Building Realism:
Architectural Metaphor in the Mid-Victorian Novel

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Abstract

This thesis examines the use of architectural metaphor in four mid-Victorian novels: Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872). The thesis argues that psychological realism in these novels is taking shape via architecture and provides a detailed examination of the heroines of mid-Victorian realist novels who narrate or convey their understanding of the world through architecture. This pattern of narration materialises in the novels through both straightforward architectural reporting (description of the built environment) and creative, imaginative architecture (architectural metaphor). A second layer of architecture exists in these novels apart from the built environment, a layer in which architecture functions in order to give three-dimensionality to a heroine's thoughts and emotions. I refer to these moments as 'architectural internalisation' and explore it as a dynamic technique used by authors to heighten the psychological realism of their work by allowing heroines to articulate and narrate their subjective experience via architecture: architecture provides these heroines with a vehicle for creative and constructive self-expression. While many critics address material architecture in these novels in terms of a realist built environment and metaphoric architecture primarily in terms of female entrapment and confinement, this thesis suggest a reappraisal of the role of architecture and an interrogation of the tendency to reflexively consider the architecture presented by Victorian authors as restrictive and constraining. It examines the architecturally-mediated psychological interiors crafted by these authors that anticipates the direct and unmediated access of the modernists, advocates that equal attention be afforded to built as well as organic images, and urges that built images be examined as purposeful constructions instead of dismissing them as pre-existing vehicles channelling the flow of organic systems.

A close reading with a focus on architecture reveals that architectural metaphors are a vital component of the psychological realism of these novels. The thesis accordingly offers new insight into their heroines and narrators. *Bleak House's* Esther Summerson is at the centre of a psychological realist form depicted through architecture, while she has historically been depicted as a character with little psychological depth. *Villette's* Lucy Snowe, frequently considered a guarded and withdrawn narrator, builds and displays her own interiority for the reader and provides unprecedented access to her thoughts and emotions, while the narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret* uses an extended architectural metaphor to construct the novel's psychological realism. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot turns to architecture to imaginatively represent the internal workings of the mind. While much attention has been paid to living structures in Eliot's work, the built also has a significant role in Eliot's representation of the human mind and body and contributes to her particular mode of realism. Collectively, these novelists build psychological realism through architectural themes and narrative strategies.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 4

Introduction 5
1. An Architect's Eye 8
2. Architectural Internalisation 15
3. Architectural Metaphor 20
4. Material and Psychological Realism 31
5. Chapters 39
Conclusion 42

1. 'every door might be Death's Door': Narrating House-Tombs in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* 45
Introduction 45
1. Esther as Author, Narrator, and Architectural Reporter in *Bleak House* 59
2. 'Death's Doors' and Esther's Narration of Mortality 83
Conclusion 102

2. Dwelling in the Heart-Shrine: Lucy Snowe as Creative Architect and Unconventional Homemaker in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* 106
Introduction 106
1. A Homeless Heroine: Lucy Snowe's Domestic Isolation 123
2. An Architect's Eye: Lucy as Author and Literary Architect 129
3. Material and Metaphoric: The Heart-Shrines of *Villette* 151
Conclusion 169

3. 'In such a house, there were secret chambers': Building Material and Psychological Realism in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* 172
Introduction 172
1. A Narrator with an Architect's Eye: Critiquing Architecture in *Lady Audley's Secret* 181
2. Touring the Architectural Interior: Braddon's Architectural Mindscapes ... 207
3. Architecture and Identity: the Discomfort of an Unhoused Body 226
Conclusion 233

4. Building the Brain: The Architectural Interior in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* 235
Introduction 235
1. Cottage Building and Dorothea's Architect's Eye 243
2. Psychological Realism and Shifting Imagery: The Organic to the Built 263
3. The Labyrinth in *Middlemarch* 277
Conclusion 295

Conclusion 299

Works Cited 307

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Introduction
Experiencing, Creating, and Narrating with an Architect's Eye

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot repeatedly represents Dorothea's imagined encounters with her husband's mind via the use of architectural imagery. Early in their relationship, the narrator comments:

> Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought […] and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent. (22)

Dorothea begins with a formal and reverential understanding of Casaubon's mind, imagining it as a labyrinth, a structure linked with classical study and one that also represents the epitome of architectural achievement and the professional mastery of the architect. After prolonged contact with her new husband, though, Dorothea's initial attraction to Casaubon's labyrinthine mind alters, as Eliot's narrator elaborates in architectural terms the disorienting, disturbing, restricting consequences of married life for Dorothea:

> How was it that in the weeks since her marriage, Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither? (183)

Significantly, Eliot's narrator also represents Casaubon's own encounter with his mental interior: Casaubon becomes a character internalised in his own mind, carrying a candle through his own mental corridors as he struggles to puzzle out his academic argument.

Architecture suffuses *Middlemarch*, from Eliot's representation of Casaubon's labyrinthine mind to her inclusion of the architecturally-minded author Saint Theresa and her emphasis on Dorothea's desire to build improved cottages for the less fortunate. Eliot's interest in material and metaphoric architecture is discernable throughout her novels. In *Daniel Deronda* (1876), for instance, Eliot writes of the Meyrick women: 'The Meyricks had their little oddities, streaks of eccentricity from the mother's blood as well as the father's, their minds being like mediaeval houses with unexpected recesses and openings from this into that, flights of steps and sudden outlooks' (174). Through the comparison with this form of architecture, the reader gains the impression that the Meyrick women are intelligent and unique, but in this case Eliot does not go as far as to internalise the women within their mental houses and show them functioning within that creative architectural space.

Many authors of the mid-Victorian era similarly make use of architectural techniques to describe their character's internal states. In his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), Dickens describes the emotional life of Mrs Todgers as a vaguely accessible architectural space: 'in some odd nook of Mrs. Todgers' breast, up a great many steps, and in a corner easy to be overlooked, there was a secret door, with "Woman" written on the spring, which at a touch of Mercy's hand had flown wide open, and admitted her for shelter' (502). By employing familiar architectural features, Dickens encourages his reader to understand Mrs Todgers's heart as a revealing structure housing numerous emotions tucked away in various nooks and corners that are only discernible if one knows where to look. Even more significantly, Dickens describes Mrs Todgers's contact with her own architectural interior as one of her heart's 'secret door[s]' opens and 'admitted her for shelter'. Like Casaubon, she becomes a figure

internalised within the imagined architecture of her organic body. In Brontë's novel, *Shirley* (1849), we learn from Mr Yorke, 'I tried to persuade a beautiful woman to love me, and she would not. I had not the key to her nature: she was a stone wall to me, doorless and windowless' (505). In these instances, authors turn to architectural internalisation to provide intimate and revealing contact with their characters' mental and emotional interiors. Similar use of architectural techniques can also be found in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Wilkie Collins's *The Dead Secret* (1857), George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863) and *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), and Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), to name only a few.

