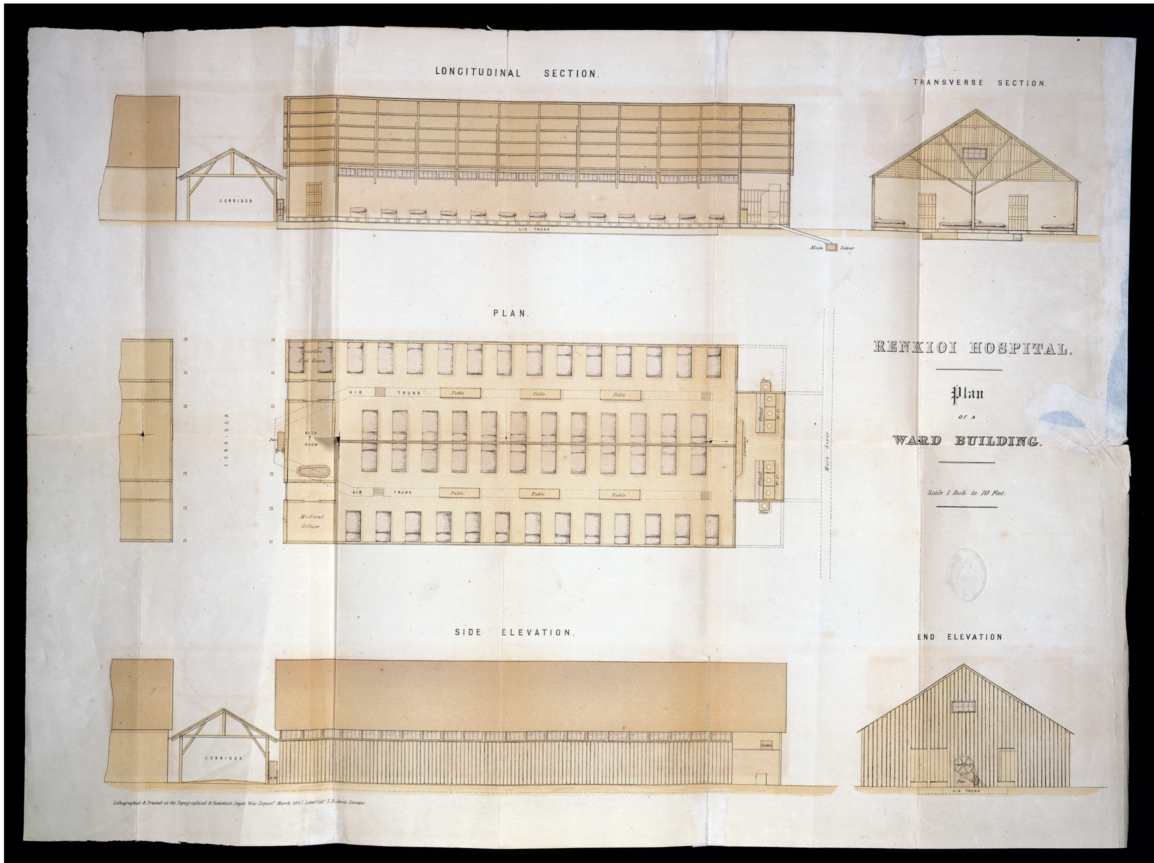

Figure 5.3: Isambard Kingdom Brunel, *Renkioi Hospital*, 1857. Wellcome Library, London.

Nightingale, a talented statistician, analyzed the data on military deaths during the war and presented the information visually in her innovative Rose diagrams (Figure 5.4). These diagrams compared injuries, diseases, and all other causes of death during several months of the war and showed that in the first seven months of the Crimean campaign there was "a mortality among the troops at the rate of 60 per cent, per annum from disease alone" (*Notes on Hospitals*). Strikingly, Nightingale also used her Rose diagrams to compare the average deaths per month of healthy men in industrial Manchester to those in the war, a comparison that Lee Brasseur identifies as "one of her most interesting

rhetorical decisions” (169). Although intended to illustrate how much more deadly the war was than “the most unhealthy city in England at the time” (Brasseur 167), these illustrations also triangulate medicine, the military, and the urban environment, as well as promote the connection of nationalism with public health previously established with eighteenth-century’s military hospitals in Chelsea and Greenwich and the early nineteenth-century construction of new royal hospitals adjacent to monumental spaces.[131]

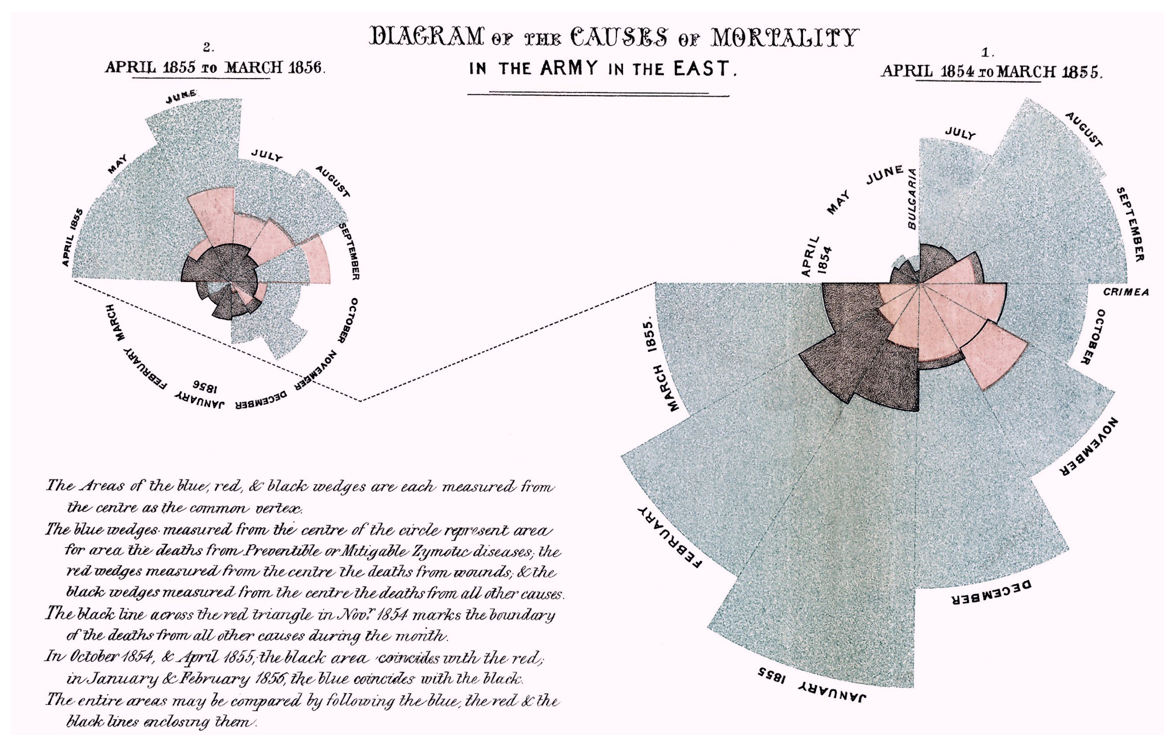

Figure 5.4: Florence Nightingale, *Diagram of the causes of mortality in the army in the East*. 1858. Drawing. *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency, and Hospital Administration of the British Army*. 1858. Wikimedia Commons.

Although by no means the first medical reformer, Nightingale’s impact on Victorian medicine and culture was profound. As Lara Kriegel points out, “Nightingale vied with Queen Victoria for prominence as the feminine exemplar of the nineteenth

[131] Arnold argues that, “The interaction of the spaces of the hospital with the urban fabric continued with the development of Hyde Park Corner in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Here the new St George's Hospital made a significant contribution to the creation of a monumental space that celebrated the nation” (120).

century." Her essays *Notes on Hospitals* (1859) and *Notes on Nursing: What it is and What it is Not* (1859) established the necessity of hospital sanitation and promoted the constant supervision of patients by nursing staff. Harriet Richardson credits the influence of her work as "the single most important development in hospital planning" (5). As an empiricist, Nightingale did not believe in the contemporary theory of contagion, which she claims "appears to have been adopted at a time when, from the neglect of sanitary arrangements, epidemics attacked whole masses of people, and when men had ceased to consider that nature had any laws for her guidance" (*Notes on Hospitals*)[132] Instead, she favored observable, sensory evidence of disease transmission, including the foul air of miasmas (malign effluvia, as Foucault would say), and was a proponent of architectural arrangements that allowed for "[n]atural ventilation [...] by open windows and open fireplaces," direct sunlight, and a carefully calibrated ratio of windows to beds, measures which she believed prevented against putrefied organic matter and air born illness.

Nightingale also stressed the importance of proper administration to prevent even a good design from becoming unsanitary, and she advocated for the authority of nurses in patient care and hospital design. She argues:

> to the experienced eye of a careful observing nurse, the daily, I had almost said hourly, changes which take place in patients, and which changes rarely come under the cognizance of the periodical medical visitor, afford a still more important class of data, from which to judge of the general adaptation of a hospital for the reception and treatment of sick. (*Notes on Hospitals*)

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[132] Warboys explains that, "Public health policy had been riven since the 1840s with divisions between so-called contagionist and anti-contagionist. The former group maintained that the prevention and control of epidemic diseases should be based on the use of quarantines and *cordon sanitaires*. The latter group, as the form of the word suggests, was primarily defined by its opposition to contagion and, above all, opposition to the use of quarantines and isolation of control epidemics. However, anticontagionists had their own programme of prevention of control, which relied on environmental improvements to eradicate the conditions in which fevers could arise and spread" (39).

Downgrading physicians and surgeons to "periodical medical visitor[s]," Nightingale's rhetoric takes on a militaristic tone as she advises each bed have "a territory to itself" and that the head nurse "ought to have her room so placed that she can command her whole ward, day and night" (*Notes on Hospitals*). Foucauldian in her emphasis on observation, she claims that, "Simplicity of construction in hospitals is essential to discipline. Effectual and easy supervision is essential to proper care and nursing" (*Notes on Hospitals*). Sanitation, for Nightingale, is linked with discipline; she writes, "Every unneeded closet, scullery, sink, lobby, and staircase represents both a place which must be cleaned…and hiding or skulking place at patients or servants disposal to do wrong" (*Notes on Hospitals*). Likewise, sanitation is closely linked with English national identity and domestic maintenance. She blames the window tax for the dearth of natural light and fresh air in English hospitals in comparison with their French counterparts;[133] at the same time she credits the Anglo-Saxon woman with a natural talent for "sanitary domestic economy."[134] This national pride mixed with admiration for the French system of medical care highlights the complexity of the national project of public health—a project that

[133] Nightingale writes, "The proportion of windows to cubic space is of the first importance of health. It has been lost sight of in English architecture, owing to the unfortunate window-tax, which has left its legacy in giving us a far smaller proportion of light than in French houses." For more on the history of the window tax and its relationship to English culture, see Isobel Armstrong's *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880*.

[134] In *Notes on Hospitals*, Nightingale's essay is followed by a transcript of her presentation of evidence to the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army. The transcript includes the following exchange: "*Can you state why the homes of the poor in the country are kept comparatively clean and healthy, on very moderate means?* I think that the woman is superior in skill to the man in all points of sanitary domestic economy, and more particularly in cleanliness and tidiness. I think great sanitary civil reformers will always tell us that they look to the woman to carry out practically their hygienic reforms. *Is it the peculiar skill and industry of the English labourers wife to which this is referable in the one case, and to the incompetency of men on the other to conduct the domestic economy of a home or an hospital?* I think so. I think the Anglo-Saxon would be very sorry to turn Women out of his own house, or out of civil hospitals, hotels, institutions of all kinds, and substitute men-housekeepers and men-matrons. The contrast between even naval hospital, where there are female nurses, and military hospitals, where there are none, is most striking in point of order and cleanliness."

becomes increasingly pressing as the century progresses and fears of racial degeneration intensify—in a context where medical advancements come from abroad.

Ultimately, Nightingale found the pavilion system (Figure 5.5), pioneered in France and Belgium, the best model for hospital design, a view supported by the Army Sanitation Commission and by George Godwin, the editor of *The Builder* from 1844-83 (Taylor 12). Taylor argues that:

> As a design format it proved to be one of the great and enduring architectural typologies, with a longevity and influence that stretched from the late 1850s to the 1930s…it had already become the perceived orthodoxy for hospital design by the 1860s, and its distinctive built form could soon be found in towns across the country. (*The Architect and the Pavilion Hospital,* vii)

What makes this design distinctive is its attentiveness to systems of ventilation. In describing the pavilion plan Annmarie Adams explains, "The need for proper ventilation permeated nearly every scale of the pavilion-plan hospital, from its site design to the architect's choice of window hardware" (22). Thompson and Gilden are more to the point; as they put it, the pavilion ward "is a sanitary code embodied in a building" (118). The arrangement of wards and supervisory medical staff was critical to maintaining sanitation. Whereas the earliest monastery hospitals were designed in the cruciform shape common to Catholic churches, the pavilion plan featured long, narrow, and low (preferably 2 or 3 stories) blocks of wards radiating from a central administrative structure. These blocks of wards included operating theatres, staff quarters, and isolation areas (Adams 14). Although the exact arrangement of the wards to the connective administrative space could vary, every ward featured windows on each of the long sides with beds interspersed between them in two long rows and, if parallel, ward blocks were somewhat distanced from each other to allow air and sunlight to circulate and enter the

windows. In addition to exemplifying Victorian sanitation standards, the pavilion model likewise suited the Nightingale model of nursing. As Adams points out, “The design of the ward itself was a medical instrument by which patients could be carefully positioned in space” and “fundamental to its operation were the relationship between the patients’ beds and the nurses’ station or desk” (10). So close was the association between the ward’s design and its nursing accommodations, that the pavilion ward came to be known as the Nightingale ward by the end of the century.

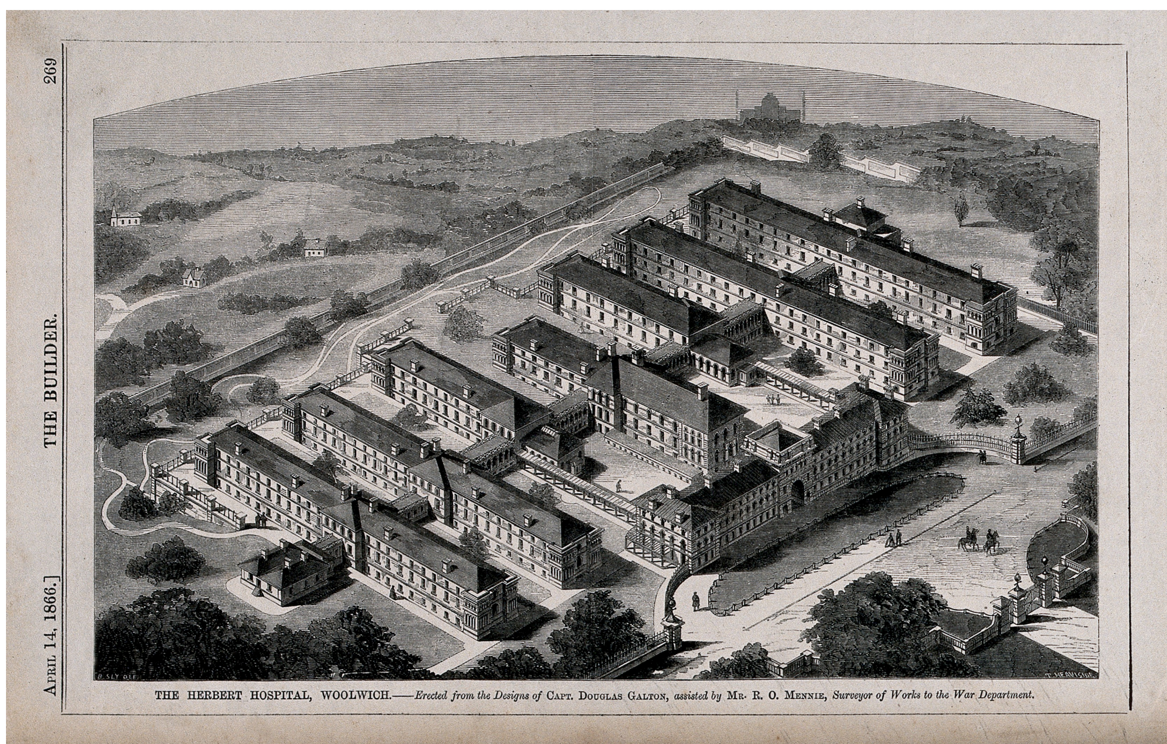

Figure 5.5: Heaviside, T. “The Herbert Hospital, Woolwich,” *The Builder*. 14 Apr 1866. Wood Engraving. Wellcome Library, London.

Despite its regulatory and seemingly oppressive layout and furnishings, or rather because of them, the development of the pavilion hospital coincided with the advancement of medical care and the eventual de-stigmatization of the hospital. Its improved sanitation decreased hospital mortality and made hospital care more palatable to potential middle class patients and the middle-class women who might become nurses.

Also key was the pavilion hospital's limited number of stories and its relatively adaptable exterior. This exterior was receptive of "almost any architectural style," and made the pavilion plan a more inviting structure.[135] As Elsbeth Heaman points out, hospitals "relied on the likeness of the big, safe house to convince middle-class city dwellers that their chances were as good there as they were at home" (24). These measures of disguise worked; by the end of the nineteenth century the middle and upper classes began to more regularly seek care at hospitals instead of at home.[136]

Contagious Reform: The Fever Hospital and *Middlemarch*

At the time George Eliot was writing *Middlemarch*, between 1869-71, the pavilion hospital had taken hold as the dominant model for in-patient medical care, while coinciding medical advancements in antiseptic surgery and the eventual embrace of contagion theory improved interventional medical outcomes. But at the time the novel is set, between 1829-32, English medical science was still in a period of relative infancy compared to the discoveries and practices coming out of France and Scotland's teaching hospitals. Nevertheless, *Middlemarch* is arguably the nineteenth century's most critically commented-upon medical novel and much of the novel's plot, with its doctor protagonist Tertius Lydgate and many bouts of illness, turns on the funding and management of Mr. Bulstrode's "New Hospital." But despite its eighty appearances in the text, the hospital

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[135] "The swift and widespread adoption throughout the country of the pavilion plan was aided by its adaptability, it could be dressed in almost any architectural style - apart from the early Italianate examples, Gothic was enduringly popular, with architectural embellishment usually concentrated on the administration block containing the main entrance" (Richardson et al. 6).
[136] For more on the late-century popular embrace of the hospital, see Lilian R. Furst's *Medical Progress and Social Reality: A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Medicine and Literature*, Elsbeth Heaman's *St. Mary's: The History of a London Teaching Hospital*, and Jeremy Taylor's *Hospital and Asylum Architecture in England, 1840-1914: Building for Health Care* and *The Architect and the Pavilion Hospital: Dialogue and Design Creativity in England, 1850-1914*.

only exists in the narrative as a political object and topic of debate, never as a concrete place or space of action. Physically located beyond the edges of the town on the "London Road" and near Mr. Bulstrode's "retired residence,"[137] the hospital (and the old infirmary it is meant to supplement) may occasionally receive visits from *Middlemarch*'s characters but our third-person omniscient narrator never joins them.