While there is a wealth of architectural detail to explore in mid-Victorian novels, this thesis focuses on four novels that deploy an architectural register of images in pronounced and sustained ways in order to generate meaning: Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872). These novels evince a persistent emphasis on architecture cohering around three particular themes and techniques and use them to further their individual realist aims. First, heroines or narrators who possess an 'architect's eye', an interest in describing the built environment world of the novel while also using architecture as a vehicle for self-expression through which they convey their subjectivity and narrative authority. Second, the use of the 'architectural internalisation' technique to explore the way minds conceptualise this subjectivity by making thoughts and emotions tangible and navigable. This technique reveals an author's interest and experimentation with the intersection of the visual registers of the organic and the built, describing the

functioning of the organic mind or body in material terms. Third, an architectural metaphor sustained across the novel, where the dominant metaphor is not a passing descriptive detail but a significant component of the novel's realism. The metaphors that I will explore in the following chapters are the house-tomb of *Bleak House*, the heart-shrine of *Villette*, the psychologically revealing self-house of *Lady Audley's Secret*, and the mental labyrinth of *Middlemarch.* Each metaphor has distinct and specific implications for the particular realist aims of each novelist. At the same time, these four metaphors of tomb, shrine, house, and labyrinth are woven across each novel as mid-Victorian realist novels experiment with the manifold potential of architectural metaphor. I have organised this introduction into three sections reflecting the above topics where the qualities of an architect's eye, the technique of architectural internalisation, and the theme of a sustained architectural metaphor will be defined and discussed before turning to a close-reading analysis of the novels.

1. An Architect's Eye

This thesis provides a detailed examination of the heroines of mid-Victorian realist novels who narrate or convey their understanding of the world through architecture. This pattern of narration materialises in the novels through both straightforward architectural reporting (description of the built environment) and creative, imaginative architecture (architectural metaphor). What we see, then, is a second layer of architecture in these novels apart from the built environment, a layer in which architecture functions in order to give three-dimensionality to a heroine's thoughts and emotions. In this layer, aspects of the mind and body are described metaphorically, in architectural terms. I will be referring to these moments as 'architectural internalisation' and exploring it as a dynamic technique used by authors to heighten the psychological realism of

their work by allowing heroines to articulate and narrate their subjective experience via architecture.[1]

While many critics address material architecture in these novels in terms of a realist built environment (Agathocleous, Brooks) and metaphoric architecture primarily in terms of female entrapment and confinement (Gilbert and Gubar), this thesis will offer a reading exploring the manner in which heroines respond to the architecture of their built environment by deploying creative architectural metaphors, crafting architectural compatibility suitable to their frame of mind. In this way, architecture provides these women with a vehicle for creative and constructive self-expression. So while authors turn to the material metaphor of architecture to expose the immaterial thoughts and emotions of their characters for the reader, furthering the psychological realism of the novel, they also clearly indicate the heroines' impulse to reach for these metaphors themselves, to use the language of their environment to speak about their subjective existence in the world. As it pursues this line of analysis the project shows how it differs from the way in which much critical work has read architecture in the novel in negative terms, particularly with regard to accounts of femininity and female subjectivity. As such, it argues for a more positive reading of architectural metaphor in the Victorian novel, a reading more about creative possibility than restriction and limitation.

My central claim is that the heroines and narrators of *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch* narrate with an 'architect's eye'. These women document their built environment for the reader and we

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[1] Late in my research for this thesis I encountered an article by William A. Cohen in which he uses the term 'material interiority' to describe Charlotte Brontë's use of a similar technique in *The Professor*. While Cohen's article did not inform my use of the phrase 'architectural internalisation' it was encouraging to discover Cohen's similar interest in looking at materially-mediated bodily interiors. I will discuss Cohen and his article in the second chapter of this thesis.

frequently see architecture and built enclosures through their eyes. Yet the term architect's eye goes beyond the material documentation expected in a realist novel. Almost paradoxically, architecture is simultaneously used as a tool for representing intimacy; the intimacy of thoughts, emotions, and memories not otherwise represented tangibly in the novel. To clarify exactly what I mean by this term, it is useful to turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the different definitions of 'architect':

> 1a. a master builder 1b. *loosely*, a builder. 2. One who designs and frames any complex structure; esp. the Creator; one who arranges elementary materials on a comprehensive plan. 3a. One who so plans, devises, contrives, or constructs, as to achieve a desired result (especially when the result may be viewed figuratively as an edifice); a builder-up. 3b. transf. of things.

On the most basic level, an architect's eye facilitates straightforward architectural reporting by providing a realist description of the world around her in architectural terms. Frequently, though, these descriptions are insightful and revealing of more than the novel's setting. A heroine with an architect's eye is a 'master builder'. She describes the architecture of the built environment for the reader and is aware of the literary potential of these spaces – frequently emphasising the intimate link between house and inhabitant. She also designs and frames a complex structure through her manipulation of the creative and expansive potential of architectural metaphor. In the case of Dickens's Esther Summerson and Brontë's Lucy Snowe, she plans, devises, contrives and constructs her first-person narrative. Finally, she transforms things, taking the known architectural features of our world and internalising them within the organic body. By doing so, she provides access to her subjective,

architecturalised interior self. To answer the question: what does an architect's eye show us that other 'eyes' don't? I would answer that the architect's eye capitalises on the literary potential of architecture. Her eye provides a realist portrayal of the world around her, in architectural terms, but also texture and tangibility to what is typically unseen: thoughts, emotions, and memories. In these novels, the perceptual experience of the heroine's encounter with the architecture surrounding them infiltrates their narrative and becomes a vehicle for self-expression. A heroine with an architect's eye is also attuned to the threads that will be explored throughout this project: the technique of architectural internalisation, the use of a multifaceted, sustained architectural metaphor, and the author's interest in translating the organic to the built.

In *The Architect's Eye: Visualization and Depiction of Space in Architecture* (1997), Tom Porter explains that early architects used the technique of visualisation before this process evolved into drafting architectural designs on paper. He writes that 'the immediate conversion of architectural ideas into two-dimensional "models" has not always been central to the creation of the built environment' and goes on to describe ancient structures where 'construction was eyeballed, working directly into space entirely without the aid of any working or design drawings' (2). These early architects used various techniques to sharpen their visual skills and to accurately train their architect's eye. Porter writes that 'architecture is concerned with the physical articulation of space; the amount and shape of the void contained and generated by buildings being as material a part of its existence as the substance of its fabric' (3). While the heroines of these novels do not erect material architectural structures in the world of the novel, or draft architectural designs (apart from *Middlemarch's* Dorothea), they are master visualisers, well-practiced in the art of seeing and

writing architecture. They examine and describe the architectural landscape surrounding them and there is a distinct power behind the ability to articulate space and void even if it is divorced from action and tangible realisation. As Porter has shown, seeing in this way is a skill that requires cultivation and the fact that authors actively endow their heroines with this skill should not be overlooked. These authors allow their characters to participate in the representation of their own constructed character through this particular way of seeing that becomes a way of creating and communicating.

In addition to documenting material architecture, the heroines of this study understand its imaginative qualities, adopting architectural metaphors to further their narration and manipulating creative architectural structures to formulate alternative homespaces or sympathetic mental and emotional interiors. These heroines are engaged in building without the use of tangible materials: they digest their environment and erect metaphoric structures with creative power and narrative authority. Taken together, these novels illustrate a pattern of narration where heroines exploit the narrative potential of architecture to tell their story and represent their understanding of the world around them as well as their understanding of other characters' mental and emotional interiors. By doing so, these mid-Victorian realist authors indicate architecture's ability to reveal deep truths about a character while also exploring the role of architectural description in advancing their novel's realism.

In *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret,* and *Middlemarch*, a heroine's encounter with the architecture surrounding them impacts their narrative and provides a register of imagery by which they construct their self-expression and articulate their female narrative voice. To date, critics have addressed architecture in these novels in terms of built environment and

metaphoric architecture. But they have done so largely in terms of female entrapment and confinement. Such readings have typically followed Gilbert and Gubar's seminal work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Gilbert and Gubar famously argue that in nineteenth-century literature, 'imagery of enclosure reflects the woman writer's own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear that she inhabits alien and incomprehensible places' (84). They frame female authors as 'Literally […] imprisoned in their homes' and suggest that we should not be surprised 'that spatial imagery of enclosure and escape, elaborated with what frequently becomes obsessive intensity, characterises much of their writing' (83). But for the women in this project, it is not all about enclosure or escape, being in or out of prison. One way or another, they must confront the social structure in which they live; as such, it makes sense for them to turn to architecture to give form to their subjectivity. Even when these women do narrate imprisonment or escape it is still an act of construction and what becomes significant is that they are building it themselves. Accordingly, architecture in these novels should not be reduced to a pre-existing structure existing solely for heroines to break free from but instead should be examined for how and why it is built into the text in the first place. This particular way of reading contributes to the field a broader look at the role of material architecture and architectural metaphor in these novels and puts distance between the appearance of female-crafted Victorian literary architecture and the assumption that it is limiting and constraining. In fact, this thesis suggests that authors present their heroines and narrators with the empowering opportunity to construct literary architecture: Dickens, Brontë, Braddon and Eliot each create heroines or narrators with a distinct architect's eye and these female heroines and narrators are thinking in architectural terms about how narratives

materialise and participating in a compelling process whereby they assert themselves and their narrative voice. These women manipulate architecture (or attempt to) for their own revealing purposes: to enhance their narrative authority, to encapsulate and enclose their past thoughts and emotions, and to represent contact with another character's psychological, emotional, or physiological interior.

The relationship between women and their domestic environment in the Victorian era has been well documented. For example, in *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel* (1974), Francoise Basch writes:

> The idealization of the wife as inspirer of humanity belonged with the Victorian conception of the Home and its meaning within the contemporary system of values. The home, a feminine attribute as it were, the 'outermost garment of her soul,' which surrounds the wife worthy of the name wherever she may be found, is like a temple of purity, a haven of peace in a hostile and impure world. (7)[2]

Such criticism has tended to lead to an oppressive vision of domestic space. The more recent material turn in criticism has questioned the legitimacy of the idea of separate spheres and explored issues of agency within the domestic. In *The Victorian Parlour* (2001), Thad Logan observes: 'While the separation of spheres was fantasy […] the sequestration of women in the home was real enough, and compulsory domesticity was the context of life for middle-class Victorian women' (25). But Logan also writes that, 'It was women who were responsible for deploying objects to create the interior space identifiable as "home." They were, in some senses, its inmates, but they were also its

[2] Basch is quoting Frances Power Cobbe, a nineteenth-century author and campaigner for women's suffrage.

producers, its curators, and its ornaments' (26). The narrators and heroines of *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Middlemarch* have a noteworthy agility with architectural description and creative architectural metaphor that should not be dismissed as purely signalling domestic restriction within the architectural space of the home, not least because, as we will see, most of these heroines do not emerge from a traditional homespace.

2. Architectural Internalisation

My exploration of architectural metaphor in the Victorian novel builds on the work of Ellen Eve Frank. In *Literary Architecture: Essays Towards a Tradition* (1979), Frank focuses exclusively on the work of male authors: Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, and Henry James. Frank writes that these authors

> teach us not only how to read but also how to see, not only the world of literature, not only the world of physical architecture, but also the structures of consciousness itself, most especially the structures of our felt and remembered experience of life. (9)

Frank's understanding that literary architecture provides readers with a material touchstone granting access to an author's 'structures of consciousness' is compelling and opens up ways of thinking about how certain Victorian authors turn to the architectural register to represent structures (mental and emotional) otherwise unseen in the built environment world of their novel.[3] Frank writes, 'structures have either actual spatial extension (architecture) in the physical world or the language of spatial extension (literature) in the world of thought' (7) and argues that her four authors 'select architecture in order to give to language and thought spatial extension, to present the where-ness of ideas and thoughts'

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[3] Frank credits Walter Pater with coining the term 'literary architecture' (227).

(12). She continues, '[b]y means of the analogue, they may give, or seem to give, substance to that which is no-thing, to that which does not occupy what we call substantial space' (12).

While Frank looks at the literary architecture created by male authors in their work, I am primarily interested in the literary architecture created by female characters and narrators. My thesis focuses on female characters and their perception of the architecture around them, the manner in which the architecture of the built environment influences their creative representation of their thoughts and emotions, and especially the moments when these characters insert themselves within their own creative architectural structure and represent their encounter with that imagined space. As Frank describes literary architecture as 'those self-consciously selected structures' which help authors 'organize their perceptions' (9), we will see Dickens, Brontë, Braddon and Eliot construct heroines and narrators who are doing the same – turning purposely towards architecture to convey their perception of the world and the structures of their memories and experiences. These authors provide spatial extension to the intangible in their novels, housing and organising thoughts and emotions within imaginary, creative, and mutable architectures. Through this technique, these authors make the thoughts and emotions of their characters tangible and navigable, laying bare the creative architecture existing apart from the built environment world of their novels.

Following Frank, I term this technique 'architectural internalisation'. I argue that this technique, whereby an organ of the human body or a thought or emotion contained within that organ is described metaphorically in architectural terms, allows authors to provide, to use Frank's term, 'spatial extension' to the intangible. Through this technique, the novelists of this study merge the organic

with the built, using architectural metaphor to create a navigable space within the human body. Architectural internalisation allows authors to substantiate a character's thoughts, emotions, or memories within a tangible structure as well as to allow their character to encounter that internalised structure of creative literary architecture. Most importantly, heroines frequently employ the architectural internalisation technique to convey their subjectivity, constructing and renovating these spaces and consequently providing readers with unprecedented access to their thoughts and emotions. At the same time, architectural internalisation allows heroines to capitalise on the narrative potential of architectural metaphors as they bring their story to life via creative literary architecture. Through this technique, authors suggest architecture as a constructive rather than a confining mode of expression and narration.

The Victorian authors included in this project have a distinct interest in writing architecture and creating a realist portrait of the built environment surrounding their characters, but also in accurately representing the human experience of living within enclosed architecture, the intimacy of the house-inhabitant connection and the way this experience infiltrates their narrative and becomes a way for characters to express their subjectivity. Building on phenomenological studies of architectural space, the thesis examines the way authors represent the interior lives of their heroines via architectural metaphors. A brief look at the work of architecturally-focused phenomenological theorists helps to open up the way these Victorian authors approach dwelling in their novels and the relationship between self and house that they represent, as architecture frequently becomes the texture of a heroine's mental and emotional landscape.

The editors of the collection *Dwelling, Place, and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World* (1995) define phenomenology concisely as providing 'a way of thinking rigorously and of describing accurately the complex relation between person and world' (1). Christopher Tilley describes the phenomenological approach in *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (1994): 'Phenomenology involves the understanding and description of things as they are experienced by a subject. It is about the relationship between Being and Being-in-the-world' (11). Tilley continues to explain that 'Being-in-the-world' is 'a process of objectification in which people objectify the world by setting themselves apart from it' (11). The result of this, he writes, is 'the creation of a gap, a distance in space. To be human is both to create this distance between the self and that which is beyond and attempt to bridge this distance' (12). What becomes interesting, then, is the way that certain Victorian authors attempt to bridge that gap between self and world with the material conduit of imaginative architecture applied to the human body. In these novels, as we will see, hearts have doors and minds have navigable staircases and unexpected corners.