First introduced in the novel's tenth chapter via Mrs. Cadwallader's observation that Dorothea "is talking cottages and hospitals" with Lydgate because "he is a sort of philanthropist" (68), Eliot foreshadows the eventual failure of the hospital project when she lumps it in with Dorothea's fruitless passion for cottagers' homes. Although, as Mr. Brooke notes, "Lydgate has lots of ideas, quite new, about ventilation and diet, that sort of thing" (68), these new ideas do little to prevent Middlemarch's denizens, like Mr. Standish, from suggesting that Lydgate will "try experiments on your hospital patients and kill a few people for charity" (68), or Mrs. Dollop believing "Dr. Lydgate meant to let the people die in Hospital, if not to poison them, for the sake of cutting them up" (323).

Not "altogether a common country doctor" (105), Lydgate received his medical education in Edinburgh and Paris. The prejudice of Middlemarch's general citizenry can likely be credited to Lydgate's time in Edinburgh; their complaints against dissection evoke the Knox, Burke, and Hare scandal that took place in that city just a few years before (and is discussed at greater length in the following section). From the perspective of his fellow Middlemarch doctors, however, both locations of study are an insult to an English education and style of practice. And they are not wrong; Lydgate's time in Paris

[137] Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. 1871. Ed. Gordon S. Haight. Reprint. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968 (p. 440). Future references to this edition will appear in the text.

leads him to believe that the profession of medicine "wanted reform" and motivates him to "settle in some provincial town" and "resist the irrational severance between medical and surgical knowledge in the interest of his own scientific pursuits" (108).

But despite its foundations in Lydgate's foreign training, the "New Hospital" ultimately becomes associated with domestic reform; Middlemarch's distrust of the hospital positions it as a metonymic stand-in for sociopolitical progress. In the opening lines of Chapter 46, the narrator explains "While Lydgate […] felt himself struggling for Medical Reform against Middlemarch, Middlemarch was becoming more and more conscious of the national struggle for another kind of Reform" (336). This link is cemented by the novel's end, when the failure of Lydgate's plan for the hospital is closely followed with the failure of the Reform bill. Neither the "New Hospital" nor the Reform Act of 1832 has a place within the novel. This is because *Middlemarch* is, of course, a novel about "unhistoric acts" and "incalculably diffusive" effects (613), a theme at odds with the spirited movement for hospital reform that took shape in the decade or two before Eliot began writing. And as Tabitha Sparks points out, despite "Eliot's topical interest in medical and scientific life" the novel exhibits a "structural allegiance to the marriage plot as a more powerful shaping device than vocational 'passion'" (43).

It is these narrative elements that likely led Florence Nightingale to call the book "odious reading."[138] As Louise Penner argues in her study of Nightingale's relationship with nineteenth-century fiction, [Nightingale] based her objections to *Middlemarch* both in public and private writings primarily on what she saw as Dorothea Ladislaw's failure at

[138] Nightingale disparages Eliot's novel in a letter to her father, W.E. Nightingale, dated 26 January 1873. Wellcome (Claydon copy) Ms9006/2. Reproduced in *Florence Nightingale on Society and Politics, Philosophy, Science, Education and Literature: Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*. Ed. Lynn McDonald.

the end of *Middlemarch* to imagine a means of contributing to the public good in any way other than serving as a helpmeet to her aspiring politician husband Will Ladislaw (77). Given Nightingale's position as the period's most iconic hospital reformer and her refusal to adopt the socially conservative role of wife and mother, it is unsurprising that she took issue with the novel's end.[139] As Lynn McDonald explains, Nightingale complained of the narrowness of "*family life*" and viewed it as "expressly fashioned to waste [a woman's] time for any great object of God's" and "the smallest of possible spheres" (qtd. in McDonald 25). Eliot's decision to close her realist novel with her protagonists' ambitions limited by their respective middle-class marriages clearly would have grated against Nightingale, whose radical social life freed her to pursue a career as a nurse, statistician, medical reformer, and political figure.

Nightingale is correct to tacitly pit married life against the hospital. At least on the level of plot, *Middlemarch*'s reliance on the narrative momentum of the marriage plot as a counterweight to its examination of the incremental evolution of a provincial community contributes to the marginalization of the hospital within the novel. In hewing to the romantic fates of Lydgate and Dorothea instead of to their charitable endeavors, the narrative evades representing the experiences of those individuals who most benefited from medical and political reforms. With an almost exclusively middle to upper-class cast of characters—in keeping with the marriage and family dramas typical of the period—and a nostalgic setting in the first half of the nineteenth century, the novel naturally depicts domestic medical care over hospitalization. And in doing so, it avoids a

[139] Despite having several suitors and at least two marriage proposals, Nightingale refused to marry in order to pursue her calling as a nurse. For more on Nightingale's romantic history and celibacy, see Nightingale, Florence, and Lynn McDonald. *Florence Nightingale: An Introduction to Her Life and Family*. (23-6).

setting whose grim environment is ill matched to an otherwise pastoral text. More significantly, while the hospital might in retrospect serve a potent symbol for the reforms on the historical horizon, the day-to-day realities of hospitalization as a condition of stasis renders this space incompatible with the plotting necessary to move along a six-hundred-plus page novel. Quite simply, the climax of a romance is far more interesting than the convalescence of a hospital ward.

Nevertheless, despite its marginalization of the hospital as a narrative venue, *Middlemarch* does acknowledge many of the same medical concerns that Nightingale and her fellow reformers sought to address, even if its protagonists choose marriage and family over philanthropy and public care. Mr. Brooke's identification of Lydgate's new ideas about ventilation and diet could be taken as a nod towards Nightingale's own advances in medical care. Moreover, the entire text is suffused with an examination of influence, often figured through the model of contagion. Writing about the text's saturation in "the language and metaphors of illness and therapeutics," Erika Wright points out that:

> Eliot stages the scene of Nicholas Bulstrode's climactic expulsion from Middlemarch at a town meeting—significantly—about sanitary reform. The town's literal and figurative health is at stake, as the scandal surrounding the wealthy banker has the potential to infect all with whom he comes into contact. (13)

Likewise, Jesse Oak Taylor points to the atmospheric ecology of *Middlemarch*, whose narrator imagines "you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting [professional men like Lydgate]" (Eliot 107).

Reading the novel through the lens of atmospheres within the context of the mid-nineteenth century theories of contagion and medical reform resituates the concepts that

shaped hospital design within the center of the text even as its architectural form is pushed to the margins. Lydgate frames his appreciation for the hospital through organic and infectious terms. He imagines that "A fine fever hospital…might be the nucleus of a medical school here, when once we get our medical reforms; and what would do more for medical education than the *spread* of such schools over the country? (emphasis added, 92). We learn in the novel's end that Lydgate dies at fifty of diphtheria (610), a sometimes-airborne disease. Never recovering from his first failure in Middlemarch, he believed himself a failure until the end. But as with Dorothea, the effects of Lydgate's influence are more diffusive and delayed than he could have known. Lydgate's death at mid-century prevents him, but not the reader, from appreciating that by the 1870s in which Eliot is writing, "things are not so *ill* with you and me as they might have been" (emphasis added, 613), we know that Middlemarch's efforts to quarantine sociopolitical and medical reform will fail. The management of Lydgate's fever hospital may have fallen to his competitors, but it might still be viewed as a potential germ for the spread of French-influenced pavilion hospitals from the 1850s forward. Furthermore, Lydgate's desire to resist the severance of medical and surgical knowledge is realized in the design of the pavilion hospital.

As my reading of *Middlemarch* suggests, the hospital is outside of narrative because its subjects, the pauperized poor, generally are too. By the time the middle classes began to embrace the hospital in the latter half of the century, its conditions had improved to render it narratively disinteresting for its lack of movement and plot. Thus in order to create medical narratives, late century authors needed to look backwards to either the pre-pavilion hospital or call upon a public medical venue that might be characterized

as the alter ego to the hospital, the operating theater-cum-dissecting hall. Late-century Gothic literature took the latter route; it regularly depicts these dynamic, performative, and inherently gory spaces as nightmarish and atavistic. This is despite the fact that by the time Eliot, Stevenson, and Henley were writing, medical researchers like Lister were replacing the sawbones image of the surgeon. Like the medical care of the hospital ward, surgery gradually migrated from private homes and lecture halls to the aegis of the pavilion hospital, where operating theaters and improved methods of sterilization and anesthesia promoted the exploration of increasingly complex and invasive procedures. The following section examines Stevenson's gothic treatment of the operating theater and dissection hall in "The Body Snatcher" and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and considers to what extent these spaces serve as a narrative surrogate for the hospital and its institutional dehumanization of the poor.