Christian Norbert-Shultz writes specifically on phenomenology and architecture in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979), noting 'Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment, or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful' (5). He goes on to say,

> Dwelling therefore implies something more than 'shelter.' It implies that the spaces where life occurs are *places*, in the true sense of the word**.** A place is a space which has a distinct character. Since ancient times the *genius loci*, or 'spirit of place,' has been

> recognized as the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life. Architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell. (5)

In this way the author is similarly tasked with creating meaningful places and, in the chapters that follow, we will see Dickens, Brontë, Braddon and Eliot turn to architecture and architectural metaphor to create meaningful architectural places in the built environment world of their novel and in the strata of their character's immaterial consciousness. These authors contribute to an exploration of dwelling by attributing architectural identification to the mental landscapes of their characters. Norbert-Shultz writes that 'The outside-inside relation which is a primary aspect of concrete space, implies that space possesses a varying degree of *extension* and *enclosure*' (12) and '[t]he distinctive quality of any man-made place is *enclosure*, and its character and spatial properties are determined by how it is enclosed' (58). This understanding of space coheres with Frank's idea that spatial extension can appear either materially, via architecture in the physical world or literarily, in the mind. This thesis will examine the way certain authors navigate the tension between extension and enclosure by turning inwards and providing spatial extension to their character's immaterial thoughts and emotions.

I am indebted to the work on literary architecture done by Gaston Bachelard in his phenomenological exploration of the image of the house in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Bachelard states his aim: 'I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind' (6). He explores the highly symbolic nature of the home, examining the significance of specific areas such as closets, attics, drawers,

and nests. Through his analysis, Bachelard compels his readers to think about our intimate connection to the architectural enclosures in which we live and suggests that the home provides foundational images that stay with us throughout our lives and consequently manifest in literature. He writes that ‘A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability’ (17) and ‘the house of memories becomes psychologically complex’ (14). Architectural enclosure is inextricably linked to emotions of safety or danger, comfort or fear, openness or secrecy, as Bachelard differentiates through the metaphors of attic and basement.

While Bachelard focuses on the recognisable architectural features of the domestic home, this thesis notes how certain mid-Victorian authors turn to other kinds of architectural spaces that carry different connotations and registers: the tomb, shrine, self-house, and labyrinth. This thesis examines how exactly Victorian novelists capitalised on a register of architectural images that are inherently dualistic: the tomb encloses but cannot not entirely contain, the shrine suggests religious worship but also emotional intimacy, the house conceals and reveals, and the labyrinth either guides or bewilders. Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot use these architectural metaphors in original and exciting ways, experimenting with domesticating non-domestic architectural structures and thereby complicating our perception of those foundational features of the home.

3. Architectural Metaphor

The four novels explored in this thesis were published across the twenty years following the Great Exhibition (1851), a time when numerous architectural debates were raging. While this thesis is in no way a full architectural history of the Victorian period, it is relevant to recall the extent of the widespread

discussions concerning architecture circulating at this time and briefly list some of the hotly contested architectural topics. Architecture was up for debate in material terms and architects and architectural theorists were deeply concerned with what exactly a building could say and what it could reveal about those enclosed within (Girouard 12). This anxiety generated serious and lengthy debates concerning the appropriateness of various styles, especially the Gothic as architecture became linked with morality, truth, and character (Pugin, Ruskin, Eastlake).[4] Mark Girouard writes, 'Houses in the gothic style had the extra advantage that, as a result of the writings of Pugin, Ruskin, and others, gothic was increasingly associated both with Christianity and with truthfulness. A gothic house stood for good principles as well as good cheer' (273). Numerous Victorian architectural theorists also bemoaned the perceived lack of originality or true inspiration in the buildings of the day (James Fergusson, Edward Lacy Garbett). Finally, in addition to concern over style, theorists also expressed a distinct anxiety over the appearance of flimsy new residential buildings unlikely to stand for centuries. Ruskin writes, 'I cannot but think it an evil sign of a people when their houses are built to last one generation only' (148). Eastlake writes: 'An Englishman's house was formerly said to be his castle. But in the hands of the speculating builder and advertising tradesman, we may be grateful that it does not oftener become his tomb' (32).

The built environment is undoubtedly inextricably linked to history and the material circumstances of its creators and inhabitants, but that does not

[4] Augustus Welby Pugin staunchly defends the Gothic style in *Contrasts* (1836). In this text, Pugin argues that the architecture of the past is far superior to the present, and refutes any claims of architectural grandeur in the current day. In *A History of the Gothic Revival* (1872), Charles Eastlake criticizes the battle of styles as a waste of time and effort (372). John Ruskin famously writes at length about the beauty of Gothic architecture, yet clarifies: 'Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture' (161). Ruskin dislikes restoration, as the original workman cannot be recalled to participate (162).

reduce architecture solely to historical context. This background informs but does not direct the focus of this study, as my interest rests on the use of architecture as a powerful, multifaceted metaphor rather than on any claims that these Victorian novelists adapted or incorporated any specific architectural theories in their work. That being said, my primary interest in these debates rests in the idea that architectural features communicate, as we will see novelists turn to an architectural register of images to reveal the inner workings of their character's mind. Edward N. Kaufman writes that 'Victorian theorists believed that buildings not only embodied meanings, but also communicated them with precision' (30). Kaufman attempts to answer the question of how do buildings communicate by remarking, 'It is significant that, in attempting to answer this question, the Victorians themselves resorted largely to metaphor. The most common metaphor was that proposed by Victor Hugo: the building as book' (30). Victor Hugo makes explicit use of the building as book metaphor, as documented by Neil Levine in his article, 'The book and the building: Hugo's theory of architecture and Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève'. Levine argues, that 'Architecture is obviously for Hugo not simply building. The questions of construction and function, as they are normally understood, are totally irrelevant. Architecture is a literary form of expression, giving permanence to human thought in monuments known as buildings' (149). The increasing correlation between artist and structure is similarly evident in the architectural field. In addition to conveying character, 'buildings in the nineteenth century came to express actively and outwardly, in concrete form, the mind of their builder-architects' (Frank 239). Thus, Victorian architects themselves began to view their creations as manifestations of their inner consciousness. While physical architectural structures might reflect the mind of

their architect, Victorian novelists experimented with employing architectural metaphor to suggest how minds conceptualise bodies – in material, structural terms.

Numerous books have been written that address architectural metaphor in the literature of various time periods. These books run the gamut from examining architectural metaphor in medieval French poetry to twentieth-century American novels and each book discuss architectural metaphor as dynamic, impactful, and linked intrinsically to an author's specific literary aims. The Victorians, then, were certainly not the first, nor the last to posit an internal space and represent it architecturally in their creative work. As we will see, Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot similarly turn to architectural metaphor to structure significant aspects of their realist novels – narration, subjectivity, psychology, and the functioning human body.

David Cowling illustrates the range of the architectural metaphor in *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (1998), thoroughly documenting the body-as-building, body-as-text, and building-as-book metaphors in medieval literature. Cowling indicates that architectural metaphors are resilient: 'The wide diffusion of the metaphor is matched by its longevity: the body has been discussed in architectural terms at least since Plato and the Bible' (25). Cowling suggests that the origin of the metaphor of memory-as-room 'may be found in the prevailing model for brain function at the time of the *rhetoriqueurs*, according to which the brain was divided into three or more interconnected apartments' (111).[5] Cowling goes on to describe the interaction between these compartments as 'a dynamic process

[5] 'rhétoriqueur, also called Grand Rhétoriqueur, any of the principal poets of the school that flourished in 15th- and early 16th-century France (particularly in Burgundy), whose poetry, based on historical and moral themes, employed allegory, dreams, symbols, and mythology for didactic effect'. http://www.britannica.com.

similar to digestion' (112). Images were created in one cell, manipulated in the next, and stored in the third.[6] He continues,

> Literary buildings also play on the metaphorical equation between the edifice and the mind, and especially the memory of the writer. Thus the allegorical visit or guided tour can connote an inner journey among the contents of the writer's memory, or the reviewing of collective, suprapersonal memory as it is enshrined in writing. This crossover between the individual and collective memory, between the contents of the writer's mind and the accumulated knowledge stored in the literary text, brings together the two metaphors THE MEMORY IS A BUILDING and THE TEXT IS A BUILDING. (136-137 original emphasis)

Like Frank, who suggests that literary architecture is often revealing of the structures of an author's consciousness, Cowling shows how architectural metaphor can relate to the mind of the author and the information contained within a literary text. The metaphor of text-as-building suggests a collective accessibility, a counterpart to the intimacy of the author's memory-as-building metaphor and yet these metaphors coexist and complicate each other. Cowling's work accordingly illustrates the way levels of meaning can be built into a literary text.

In *The Building in the Text: Alberti to Shakespeare and Milton* (2001), Roy Erikson explains, 'This book explores the surprisingly understudied relationship between architecture and literature, how such essential expressions of Renaissance culture as writing and building draw on the same compositional

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[6] Cowling explains, 'In some fifteenth-century diagrams, the cells are explicitly labeled "cella" or "cellula". This term for an explicitly architectural space, usually a monk's cell, is elaborated upon by the rhetoriqueurs in their subsequent use of the metaphor, which is informed by contemporary models for the human mind and its workings' (112).

ideals to produce what Walter Pater termed a "literary architecture"' (xiii). Erikson's argument is that 'Renaissance aesthetic theory and practice reveal an impulse to control the various systems of signification that reproduce and communicate the artist's initial idea. This urge to control form emerges as a will to impose order in an act of composition' (XXI). Consequently, Erikson finds, 'The relationship between abstract design on the one hand, and its material and textual realisation on the other hand, is crucial to an investigation of the impact of architecture on the shapes of Renaissance texts and vice versa, and it is important for the influence of rhetoric on Renaissance art and architecture' (147). Architecture provides artists, authors, and architects themselves with a tangible vehicle to channel their impulse to assert control and order over form. Erikson's conception of the bi-directional relationship between architecture and writing attributes expansive potential to both fields and also provides a way to interrogate the literariness of architecture and the self-consciously constructed text.

Simon Varey argues that it is possible to talk about architectural metaphor without discussing architectural theory. In *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (1990), Varey explores the representation of space in the novels of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson. He explains that he will not be discussing architectural theory because he has no evidence to indicate that these author's novels 'are somehow contrived as conscious responses to architectural writers, individual buildings, or particular theories of space' (3). Instead, 'the writers discussed here share a habit of spatial thinking' (3). Somewhat similarly, Nicole Reynolds argues that instead of treating architectural images 'in isolation', the important question is 'why *so many* authors in the period found architecture so compelling as a metaphor' (2). In

Building Romanticism: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2010), Reynolds questions exactly what makes architecture such a compelling metaphor and finds that 'Architecture and architectural tropes impelled Romanticism's dramatic reconceptualizations of the individual subject and of the world the subject inhabits' (4). She is interested in 'emphasizing the relationships between physical space and psychological interiority, between the built environment and the bodies that occupy it, and between built and represented spaces' (4).[7]

Marilyn R. Chandler writes in *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction* (1991), 'American writers as diverse as James, Cather, Wharton, and Faulkner repeatedly use architectural metaphors to describe their work and their idea of the text as something that can best be understood spatially and structurally' (2). Chandler continues,

> The houses in their novels thus reflect not only the psychological structure of the main character or the social structures in which he or she is entrapped but the structure of the text itself, thereby setting up a four-way, and ultimately self-referential, analogy among writer, text, character, and house. (3)[8]

She finds that, 'The same architectural habit of mind that designs and builds a house both to reflect patterns of life within it and to configure life in certain patterns may design a narrative to reflect and recast what the author conceives

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[7] Reynolds continues, '*Building Romanticism* offers a unique contribution to the ongoing critical reappraisal of Romanticism's versatile and variable cultural project. The book's prevailing, often intersecting, arguments concern the divide between public and private in literary and architectural treatments of space; the link between material culture and the imagination, the importance of the body – and of the body's lived situation – in the formation of Romantic subjectivity and the differences that gender, sexuality, and class make in the discursive and material positioning of subjects within specific architectural spaces' (5).

[8] Chandler continues to state her aims: 'This book is an exploration of the ways in which a number of our major writers have appropriated houses as structural, psychological, metaphysical, and literary metaphors, constructing complex analogies between house and psyche, house and family structure, house and social environment, house and text' (3).

to be the essential structures of our lives' (3). Authors who possess an 'architectural habit of mind' are interested in an underlying strata of architecture – the structures of human life revealed through narration. These creative, imaginative spaces are particularly significant, 'unlimited as they are by practical constraints of material and context but informed by the natural and architectural features of our actual environment' (3). As Bachelard has shown, the house offers a 'body of images' (17) that become foundational in our imaginations. Unconstrained by material reality, these architectural images can be endlessly adapted and renovated.

The abovementioned books address the role of architectural metaphor in literary texts of various periods yet raise important questions that can be applied to the work of Victorian novelists. I am similarly interested in probing exactly what makes architecture such a compelling metaphor and my chapters will explore a similar range of issues and attempt to usher in a sustained critical focus on architectural metaphor in the Victorian novel. With Cowling's work in mind, we can think about how architectural metaphors lend themselves to layering and multiple signification: a building metaphor can relate variously to the author's mind, their work, and their memory. Erikson suggests that we consider the deployment of architecture as an impulse to control and to impose order on form. Varey coins the phrase 'a habit of spatial thinking', what Chandler will later call 'an architectural habit of mind'. Like Varey's authors, Brontë, Dickens, Braddon, and Eliot are not necessarily formulating 'conscious responses to architectural writers, individual buildings, or particular theories of space'. Nevertheless, these authors, like Varey's, do 'share a habit of spatial thinking', a phrase I find significant. The idea that certain Victorian authors possess a habit of spatial thinking suggests that the appearance of architecture

or architectural metaphor in their novels is not simply descriptive but intrinsic to the construction of their work. Their habit of thinking is reflected in their novels through their sustained use of architectural metaphor to accomplish their realist aims. These aims are built into the novel via the unmistakable literary architecture intentionally brought to the fore by their authors. Reynolds encourages us to look at proliferation: why does architecture speak to so many authors? She suggests that architecture provides a way to navigate bodies, minds, and built spaces. Chandler argues that certain authors turn to architectural metaphor to represent the 'essential structures of our lives'. We will see the heroines of this project participate in this action, describing their built environment but also at times reaching for creative architectural metaphors to narrate the story of their emotional and psychological past.