A Hyde to the Hospital: Operating Theaters and the Medical Gothic

As their name implies, operating theaters featured steep auditorium seating surrounding a top-lit operating table and provided a gruesome form of entertainment (Figure 5.6). Although the primary patrons of these theaters were medical students, as Annmarie Adams points out, only a handful of the hundreds of people who might attend an operation in a metropolitan center like London or Edinburgh would become surgeons and "the end of the surgical procedure was often marked by a thunderous applause" (15). In Adams's comparison of these spaces, she emphasizes the surgeon's greater degree of control over his environment and influence on his audience than that of the nurses who cared for patients on the wards. She writes:

> Surgeons controlled the timing of their shows and performed for a discerning audience increasingly made up of men who wanted to emulate them, in a setting that consciously reminded viewers of their position as audience members, keeping them, literally, in their place. In this way, 'onstage' and 'backstage' were separate for surgeons. By contrast, nurses were on view at all time, for an audience of poor people who didn't necessarily aspire to become nurses, in a setting that naturalized the mutual gaze between nurse and patient, while offering no boundaries whatsoever between their spaces. (Adams 15)

Thus, although Nightingale's image as the angel-nurse—the lady with the lamp—captured the national stage and converted England's embarrassments in Crimea into the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon woman over disease-causing filth, the women she trained and the hospitals she advocated failed to capture the Victorian literary and popular imagination to the same degree that the operating theater and its architectural predecessor, the dissection hall, managed.[140] It is easy to imagine why; in addition to its inherent theatricality and sensationalism, surgery is by its very nature episodic, whereas hospitalization is a continuous process. Thus it is unsurprising that much of the late-Victorian fiction that treats this space features a shorter format than the triple-decker novel; short stories and novella's dominate the sub-genre of surgical medical fiction.

[140] For example, Wilkie Collins's *Heart and Science* (1883), Arthur Conan Doyle's "His First Operation" and "The Case of Lady Sannox" in his collection *Round the Red Lamp* (1894) and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) all feature or allude to operating theaters.

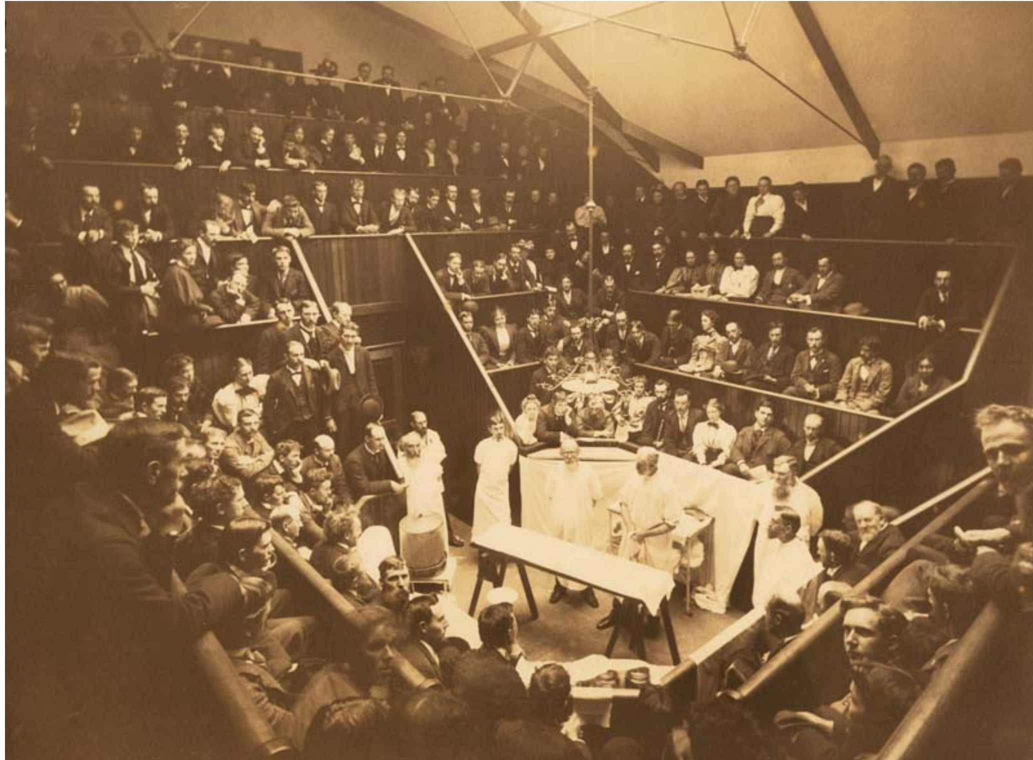

Figure 5.6: *Cooper Medical College Operating Theater, San Francisco*. Photograph. Stanford Medical History Center. [141]

Although the theatricality and episodic nature of the operating theater are compatible with plot, these are not what characterize artistic representations of this space. Rather, depictions of these venues rely instead on their inherent Gothicism. From grave robbing to vivisection, the operating theater was home to the most scandalous of those practices that furthered medical knowledge throughout the nineteenth century. Infamous beyond all other medical horrors were the murders committed by William Burke and William Hare and the subsequent disgrace of famed Edinburgh surgeon Doctor Robert Knox. Between 1826 and 1827, "dissection became compulsory for diploma candidates with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and then for Edinburgh University

[141] Although the above image is of an American operating theater, it is architecturally consistent with the operating theaters of nineteenth-century Britain and a clear photographic example of what these spaces would have looked like.

medical students."[142] Although grave robbing had long been the practice for procuring bodies for dissection (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* comes immediately to mind), this sudden increase in the demand and reward for fresh bodies prompted Burke and Hare to start "manufacturing the commodity" by murdering 16 people over the course of a single year (McCracken-Flesher 7). In November of 1828, a victim of Burke and Hare was discovered outside their lodgings but was removed before the police arrived. The body was later found awaiting dissection at Doctor Knox's operating theatre. Knox claimed to have known nothing about the murders and just "happened to be the establishment with which Burke and Hare chiefly dealt" (qtd. in McCracken-Flesher 10), but the public found him guilty by association and the famous doctor came to be reviled. Although only Burke was found guilty of murder, all three men live on in infamy. Their story has inspired countless literary and theatrical productions, and allusions to the case—such as Eliot's sly reference to Knox in Mr. Standish and Mrs. Dollop's fear that Lydgate will let his patients die simply to cut them up—remained common throughout the nineteenth century.

Robert Louis Stevenson capitalized on the lingering horror of the Burke and Hare murders in his 1884 short story "The Body Snatcher" and later novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The former story recounts the experience of Fettes, a Scottish medical student charged with the care of his instructor's operating theater and lecture room, including the task of receiving and dividing the corpses delivered for dissection. Stevenson goes out of his way to indicate that Fettes's instructor Mr. K— is a barely disguised Doctor Knox, writing:

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[142] For more on the history and cultural legacy the Knox, Burke, and Hare scandal, see Caroline McCracken-Flesher's *The Doctor Dissected: A Cultural Autopsy of the Burke and Hare Murders*.

> There was, at that period, a certain extramural teacher of anatomy, whom I shall here designate by the letter K. His name was subsequently too well known. The man who bore it skulked through the streets of Edinburgh in disguise, while the mob that applauded at the execution of Burke called loudly for the blood of his employer. (206)

Stevenson, it appears, is on the side of the mob and the story suggests that profiting from murder is only a step away from committing the act. Persuaded by the class assistant Macfarlane, Fettes looks the other way when Jane Galbraith, whom knows to have been alive and well the night before, is delivered to the theatre's doorstep. This indiscretion leads Fettes to act the accomplice after Macfarlane kills his blackmailer, Gray. Convinced he has gone too far to change course now, Fettes pays Macfarlane for Gray's body and prepares it for dissection. This grisly tale comes to a climax when both Fettes and Macfarlane are sent to rob graves to provide more subjects for Mr. K—'s students and, after digging up a farmer's wife in the dark and pouring rain, discover that the dripping corpse jostling between them with every bump in the road has transformed into "the body of the dead and long-dissected Gray" (221).

Horrific as the many corpses of this story may be, what terrifies Fettes and Macfarlane is the instability of the body's identity. The men are "experienced" grave robbers and unaffected by the dark and stormy night and ghastly task of breaking a coffin; they only become disconcerted and determined to inspect the corpse when they realize that the wrapped figure has changed its shape, and finally jump and scream when their lamp reveals the criminal Gray's face instead of that of the respectable farmer's wife. The transformation haunts both men, but it should not necessarily come as a surprise; the dissection of Gray is thought of by Fettes as "the dreadful process of disguise" (215), and despite Jane Galbraith having been "as well known as the Castle

Rock" (the implication being that she was a prostitute), "The body of the unfortunate girl was duly dissected, and no one remarked or appeared to recognize her" (210-11). As the narrative makes clear, a body dissected (or due to be dissected) is an identity erased.

"The Body Snatcher" literalizes the social and psychic effects of the policies regulating dissection following the Burke and Hare case. As Richardson explains, after another case of "burking" in London in 1831, the British Parliament passed a bill that:

> recommended that instead of giving hanged murderers, the government should confiscate the bodies of paupers dying in workhouses and hospitals, too poor to pay for their own funerals. What has for generations been a feared and hated punishment for murder became one for poverty. (*Death, Dissection and the Destitute, xv*)

Further dehumanizing paupers whose bodies were already subject to medical experimentation and research in the hospital, the bill established the operating theater and dissection hall as an extension of the hospital well before it was regularly integrated in its architectural design. And although it ostensibly only threatens the distinctions between pauper and criminal, Stevenson's tale implies that the bill's erosion of moral and class-based distinctions may be difficult to contain. The real Doctor Knox was an ethnologist after all, and his anatomical research contributed to nineteenth-century discourse surrounding degeneration. Thus the transformation of the farmer's wife into an already dissected corpse evokes the specter of class-based degeneration.[143] Ultimately, Stevenson's ghost story reveals a greater terror than murder or the desecration of one's final resting place: the terror of the operating theatre as a space that not only altered one's corporeal form but also challenged Victorian identity formations. In this way, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is an extension of the themes of "The Body Snatcher." It is no coincidence

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[143] Ilaria B. Sborgi also identifies "The Body Snatcher"'s engagement with theories of degeneration in her chapter "Stevenson's Unfinished Autopsy of the Other."

that Utterson discovers Hyde's dead body, as well as the documents to prove that Jekyll's own death and identity have been erased by Hyde's corpse, in Jekyll's laboratory.

Critics have examined Jekyll's transformation through the lens of late-Victorian theories of degeneration and class politics,[144] but what is often overlooked is the specificity of the story's setting. Opening with a chapter titled "Story of a Door," the reader later learns that, more than a symbol for the mystery and inaccessibility of Jekyll's relationship with Hyde, the titular closed door is the back entrance to a building "indifferently known as the laboratory or dissecting rooms;" Jekyll "had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden" (25). Noting that the alley door in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* would have been the receiving area for corpses in the era of Burke and Hare, McCracken-Flesher argues we read Jekyll as another iteration of Knox, and Utterson's need to break down Jekyll's cabinet door as an echo of the Edinburgh police's need to break into Knox's operating theatre.[145] Furthermore she points out, "Utterson comes in by Jekyll's front door, passing through the old surgical theater to the chemical cabinet, and implying a medical progress from ancient to modern. But Hyde has entered first, through the back door. The anatomical past and the chemical present are in important respects one and the same" (112). Be it by drug or scalpel, the medical interventions that took place in the over-determined space of

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[144] Stephen D. Arata's "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde" has been seminal for studies of degeneration in Stevenson's work and in late-Victorian gothic fiction in general.

[145] Ruth Richardson also sees *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a revision of the central themes of "The Body Snatcher," but unlike McCracken-Flesher, views MacFarlane as the model for both Jekyll and Hyde. "Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher*." *The Lancet*. 385.9966 (2015): 412-3.

the operating theatre threatened the stability of the identities of those who underwent treatment.

But the barely refurbished laboratory of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is much more than coded, spatial shorthand for skin-crawling experiments and altered identities. Beyond forging a connection between Jekyll's quest to split his soul and "pluck back that fleshly vestement" and the anatomist's disinterest in the provenance of the body on his dissecting table, the built environment of the repurposed operating theatre around which this story unfolds produces a physical and figurative atmosphere that further affiliates this space with the pre-pavilion hospital. Combining gothic decay with a lack of ventilation, the annex in which the theater is located is described in the opening pages as a "sinister block of building" with no windows, a "blind forehead of discoloured wall," and a single door "blistered and distained" (8). It is, as Enfield guesses: "scarcely a house" (11). For as much as Jekyll and Utterson spend their evenings gathered around warm hearths, this is an anti-domestic narrative, populated almost exclusively by single, professional men. Jekyll's home may wear "a great *air* of wealth and comfort" (emphasis added, 18), but the air of surrounding London shares more in common with the "dingy," "littered," and "foggy" former theatre from which Hyde originates (25).

Enclosed on all sides by homes and businesses and lacking any widows except the three barred ones in Jekyll's cabinet, the atmosphere that emanates from of the urban operating theatre seems to affirm Nightingale's prediction that "To build a hospital in the midst of a crowded neighbourhood of narrow streets and high houses, is to insure a stagnation of air without, which no ventilation within, no cubic space, however ample, will be able to remedy" (*Notes on Hospitals*). In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* this stagnation

of air is evidenced in the ever-present fog (what we could recognize as smog today). Jesse Oak Taylor suggests that the "pervasiveness of smog in the novel fuses plot and atmosphere" and promotes an ecocritical reading of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in which Mr. Hyde is "literally born of pollution" (110-13). I argue that when read through the medical context established by novella's setting and central characters, the fog might be better interpreted as a form of miasma and Hyde a contagion, blighting the lives he comes in contact with. Furthermore, the specific locations in which the fog is found—surrounding the operating theater and Hyde's home—alludes to the connected class politics of public health, the hospital, and dissecting hall first raised in "The Body Snatcher."

Just hours after Sir Danvers Carew is murdered the city is shrouded in the "first fog of the season" and by morning a "great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven" (23). Here, "pall" equates the smoky cloud with a death shroud, compounding the already unhealthy atmosphere of Hyde's working-class Soho neighborhood, an area noted for its "muddy ways, slatternly passengers," and women headed out to gin palaces during the day instead of tending to their homes (23), conditions that Nightingale believed spread disease. The continued presence of the fog, following Carew's murder, foreshadows the return of Jekyll's alter ego and conveys the potential breadth of his contamination. On the evening that Utterson's clerk, Mr. Guest, discovers that Hyde's farewell letter was forged by Jekyll, "The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city […] and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind" (27). In this passage, Stevenson's anatomical metaphor likens the city to an urban organism whose

circulating populace might at any moment come into contact with Dr. Jekyll's deformed and degenerate other self.

Circulation—and its alter ego contagion—likewise serves as a metaphor for the narrative strategy of the text. In this anti-domestic novel, there is no marriage or romance to shape plot progression and provide a narrative resolution. Instead, the story of Hyde is circulated within Utterson's community of professional men, passing between narrators like an illness and killing a few along the way. Its open-ended conclusion, produced by Utterson's failure to return to the scene of the crime and body of the text after he trudges off to read Dr. Lanyon and Dr. Jekyll's letters, suggests that, like the fog, the story and its fatal ends might continue to spread. Furthermore, with its shifting narrators and focalizers, the form of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* mirrors its own thematic examination of the instability of identity and echoes the "The Body Snatcher"'s exploration of the anonymity of institutional medical exploration and care.

Significantly, both of Stevenson's medical horror stories place their operating theatres in the past. In "The Body Snatcher," Fettes and Macfarlane's work for Mr. K— in Edinburgh is ensconced within a frame narrative set in England decades later. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the theatre, with its "dust" and "perfect mat of cobweb" (39), has clearly stood empty of student anatomists "for close on a generation" (8). Compounding these narratives' gothic atmospheres, Stevenson practices a form of spatial atavism that roots his late-Victorian doctor protagonists in the outdated dissection halls of Knox's era instead of the modern operating theaters of the period's pavilion hospitals. Rather than neutralize the violence and terror associated with these spaces, Stevenson's spatial atavism sets the stage for episodes of moral atavism and physical degeneration that indict

medical practices and research that disregard patient or subject identity. Although the operating theater-cum-dissection hall is detached from the hospital in both narratives, the former is dependent on the latter. As such, the operating theater is positioned as a Hyde to the hospital's Jekyll, its inherent theatricality and episodes of violence eminently more narratable than the containment and quarantine of the hospital.

Poetic Rhythms and the Audible Atmosphere of W. E. Henley's "In Hospital"

While working on "The Body Snatcher" in 1881, Stevenson wrote to his friend W. E. Henley (1849-1903) about his disgust at having composed such a gruesome tale. Of his literary peers, none other was likely to better understand the latent horrors of the operating theatre and hospital. Henley contracted tuberculosis of the bones in his hands and feet as a young man and spent much of his twenties in and out of medical facilities. He was admitted to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London for ten months, during which his left leg was amputated, and he spent a year at the Royal Sea Bathing infirmary at Margate, where his infection continued to spread. Following these failed treatments, Henley was admitted to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in the summer of 1873 where he underwent two successful operations on his right foot as a test case for Joseph Lister's antiseptic surgery.[146] He would spend twenty long months healing in the Royal Infirmary, inspiring a collection of 28 poems titled "In Hospital: Rhymes and Rhythms" and first published in *A Book of Verses* (1888). Opening with a poem titled "Enter Patient" and

[146] Edward H. Cohen is the current authority on Henley's "In Hospital" and has published numerous works on its publication history and reception. For more on Henley's life and work, see Cohen's "An Uncollected Hospital Essay by W. E. Henley;" "Henley's 'In Hospital', Literary Realism, and the Late-Victorian Periodical Press;" "The Epigraph to Henley's In Hospital;" "'Ennui': an Uncollected Hospital Poem by W.E. Henley;" and "The Second Series of W. E. Henley's Hospital Poems."

closing with "Discharged," the collection is organized in a chronological cycle that represents the perspective of a hospital patient, and most likely reflects the author's own hospitalization. Unnarratable in almost all other Victorian literature, the experience of being treated in a nineteenth-century British hospital is, as it turns out, best captured in poetry rather than fiction.

Although supported by notable friends like Stevenson and J. M. Barrie, Henley's work drew mixed reviews. Edward Cohen reports that many Victorian readers were repulsed by the poems' "grim details" and found that they challenged "Victorian canons of taste," while reviewers struggled to assess the collection's proto-modernist poems, finding that they straddled the boundary between poetry and prose (Cohen, "Henley's 'In Hospital'…" 2). Those who did approve of Henley's work admired its pictorial elements verging on literary realism, and praised Henley's impressionistic, painterly style and ability to convey the feeling of hospital life ("Henley's 'In Hospital'…" 5). Whether readers were repulsed or impressed by Henley's deft portrayal of the hospital, applauded or derided his rejection of conventional poetic forms, they agreed that he was innovative in his choice of subject, even if they asserted after the fact—as did the *New Princeton Review*—that "'it is not so strange, after all, that the poetic fire should be kindled and fed in such an *atmosphere*" (my emphasis, qtd. in Cohen "Henley's 'In Hospital'"3). Indeed, we need only remember that Nightingale's fame was in part cemented by Longfellow's panegyric poem "Santa Filomena" (1857), in which he describes the "lady with a lamp" as a vision from heaven in "that house of misery" with its "cheerless corridors," "cold and stony floors," and "glimmering gloom" (lines 19-23).