Each chapter of this thesis focuses on a particular architectural metaphor and its implications across the novel: the house-tomb, heart-shrine, self-house and mental labyrinth. While I find that one architectural metaphor stands out as intrinsic to each novel, Dickens, Brontë, Braddon and Eliot each construct metaphoric tombs, shrines, houses and labyrinths in their novels. These are insistent and recurrent images deployed across the novels and subsequently built and renovated across the chapters of this thesis. This dissertation focuses on a range of structures and their various manifestations in the novels. *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch* are novels preoccupied with death and burial, the living dead and the prematurely entombed, tomb-like-houses and death as a mode of habitation (the tomb). Each novel ruminates on the creation of sacred heart and mind spaces, the impulse for creative and unconventional homemakers to build protective enclosures for emotions and memories and create alternative dwelling spaces (the shrine). They illustrate an

insistence on architectural texture for representing how minds conceptualise bodies and explore the act of navigating the organic body via building materials (the house). Finally, each novel depicts intricate and unknowable houses and complex mindscapes (the labyrinth). In each case we see authors using these architectural structures flexible and adaptable potential to push back at the idea that Victorian literary architecture is inherently restrictive and confining. These particular architectural images, more than Bachelard's attics and basements are intrinsically complex and encode multiple meanings: habitation and mortality, confinement and liberation, secrecy and exposure.

Tracking these dominant architectural metaphors and themes is only possible through a close-reading methodology. As such, my dissertation is driven by close-readings of the novels that are attentive to the literary techniques that give form to the architectural register with which I am concerned. While I draw on some historical context and while I relate my criticism to scholarship that is concerned to historicise to a far greater degree than I am, I argue that a nuanced close reading of the literature will show in various stimulating ways how architectural imagery and metaphor is a crucial and often overlooked component of the psychological realism of these novels. I am looking at the architectural edifices constructed and erected by narrators and heroines apart from the built environment landscape of the novel and what these building projects reveal about a character's internal life and method of navigating, processing, and manipulating elements of the material world they encounter. My thinking about the role of architecture in these novels is informed by Caroline Levine's recent work on forms, especially her borrowing of the idea of 'affordance' from design theory to indicate 'the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs' (6). Levine applies this idea to thinking about what

forms are '*capable* of doing' (original emphasis 6). Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot represent material and metaphorical architecture and its psychological affordances. I argue that we need to look at psychological realism in these novels in terms of architecture, with a special focus on heroines who digest their material environment and provide straightforward architectural reporting but also express their subjectivity via creative architectural imagery.

My critical approach facilitates an exploration of the layers of material and metaphorical literary architecture constructed by Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot in their novels. In *New Formalist Criticism* (2013) Fredric V. Bogel states that the general aim of a formalist approach 'has always been to liberate textual meanings – and kinds of meaning – unavailable to non-formalist strategies of interpretation' (4). In addition, 'a strong secondary aim of contemporary formalism is indeed to insist on the linguistic dimension of works of verbal art' (4). Bogel continues,

> Whatever else the text is – a play of themes, a historical document, a production of a particular author or era, a real-world political manifesto – it is fundamentally a structure of language. A proper contemporary formalist analysis, as a result, must show how the text's language is what makes it any of those other things. (4)

Bogel then describes the importance of a close-reading approach, writing,

> As I see it, close reading – patient, inventive, detailed attention to how language works in a text – represents our best hope of getting beyond the clichés of superficial acquaintance, taking responsibility for the being and interpretation of the full text, and

> allowing ourselves to be surprised both by what it is and by how much it differs from what we had thought it was. (23)

Bogel's caution to allow for surprise in our reading is relevant to a re-examination of architectural metaphor in the mid-Victorian novel. I argue that it is important to consider the precise ways author's deploy architectural metaphors in their novels to further their particular realist aims and to interrogate the reflexive categorisation of these metaphors as confining, imprisoning, and punishingly inflicted on a novel's heroine.

4. Material and Psychological Realism

The Victorian novel has a well-known association of realism with materiality. As Caroline Levine writes in her chapter on Victorian realism in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2012), 'The Victorian novel is notorious for being packed with things' (93). Levine also suggests, 'In part, novelists valued things as part of a dense description of the social world, understanding material objects as an integral part of lived experience' (93). Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison write in *Literary Bric-à-Brac and the Victorians* (2013): 'The reification of the literary through the material centralises the importance of object matter to strategies of interpretation and even just strategies of reading' (1). Alison Byerly describes Victorian novels as 'famously self-conscious about their status as artifacts' (2) and explores what she considers the paradoxical role of the arts in these novels that strive for realism yet 'are filled with both explicit references to artworks that have a function within the narrative […] and metaphors that implicitly compare the novelist's own representation to specific forms of art' (2). Focusing on a specific artistic genre, Ruth Bernard Yeazell dissects the relationship between Victorian realist novels and Dutch painting, arguing that techniques of literary realism such as '[t]he

detailed rendering of material particulars […] had their visual analogues in the so-called Golden Age of Dutch painting' (7). The built environment surrounding authors and represented in their novels, the architecture of the city and materiality of the home and the collections and profusion of decorative ornaments they potentially contained has also received a great deal of critical attention. Thad Logan takes the parlour as a point of departure to 'investigate how ideology is inscribed in and onto the material world and how this world resonates with meaning for historical subjects' (1). She contends, 'the parlour, whether in life or in art, is a site at which we can explore potentially explosive disturbances in psychic and social fields and can trace attempts both to articulate and resolve such disturbances' (1). In *On Exhibit: The Victorians and their Museums* (2000) Barbara J. Black examines 'a cultural phenomenon that emerged in the early nineteenth century – the dual craze for collecting and exhibiting' (68), arguing that the nineteenth century 'gave birth to the modern museum' (9).[9] Jane Hamlett examines conditions of material life in Victorian asylums, lodging houses, and schools, and argues that 'while the material world was used to control inmates, it could also create opportunities for them. The agency of objects can work in more than one way' (10). These books and numerous others have contributed to the 'material turn' in Victorian studies over the past twenty or so years. In terms of architecture this material turn coheres, not unexpectedly, around the tangible built environment world represented in the novels of the period. In contrast, by focusing on the creative, imaginary, architecture constructed in *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and

[9] In *Possessing Nature*, Paula Findlen traces the appearance of museums back to early modern Italy. She writes of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy: 'Collecting, in short, had become an activity of choice among the social and educated elite […] Through the possession of objects, one physically acquired knowledge, and through their display, one symbolically acquired the honor and reputation that all men of learning cultivated' (3).

Middlemarch, this project will illustrate that architectural metaphors are a vital component of the psychological realism of mid-Victorian novels.

My thinking about material, and particularly architectural, realism in the Victorian novel is informed by Peter Brooks and his book *Realist Vision* (2005). Brooks opens his book by describing the allure of scale models. He suggests,

> The pleasure that human beings take in scale models of the real – dollhouses, ships in bottles, lead soldiers, model railroads, - must have something to do with the sense these provide of being able to play with and therefore master the real world. The scale model […] allows us to get both our fingers and our minds around objects otherwise alien and imposing. Models give us a way to bind and organize the complex and at times overwhelming energies of the world outside us. (1)

Brooks takes the idea of the scale model as a point of departure to discuss Victorian realism and claims, 'More than most other fictions, the realist novel provides a sense of play very similar to that given by the scale model' (2-3). Brooks continues, 'Playing with the world seriously – in a form of play governed by rules of modelling, one might say – is a bold new enterprise for these novelists' (5). Brooks's scale-model paradigm provides an irresistibly architectural framework for thinking about the various realist aims of Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot. While these authors could be said to play seriously with architectural verisimilitude in representing the built environment world of their novel, they also represent their characters' desire to 'bind and organize' the world through straight-forward architectural reporting but also through the creation of intimate architectural metaphors that become psychologically revealing. They foreground their heroine's interest in playing linguistically with

architectural materials, becoming creative literary architects through the construction of metaphoric enclosures to house their thoughts and emotions.