Although Henley was admitted to the Royal Edinburgh infirmary to undergo an experimental surgery at the forefront of modern medical research, his characterization of the hospital in "Enter Patient," the opening poem in the series, echoes Longfellow's description of Scutari and focuses on the building's age and sedimented history as a space that was equal parts punitive and curative. Looming before the speaker through thick "mists" that "haunt the stony street"—in an atmosphere not unlike that of Stevenson's foggy *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—stands "the Hospital, grey, quiet, old" (1.1-3), with its "corridors and stairs of stone and iron, / Cold, naked, clean – half-workhouse and half jail" (1.13-14). Although its cleanliness suggests that this hospital might be more the modernizing medical facility in the style of a Nightingale pavilion than an atavistic workhouse, the poem's speaker nevertheless apprehends the Foucauldian "temple of death" discussed in the introduction to this chapter; instead of "the familiar surroundings of his home and family" he finds only spectral figures (Foucault 18). This is an environment "Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers meet" and the boundary between these states is blurred (1.4); where a "strange child—so aged yet so young !— / […] / Precedes me gravely" (1.6-8), and "The patients yawn, / or lie as in training for shroud and coffin" (3.9-10). And like the mists that shroud the hospital, the very air within the building is haunted with the possibility of death. Describing his surroundings in the third poem, "Interior," the speaker notes, "There is nothing of home in the noisy kettle, / The fulsome fire. / The atmosphere / Suggests the trail of a ghostly druggist" (3.3-6). In doing so, the speaker connects even lingering odors of drugs such as chloroform with the alienation of domestic life and the promise of mortality.

Much like Stevenson's tales of medicine gone wrong, Eliot's story of social contagion, and Nightingale's manifesto against miasmas, for Henley's "In Hospital" atmosphere is everything. But rather than serve as a figurative stand-in for the social ills of a community, or a narrative device in service of shifting focalizers and perspectives, Henley's poems convert the atmosphere produced by the hospital's utilitarian structure and furnishings into an expression of the individualized experience of its otherwise anonymous and marginalized patients. Throughout, the physical and emotional discomforts engendered by this environment are conflated. When the speaker sits "on a bench a skeleton would writhe from, / Angry and sore, [as] I wait to be admitted: / Wait till my heart is lead upon my stomach" his body is rendered simultaneously anatomical and symbolic, the physical skeleton supporting the figurative heart and stomach, sites of emotional knowledge (2.5-7). Furthermore, when the speaker describes the hospital waiting room as "(a cellar on promotion), / Drab to the soul, drab to the very daylight," (2.1-2), the anaphora of the room's drabness allows for the convergence of the inner life of the patient with the air and elements that surround them. In another example, even the sounds of fellow patient's labored breaths provide an invitation to contemplate the existential crisis of illness: "My neighbor chokes in the clutch of chloral . . . / O a gruesome world!" (3.13-16).

Although, the oppressiveness of the hospital's atmosphere and environment is diffused throughout all twenty-eight the poems, the speaker's focus on his environs is most intense in the early and late poems. As Cohen points out, in these moments the speaker's "heightened sensitivity" reveals his "mounting frustration with a regimen shaped by confinement and submissiveness" ("An Uncollected Hospital Essay" 259).

Unable to leave his bed following an operation on his leg recounted in the fifth poem in the series ("Operation"), the speaker's horizon of experience is constricted to what he can see, feel, and hear from his mattress and, I argue, this limited perspective shapes the representational strategy and the structure of this poetic narrative. Ultimately, through its structural stagnancy and reliance on sensory data, "In Hospital" creates the conditions for reproducing and redeeming the unnarratable space of the Victorian hospital ward.

In the seventh poem, "Vigil," one of the most concentrated studies of the speaker's surroundings, his curtailed mobility transforms the hospital ward into a world unto itself; mattress lumps grow to become metaphorical "boulders" and feel like "glowing kilns," while the gas light is immortalized as "an inevitable atom." (7.7-13). In the same way that a lump is magnified into a boulder, the speaker's immobility is perceived as unending and torturous, "a practical nightmare" where all the patient can do is "Ache - - - ! / Ache," (7.3-6) and reminisce "On . . . and still on . . . still on" (7.24) about "Old voices, old kisses, old songs" that return to him "malignant" and "derisive" (7.17-9). The distortion of time during this "vigil" extends the speaker's identification of the hospital as a jail in the first poem, while his characterization of his fellow inmates further evokes the hospital's carceral qualities. Complaining of another patient who "Snores me to hate and despair" (7.15), the speaker explains in lines 30-36:

> …the snorer,
> The drug like a rope at his throat,
> Gasps, gurgles, snorts himself free, as the night-nurse,
> Noiseless and strange,
> Her bull's-eye half-lanterned in apron,
> (Whispering me, 'Are ye no sleepin' yet?)
> Passes, list-slippered and peering,
> Round…and is gone.

Like in the introductory poems in the series, death lurks on the edges of “Vigil,” this time in an allusion to the prison scaffold and the likening of the drug treating his neighbor to a noose. Compounding the carceral connotation of this scene, the nurse seems less like the saintly “lady with the lamp” than a policeman on patrol with her bull’s-eye lantern looking for disturbances in the night. Similarly, the droning sonic effect and implied endlessness of both the imagined snore and the anaphora of “ache,” “on,” and “old” emphasizes the speaker’s entrapment.

“Lived on one’s back” (7.1), life may be a nightmare, but it is also an inescapable cacophony. According to Nightingale, noise is tantamount to a “cruel absence of care” and an extension of the atmosphere that must be carefully managed for patient health (*Notes On Nursing…*). She is especially opposed to ambient noise, and argues, “every noise a patient cannot *see* partakes of the character of suddenness to him” (*Notes on Nursing*). This is the case with the speaker suffering through the night in “Vigil.” He cannot help but hear that “Far in the stillness a cat / Languishes loudly,” and is all nerves anticipating a neighbor’s “moan” (7.25-9). Even his dreams are “Broken with brutal and sordid / Voices and sounds that impose on me” (7.39-40). So loud are the speaker’s surroundings, that it is the nurse’s noiselessness, a quality encouraged by Nightingale, which apparently makes her strange. Reflecting on Nightingale’s prescriptions for quiet, John Picker offers a suggestive example of the Victorian association of noise and atmosphere. He explains:

> Nightingale’s practical consideration of the relationship between bodily soundness and external sounds revealed the extent to which, by the 1860s, perceptions of the unhealthy effects of noise had acquired a new sense of urgency and caution amid a growing urban cacophony. // During a period, in fact, when complaints surged against the stink of the Thames and smoky London air, street

sounds also came to be represented as threatening pollutants with noxious effects (66).

As with the second chapter of this dissertation, Henley's speaker serves as an "earwitness" to the soundscape of the hospital (Picker 13). Throughout "In Hospital" the speaker carefully catalogues what he hears and presents an audible atmosphere, a "loud spaciousness" (1.5) where "far footfalls clank" (3.15), a space where patients apprehend the arrival of their doctor and his students "Through the corridor's echoes / louder and nearer / come a great shuffling of feet." (11.2-4), and whose departure is marked by "whispering" (11.41). As the series progresses, listening becomes the speaker's primary means of connecting with his surroundings, his fellows, and the world beyond the ward. Time is marked when a bell "clangs" and "the nurses troop to breakfast" (26.9-10); the change of seasons is perceived through the "cawing" of crows and "tracing" of dogs (26.5-6); and holidays are celebrated with a penny-whistle rendition of "*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*," inspiring stumps to shake, "Splinted fingers [to] tap the rhythm," and patients to become "Of their mattress-life oblivious" (27.2, 9-10, 13).

Following the speaker's establishment of an audible atmosphere in "Vigil," the series' catalogue of pain and environmental suffering is punctuated, and at times supplanted, by individual portraits of patients and caretakers—the speaker's fellow inmates—written in the form of a sonnet. These sonnets narrate others' experiences, a product of "close listening" (Picker 6). For example, in "Suicide" the speaker recounts the motivations that led a man to cut his own throat with a dull knife and explains, "In the night I hear him sobbing. / But sometimes he talks a little. / He has told me all his troubles." (24.14-6). This cluster of portraits in the middle of series borrow a familiar poetic form to tell an unfamiliar story—the experience of the poor hospital patient and

the people that care for them. An experimental patient, Henley is better educated and more privileged than his fellow patients, but his choice of form provides space for multiple perspectives. As Jennifer Yirinec argues, "by locating himself within a community of patients from varying social spheres, Henley launches a critique of the Victorian stigmatization of 'poor' bodies, ultimately revealing the way in which all human beings are essentially equalized by suffering and illness" (2). I would add that, in recounting the stories and describing in precise detail the facial features and expressions of the hospital's community of patients, caregivers, and cleaners, Henley resists the anonymizing force of hospital and operating theatre.