The bridge between material and psychological realism via architecture is precisely what I am interested in exploring in this thesis. In terms of psychological realism, I am not looking at an author's replication or incorporation of contemporary psychological theory in their novels but the attempts of realist authors to apply realist aims to psychological portraits and landscapes and the way architecture in particular allows them to do so by merging the visual registers of the organic with the built. Literary criticism has generally considered psychological realism as a feature of late nineteenth-century and modernist literature. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* (2007) Anne Fernihough states: 'stream-of-consciousness writing brought to literature […] a psychological subtlety and complexity that it had never known before' (79). In *Consciousness in Modernist Fiction* (2013), Violeta Sotirova writes 'it is the contention of most critics that the Modernist novel is most aptly characterised as the novel of consciousness' (26). Sotirova indicates that in these novels 'characters now enjoy unmediated presentation of their inner life' (27). The term stream of consciousness was coined by Eliot's partner G.H. Lewes and mastered by Virginia Woolf and denotes unmediated access to characters' minds.[10] In contrast, the form of mid-Victorian psychological realism in which I am interested often takes shape as psychological expression via architecture – a built psychological landscape accessible through tangible and familiar building materials. This access is visualised and mediated by the narrator or the heroine herself. As such, what

[10] Rick Rylance notes that Lewes coined the steam of consciousness phrase while Eliot was working on her novel *The Mill on the Floss*: 'Just as the line between modern and Victorian cannot be so easily drawn, the histories of psychology and literature can sometimes be as close as a hallway apart' (13).

we see in these novels are enclosed thoughts and mediated access to the mind in contrast to the stream-of-consciousness technique typically associated with the modernists.

Brooks describes authors like Dickens as ‘Removing housetops in order to see the private lives played out beneath them’ (3). Brooks is talking about taking the roof off a character’s house to show their private lifestyles but Dickens and the other authors of this project are doing something similar for the mind by visualising model minds and structuralising, organising, manipulating, and uniting a material reality known and expressed via architecture with an internal view mediated by architecture. My relationship with the material turn in scholarship coheres around the idea of mental texture architecturalised (to possibly coin a phrase), as authors construct psychological portraits through the technique of architectural internalisation or by representing a heroine’s architecturally-inflected vision of the world surrounding them.

This thesis argues for a reading of architecture as a psychologically revealing vehicle for authors interested in representing materially rich architectural mindscapes. As such, this thesis focuses on four architectural metaphors that are psychologically complex. The tomb or mausoleum, with its recognisable architectural features, indicates the human impulse to consider death as another stage of habitation, thereby representing both life and death in tandem. The shrine indicates a desire to worship and enclose our reverence and also our hope that we ourselves will be held close. The house with its doors, staircases and corridors can potentially conceal or expose our secrets and darkest impulses. The labyrinth suggests a tortuous mindscape, mental chaos, confusion, and a quest for clarity. These metaphors are multifaceted and come to the fore in novels interested in representing the interior lives of their

characters. We will see Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot turn to these metaphors to enhance the psychological realism of their novels as they represent their character's emotions and mindscape. In addition to discussing these metaphors as psychologically revealing, this chapter is interested in the psychology of the heroines and narrators writing architecture. I am talking here about the psychological impulse to imagine, build, and control spatial structures. We will see heroines and narrators report the built environment world of the novel as seen through their architect's eye, but also reveal the desire to create space and act as a literary architect.

The field of psychology emerged during a time of scientific advancement and upheaval, a fact noted by Rick Rylance in *Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850-1880* (2000) as he documents the newfound applications for the science and the numerous psycho-rooted words that accordingly came 'tumbling into usage' (14). Words such as 'psychophysiology', 'psychoneurology', and 'psychophysicist' reveal the infiltration of psychology into various fields and suggests the belief that psychology could potentially provide a new approach to a range of different subjects including, I argue, the novel. We will see authors pushing at the boundaries of what is known and what can be seen. Significantly, architecture is recurrent in these explorations of rendering interiority. Scholars have thoroughly explored the interplay between the developing field of psychology and the literature of the nineteenth century, most significantly Sally Shuttleworth in books such as *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (1984) and *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996) and Gillian Beer in *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983). These writers have shown how mid-Victorian authors explored a

particular form of psychological realism that was suited to the materiality of the realist novel. For example, scholars have also noted that the Victorian mind was frequently described spatially. In *An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-1890*, Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth write of physiological psychologists: 'Like the phrenologists, these writers conceptualized the mind in spatial terms, while developing the associationists' metaphors of "channels" or steams of thought, and they emphasized the transformative process of individual growth within a social environment' (Taylor 68-69). As Athena Vrettos suggests, 'Victorian psychology and Victorian fiction challenged the unity and stability of the self and the coherence of consciousness' (82). Vrettos continues, 'Both attempted to map the intricate structures and capacities of the psyche. In doing so, they helped to redefine both consciousness and identity, offering increasingly complex accounts of human behavior and the expansive visions of the human mind' (82). This thesis is interested in the use authors made of the material vehicle of architecture to further these explorations: despite its seeming rigidity, architecture can in fact be adapted and renovated.

Scientists and novelists often responded to each other: 'psychological writers often developed their points from novels as well as real life to illustrate particular arguments' (Taylor xv). In fact, 'literary and cultural expectations exerted strong pressure on the formulation of medical categories and diagnoses, which in turn influenced the development of cultural interpretations of insanity' (230). But just as this thesis does not endeavour to provide an architectural history of the nineteenth century, it does not attempt to map Victorian novelists' interpretation of contemporary scientific or psychological theories. As mentioned above, these studies exist and provide a crucial blueprint to an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between Victorian

literature and psychological theory. Consequently, the novels of this study were not chosen for any direct expression of these psychological or architectural tensions, but rather for the manner in which they manipulate architectural metaphor and imagery in their exploration of the way minds conceptualise bodies and the thoughts and emotions bodies contain.