Furthermore, the intimacy forged through these sonnet-portraits demonstrates how the atmospheric antagonism between hospital treatment and domestic care might be reconciled through the "sociability of the patients." It suggests that the establishment of surrogate families within this community of sufferers potentially rehabilitates the hospital's image as a temple of death (Yirinec 7). Although the speaker prepares for his operation by reminding himself "The gods are good to me: I have no wife, / No innocent child, to think of as I near / The fateful minute" (4.5-7), he reveals in "Children: Private Ward" that in his convalescence he has become "a father to a brace of boys, / Ailing but apt for *every sort of noise*," (emphasis added, 18.2-3). Despite sharing a "dim, dull, double-bedded room" (18.1), a replica of the men's ward Henley inhabits, the boys "eat, and laugh, and sing, and fight, all day" (18.9). Their joyful din produces a sonic atmosphere in contrast to the droning torture of "Vigil," while their imaginative games—where they "play / At Operations" and pretend to be "self-chloroformed, with half-shut eyes, / Holding the limb and moaning" (18.10-14)—restage the trauma of the speaker's

own surgery as a comedy and provide him with an avenue of temporary respite from the realities of the hospital.

In the later poems of the series, the tone is subtly shifted, as are the depictions of the atmosphere of the hospital. Despite a continued frustration with confinement, the overall mood of the series gradually becomes less dark. Like the children he has developed a relationship with, the speaker is now able to imagine and literally project pleasure within the otherwise "decent meanness" of the hospital (3.2). In "Music," the twenty-third poem in the series, he hears an organ in the distance piping "foolish ditties" and is immediately transported into a memory (23.4). He explains:

> And, as when you change
> Pictures in a magic lantern,
> Books, beds, bottles, floor, and ceiling
> Fade and vanish,
>
> And I'm well once more . . . (23:5-8)

Unlike the "brutal and sordid" sounds that disturb the speaker and emphasize his imprisonment in "Vigil," the organ music serves as a temporary mode of escape. Evoking the magic lantern—at turns a Victorian toy, teaching tool, and popular entertainment medium—and casting the hospital's features as little more than pictures, the speaker imagines an immateriality to the furnishings that physically and emotionally pained him in the series' beginning even as he implicates the poem's reader as an audience-member and witness to that pain.

Literally distancing his memory of being well from the hospital's interior with a stanza break, the speaker describes an evening scene equally atmospheric to the space of the hospital but much more pleasant. Framed by a refrain-like variation on the opening stanza's distant organ piping ditties (23.3, 15-6, 23), the speaker dreams of observing a

woman from the sidewalk outside her shop, where he “can smell the sprinkled pavement” and the sight of her “chestnut chignon / Thrills my senses!” (23.21-4). Exclaiming “O, the sight and scent, / Wistful eve and perfumed pavement (23.25-6), the speaker credits the music for breathing “the blessed / Airs of London” (23.27-8) and cements the affiliation of soundscape and atmosphere.

In general, the speaker of “In Hospital” gradually shifts his narrative attention from his immediate environment and its effect on his psyche to his community and the sounds that carry on the air “Thro’ [his] grimy, little window” (27.2). But “Nocturn,” the penultimate poem in the series, undercuts this general trend as it revisits “Vigil”’s study of a sleepless night with an intensified focus on the emotional agonies of nighttime noise. Within a synesthetic sonic landscape where a “shadow shuts and opens” and “loud flames pulse and flutter,” the speaker complains, “I can hear a cistern leaking. / Dripping, dropping, in a rhythm” (27.2-6). Repetitive on all levels—its subject (a sleepless night), content (a constant drip), and accentual-syllabic rhythm (four iambs per line, four lines per four stanzas)—, “Nocturn” equates the rhythms of hospital confinement with torture. Expressing his loss of time in the final stanza, the speaker complains “And my very life goes dripping, / Dropping, dripping, drip-drop-dropping, / In the drip-drop of the cistern” (27.14-16). Connecting the stasis and repetition of the hospital with a failure of domestic management in the form of a broken cistern—which by this period might well be attached to a toilet and site of sanitary scrutiny—via the audible atmosphere, Henley’s “Nocturn” ultimately reiterates the atmospheric antagonism between hospital and home established in the beginning of the series. Furthermore, with its repetitions and image of a life washed down the drain, “Nocturn” intimates that, despite the speaker’s growing

relationship with his fellow patients, these relationships will lead to nothing; unlike in the family dramas of Victorian fiction, Henley is only a father-figure so long as he is still admitted.

More broadly, "Nocturn" serves as a reflection of the series as a whole and an appropriate last poem to be set within the physical space of the hospital. Like so many drips, the mix of traditional forms and free verse creates in the series as a whole a "Rhythm / rough, unequal, half-melodious" (27.6), while the speaker's insistence that "I must listen, listen, listen / In a passion of attention" (27.11) might serve as its epigraph and *raison d'etre*. Most importantly, its internal (content) and external (theme) reiterations emphasize the stagnancy and containment of the hospital; it is precisely this that renders it incompatible with plot. Despite the inclusion of an episode in the operating theater, the bulk of "In Hospital" is marked by a lack of eventfulness. The fifth poem of twenty-eight, "Operation" is striking for being the only poem in the series in the second person; however, it is precisely this stylistic shift that establishes the action of the operating theater as alien to the inertia of the hospital. Even the atmosphere of the hospital is static in comparison to the world outside its walls. In the first poem of the series, the speaker is met with "draughty gloom" (1.5) as he enters the hospital; in "Discharged," the last, he enters a world of "wind and sunshine" (28.2).

Atmosphere has been the thread that ties this chapter together. As I have demonstrated, the management and influence of atmospheres both literal and figurative was a key concern in the design and administration of the Victorian hospital. On the one hand, because many Victorian hospital reformers believed in the danger of miasmas and poor sanitation, the literal atmosphere—managed through ventilation, sunlight, and the

proper arrangement of wards—was a central consideration in the renovation and new construction of nineteenth-century hospitals. On the other, because most Victorians who could afford it were treated at home until the end of the nineteenth century, the figurative atmosphere of the hospital was positioned as anti-domestic and antagonistic to the comforts of home and family; it was imagined as a "gloomy and mournful" "temple of death." Together, these literal and figurative atmospheric conditions provided Victorian authors a representational framework for examining the relationship of the hospital to society, as both a site of scientific experimentation and repository for social and economic outcasts, despite the often-necessary marginalization of this architectural form as a narrative venue.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the representation (or, more specifically, absence) of the hospital in Victorian fiction is determined by the intersection of form, content, and genre. Within the marriage plots and family dramas that dominated much of Victorian fiction, there was often little room for the class of characters—the pauperized poor—likely to be treated in a hospital; as a result, Victorian literary representations of hospitals are relatively uncommon. But it is not just population that determines narratability. Besides the absence of the middle and upper classes, the conditions of hospitalization during the Victorian era rendered it incompatible with plotting. The anonymity, confinement, and stasis that were inherent to this space could not sustain the multi-character or the marriage plots that made loose, baggy, Victorian novels possible. To some degree, late-century Victorian gothic genre fiction managed to recover a component of the hospital, the operating theater. Often much shorter than their triple-decker predecessors, these later narratives benefitted from the theatricality and

eventfulness of the operating theater in comparison to the hospital ward. And because of their thematic interest in degeneration, they more readily addressed an institution historically associated with pauperism; however, these representations typically relied on a spatial atavism that only compounded the marginalization of the populations that typically sought treatment in hospitals. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that the representation of the experience of the Victorian hospital is best suited to poetry, a literary form adapted to rhythms and repetitions instead of progress and resolution. And as Henley's proto-modernist work demonstrates, the homogeneity afforded by a series of compact and individually structured poems promotes the disposal of plot in favor of the representation of a diverse body of (mainly working class) patient and caretaker experiences.

In attending to the audible atmosphere of the hospital, this chapter represents a return to the beginning of this project and its examination of Wilkie Collins's suspenseful soundscape. Although perhaps not the primary topic of investigation in every chapter, the class politics of representation has been a critical undercurrent throughout, one that comes the surface most clearly in this chapter. In ending with Henley's book of poems, this chapter gestures towards the limits of narrative representation and the manner in which literary and architectural forms collaborate in the display of some social classes and formations, and in the erasure of others. The following coda likewise begins with poetry. Coming full-circle, it returns to the writings of Thomas Hardy and the benefits of an architecturally informed approach to reading Victorian literature. Furthermore, it traces the origins of this dissertation, considers the implications of my project for Victorian literary studies, and charts potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CODA

This dissertation opened with Thomas Hardy, and it is with Hardy that I wish to draw to a close. In the previous chapter, I examined the unnarratability of the hospital and considered how the affordances of poetry might provide an alternative literary mode for the representation of the politics and lived experience of the built environment. As I noted briefly in the introduction to this project, Thomas Hardy gave up novel writing after *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Perhaps frustrated by *Jude*'s negative reviews, Hardy turned to poetry and published the collection *Wessex Poems* three years later.[147] Comprised of 51 poems, the collection was a combination of old compositions and new, with some poems dating back to his time as an assistant architect. "Heiress and Architect" is one such poem. Dated 1867, just two years after "How I Built Myself a House" was published, "Heiress and Architect" rehashes the earlier tale's dramatization of gender conflicts through disagreements over building design; reconstructed in an "overschematic" poetic form, "Heiress and Architect" is both more overtly confrontational and more densely referential (Knoepflmacher 1058). It also perfectly encapsulates the central argument of this dissertation and its intervention into the field of Victorian literary studies.

[147] There is no critical consensus on why Hardy decided to give up the pursuit of novel writing, and it is somewhat besides the point for my argument. However, in the semi-autobiographical *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, the speaker explains, "The misrepresentation of the last two or three years affected but little, if at all, the informed appreciation of Hardy's writings, being heeded almost entirely by those who had not read him; and turned out ultimately to be the best thing could have happened; for they well-nigh compelled him, in his own judgment at any rate, if he wished to retain any shadow of self-respect, to abandon at once a form of literary art he had long intended to abandon at some indefinite time, and resume openly that form of it which had always been more instinctive with him…" (309).

Structured as a dialogue between the title's two principal figures, the stanzas of "Heiress and Architect" shift between the former's requests and the latters's rebuttals. The heiress asks for "'high halls with *tracery* / and open *ogive*-work,'" "'wide fronts of *crystal glass*,'" "'A little chamber, then, with *swan and dove* / Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device'" in which to meet her lover, and "'Some narrow winding *turret*'" (lines 13-4, 26, 38-9, 51). Instead of agreeing to her plans, the architect meets each request with a respective argument against its wisdom. He suggests that she would do better to choose "'the close and surly wall, / For winters freeze,'" a "'house for secrecy, / For you will tire [of exposure to the world],'" no "'such sweet nook / …For you will fade,'" and finally, "'space (since life ends unawares) / To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs; / For you will die.'" (lines 24-5, 36-7, 46-9, 59-61). Ending on this sardonic note, the poem is illustrated with a simple line drawing of four figures carrying a coffin down the stairs that appears to confirm the architect's grim argument and approach to design (Figure 6.1).

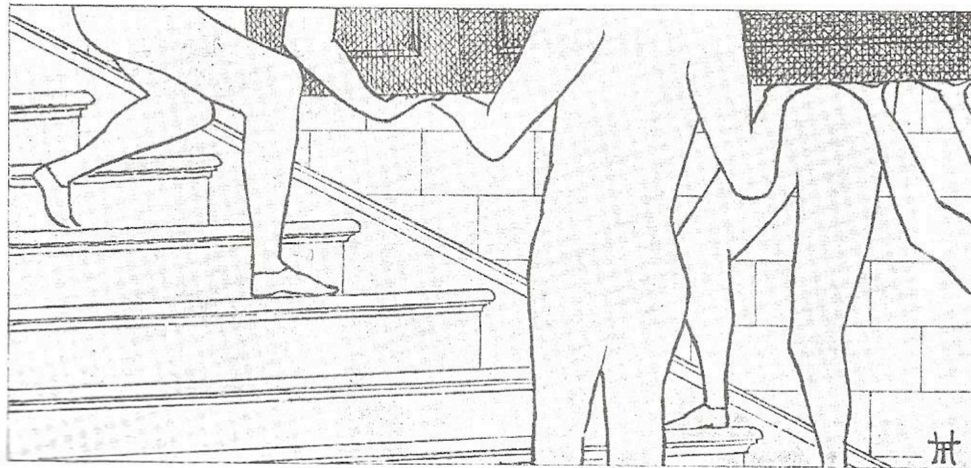

Figure 6.1: Thomas Hardy, Illustration to the poem "Heiress and Architect." *Wessex Poems*, 1898.

Critical assessments of the opposition between the heiress and architect tend to focus on Hardy's allusions to the canon of Romantic and Victorian poetry in his "Wordsworthian" heiress's desire for "scent and hue" (Knoepflmacher 1058), and suggest that "Heiress and Architect" functions as a critique of Hardy's literary forebears and an allegorical depiction of the nineteenth century's ideological shift from Romanticism to a "Darwinian point of view."[148] What are downplayed in these analyses are the poem's architectural specificities and allusions. "Tracery" refers to the open stonework typical of a Gothic window, an "ogive" is a pointed Gothic arch, a "turret" is of course a feature common to medieval fortresses and castles, "wide fronts of crystal glass" are highly suggestive of the Crystal Palace, and a chamber furnished with "swan and dove" "engrailed" evokes William Morris's richly patterned designs for wallpapers and tapestries that featured both creatures (Figure 6.2). Collectively, these features conjure up many of the dominant features and figures of the "High Victorian Movement" in architecture that, as I note in Chapter 3, reached its zenith in the 1860s and 70s. In pitting the poem's architect against his client's wishes to construct a building in the stylistic mode of the day, Hardy appears to anticipate the eventual decline of the Gothic Revival at the century's end (when *Wessex Poems* was published); the architect's utilitarian insistence on a staircase wide enough to fit a coffin foresees the twentieth century embrace of functionalism.

Significantly, an architecturally informed analysis of "Heiress and Architect" does not contradict the existing literary and cultural analyses of the poem. Instead, I argue that it—like the many texts I examined in the previous chapters—brings to light suggestive

[148] For more on this, see Bailey 108, Knoepflmacher 1058-61, and Giordano 111.

parallels between literary, architectural, and ideological movements that demand continued critical attention. Moreover, Hardy's deployment of architecture as shorthand for Victorian literary tropes is indicative of the extent to which material and artistic forms intersect, and it provides more evidence of the potential for the latter to coopt the former for aesthetic and political ends.

Figure 6.2: William Morris, *Dove and Rose*. 1879. Textile. ©Victoria & Albert Museum.

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the Victorians understood architecture as a medium of cultural and political messages, as well as a product of the material conditions of their society. I examined various literary representations of four building types—hotels, courthouses, theaters, and hospitals—that were either invented or radically redesigned due to the nineteenth century's industrialization, increasingly mobile population, growing consumer culture, and new approaches to public health; through this, I demonstrated how Victorian authors engaged with the period's shifting sociopolitical

landscape through their depictions of architectural forms. Beyond arguing that close readings of Victorian literary representations of the built environment can provide a nuanced and complex analysis of the period's ideas about itself and about the spatial forms that organized social relationships, I have suggested that the nineteenth century's rapidly developing built environment allowed for new narrative possibilities and shaped authorial innovations in genre, style, and form. At its most fundamental level, my project is based on the premise that the spaces we inhabit shape the stories we tell.

In searching for an exit to a project that has stretched out over the course of several years, it seems that I might do well to return to how I entered this field of study in the first place. The foundations for this project were laid four years ago, in October of 2013, at the North American Victorian Studies Association. It was there that I heard Rutgers University Art Historian Carla Yanni give a plenary talk on the relationship between architecture and the social production of knowledge. A distillation of her studies of Victorian museums of natural history and asylums, Yanni's plenary highlighted the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of architecture. Although I instinctively understood that built space is a crucial element in the construction of culture—one that shapes our relationships with each other, negotiates our movement in the world, and frames our moments of solitude and interaction—I had never seriously considered it as an object of literary analysis. Yanni may have been "reading" actual buildings, not texts, but her approach to the semiotics of built space inspired me to test whether fictionalized buildings might not benefit from the same sort of architectural, historical, and cultural analysis. The only question was how to limit my archive.

I began by reading social historians of architecture and human geographers of all stripes: I turned to feminist critics such as Annmarie Adams, Polly Wynn Allen, Dolores Hayden, and Doreen Massey; I discovered the distinction between monumental and vernacular architecture with Peter Guillery's *Built from Below*; and I learned much about glossing vast architectural histories from popular publications about the evolution of the home by authors such as Judith Flanders and Lucy Worsley. I was also incredibly lucky to have received an Institute of Humanities Research Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship in the summer of 2014. It allowed me to explore the archives of the Royal Institute of British Architects, housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum. There, I sifted through endless stacks of three-foot-square folders filled with fragile parchment drawings and plans. They were very beautiful and often indecipherable. An overwhelming majority of them were of churches and ornamental cornices; I would have done well to read Ruskin before I arrived. In the end, I gained an appreciation for the challenges of archival research. More importantly, I ruled out the too broad project of tracking the narrative mechanisms of different building elements, such as windows and stairs. Wiser minds guided me towards building types instead of technologies, and continued research led to me to examine the underrepresentation of built public spaces in Victorian literary studies and to my focus on the four building types addressed in this project.

Even still, my topic is capacious, and my approach to reading literary representations of the built environment opens many doors. As demonstrated by the end of the previous chapter and by the beginning of this one, future iterations of this project might address the relationship between poetry and architecture, as opposed to this project's focus on narrative. Alternatively, I might expand my field of research to include

similarly novel building types that remain unaddressed here, such as railway stations and office buildings. Or, an even more interdisciplinary approach might track the evolution in narrative forms affiliated with the spaces taken up in this dissertation. It would be interesting to consider the continued depiction of hotel rooms as permeable spaces and sites of horror; it is worth considering whether contemporary courtroom dramas in film and on television also rely upon melodramatic and affective strategies as a mode of political critique; and the recent boom in the number hospital television shows and dearth of hospital films might tell us something important about modern narrative constraints.

As it stands, my project builds upon previous literary studies of domestic, carceral, and commercial architecture and expands the critical archive to include a set of relatively understudied public spaces whose cultural significance remains profound even today. In examining a variety of consumer and capitalist spaces and a range of texts and authors spanning the long nineteenth century, this project aims to demonstrate both the significance of public architectural forms to even some of the most "domestic" of novels and the benefits of interdisciplinary analyses of these spaces to Victorian studies and cultural studies, more broadly. Moreover, it contributes to Victorian studies'—and literary studies' in general—recent reinvestment in formalism(s) as it demonstrates the relationship between the various, intersecting, forms that govern and compose built environments, social relations, and literature. It also reminds us the continued critical value of attending to the built environment in an academic climate dominated by discourse about digital publics and the space of social media. Beyond the portability of my methodology to additional architectural forms and/or other literary fields, my project

provides new humanistic avenues of inquiry in the study of urban development and it shifts the ways in which we read and understand representations of space.

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