While scholars like Shuttleworth, Beer, and Rylance have conducted invaluable research charting the extent to which various Victorian novelists were engaged with the developing field of psychology, there is also an advantage to pursuing a formalist analysis of the manner in which these novelists respond to the challenge of representing interiority and subjectivity and the frequency in which they employ architectural imagery in their attempts. As we will see, these authors explore the utility of architecture in a psychological context. J. Hillis Miller and his work *The Form of Victorian Fiction* (1968) represents an early interest in formal analysis. Although he does not use the phrase ‘psychological realism’ and it is perhaps not a classic definition, I think of the psychological realism being generated in these novels in terms of his statement that ‘A Victorian novel may most inclusively be defined as a structure of interpenetrating minds’ (5). Miller argues that ‘An exploitation of the fact that one can in language imagine oneself as having direct access to another mind makes Victorian fiction possible’ (3). He explains,

> A novel is a structure of interpenetrating minds, the mind of the narrator as he beholds or enters into the characters, the minds of the characters as they behold or know one another. Not isolated consciousness, not consciousness at grips with natural objects, not consciousness face to face with God in meditation, but consciousness of the consciousness of others – this is the primary

> focus of fiction. The novelist's assumptions, often unstated ones, about the ways one mind can interact with other minds determine the form his novel takes. (2)

I am interested in how Dickens, Brontë, Braddon and Eliot grapple with the task of representing, as Miller indicates, 'a structure of interpenetrating minds' by architecturalising this contact. This is precisely what Eliot does by illustrating Dorothea's vision of Casaubon's mind as labyrinthine and then internalising Casaubon within that imagined structure and showing his difficulty navigating his own architecturalised mindscape. These authors give us inward-looking heroines who penetrate various structures of the built environment they inhabit but also narrate aspects of their internal lives via architectural metaphor. Authors turn to architectural structures such as tombs, shrines, houses and their components (doors, windows, staircases, hallways) to illustrate mindscapes and encapsulate their character's emotional experiences. What becomes psychologically revealing in these novels, then, is the way that authors display a conversion tendency by describing something organic in architectural terms. By doing so, they materialise and give texture and tangibility to their character's immaterial thoughts and emotions. By experimenting with architectural internalisation and providing spatial extension to the mind, these authors make dramatic strides towards psychological realism in their novels.

5. Chapters

In *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens's heroine, Esther Summerson, possesses an architect's eye. The first chapter of this thesis examines Esther's role as narrator for half of the novel and argues that she makes the self-conscious choice to capitalise on the literary potential of architecture: Esther trains her architect's eye on the material built environment she encounters over

the course of her narrative and provides her reader with straightforward and detailed architectural reporting. She also directs her architect's eye towards the creative work of the novel and uses the architectural metaphor of house-tombs to describe many of the architectural interiors she encounters. These metaphors are insistent and recurrent, as Dickens indicates his vision of the human condition as a progression of architectural enclosures terminating at the tomb. Writing as a mortal participant in that trajectory, Esther plays a vital role in Dickens's realist representation of human mortality and its accompanying psychological impact. While Dickens is not typically associated with psychological realism, it is important to look at what he accomplishes with his heroine and her death-inflected architectural vision. Esther has been considered overly cheerful and vacuous but she expresses a dark outlook of the world in her portion of the narrative: Esther writes death into nearly every architectural space she describes. Esther and her psychologically-revealing preoccupation with death is a frequently overlooked but nevertheless defining characteristic of Dickens's heroine.

Many studies of Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Villette*, cohere around imagery of surveillance and confinement. Less remarked is the fact that Brontë gives us a heroine, Lucy Snowe, who imbues her narrative with creative architecture. At odds with her environment, Lucy creates her own architectural interiors, imagining an alternative to the restrictive architecture she experiences throughout the novel. Thus she is not entirely a victim of spatial circumstance, as has been suggested, but instead becomes a creative architect through metaphor. While scholars have noted Lucy's isolation from a traditional domestic home, my second chapter explores her response to that isolation and the architectural metaphors it engenders. The shrine in particular exists as a

crucial metaphor in *Villette*, encapsulating Lucy's reverent desire for enclosure within a space that is both sacred and domestic. Brontë uses the shrine to substantiate Lucy's subjectivity and convey her vision of her own heart and mind, emotions and memories. Through this architectural approach, Brontë encourages her reader to understand her heroine through an architectural register of images that become psychologically revealing.

The narrator of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*, delights in providing her reader with extended architectural descriptions. My third chapter looks at the way Braddon's narrator criticises and critiques the specific architects of the structures she encounters over the course of the novel, simultaneously highlighting her own superior architectural insight. Her incisive criticism on the misuse of architectural materials can also be read as Braddon's treatise on a well-constructed novel. Additionally, Braddon's narrator is responsible for describing Audley Court in a way that doubles as a psychological diagram of its most famous inhabitant, Lady Audley. By merging the organic with the built, Braddon creates a mindscape that is tangible and navigable. This is a reversal of the architectural internalisation technique – here material architecture suggests otherwise unseen mental processes – as architecture provides Braddon with a crucial medium for representing her heroine's psychological condition and motives.

In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Dorothea understands and processes the world through architecture – either through the medium of her recurrent interest in building cottages for the less fortunate or the charged encounters with architecture that become emotionally revealing. While Eliot's use of organic structures such as water, webs, and currents, as a vehicle for the representation of contemporary psychological theories and mental processes

has been extensively explored, far less critical attention has been paid to the structural counterpart to these organic images: the labyrinth, staircase, and anteroom. Focusing on *Middlemarch*, my fourth chapter explores the slippage between the well-documented organic mode of representation and that of the architectural and built metaphors through which Eliot pushes at the boundaries of the realist aesthetic, as well as the moments in which she displays a conversion technique by describing something organic in architectural terms. Eliot demonstrates these conversions particularly during the portion of the novel set in Rome, a city that unites the architectural and the archaeological, allowing the novel's heroine to construct and renovate her vision of her husband's mind via these schemes. Through such analysis, this chapter argues that Eliot's formal mode creates a bridge between material and psychological realism.

Conclusion

Tracking the multifaceted metaphors of the tomb, shrine, house, and labyrinth across *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch* reveals that architecture provides a surprisingly elastic vehicle around which Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot construct the psychological realism of their novels. As we have seen, Dorothea Brooke's dismay is palpable when she is forced to acknowledge to herself that Casaubon's intellectual ability can best be described as 'anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither' (183). Eliot's narrator describes Dorothea's reassessment of her husband as an architectural shift, a claustrophobic narrowing of mental passages that simultaneously conveys the constriction of Dorothea's happiness and the shattering of her confidence in her own judgement. Eliot then employs the architectural internalisation technique to illustrate that Dorothea's concerns are in fact valid. Eliot internalises Casaubon within the architecturalised

structure of his own labyrinthine mind, providing unprecedented access to a character's mental process as the reader observes Casaubon struggle to navigate his own mental interior. Significantly, these architectural renovations are revealing of both Casaubon and Dorothea.

Mark Girouard writes of English country houses that 'Even when the customs have gone the houses remain, enriched by the accumulated alterations, and often the accumulated contents of several centuries' (12). Girouard then suggests, 'Abandoned life-styles can be disinterred from them in much the same way as from the layers of an archaeological dig' (12). We can similarly excavate the novels of this study for meaning conveyed via architecture, as architecture is a compelling vehicle for exploring and representing identity, subjectivity, and narrativity, as well as the functioning of a character's mental and emotional interior. I suggest that we approach these novels similarly to Girouard and the English country house, examining and disinterring, looking at the architecture that exists on the surface in the built environment world of the novel and the architecture that materialises in the novel as metaphor, not precisely tangible but nonetheless solidified through the architectural register of imagery. This thesis examines the impulse of Dickens Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot to layer their novels with architectural meaning and to invite their readers to participate in the meaningful act of excavation.

This critical approach will enhance the way we read the mid-Victorian realist novel by focusing in on the specific materials employed by Dickens Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot to construct their characters' psychological profiles. This approach coheres around a series of interlinked critical imperatives: to re-evaluate architecture in these novels and interrogate our tendency to reflexively consider the architecture represented by Victorian authors as restrictive and

constraining; to examine the architecturally-mediated mental landscapes crafted by these authors that anticipates the direct and unmediated access of the modernists; to afford equal attention to the labyrinth as well as the stream, examining closets and corridors instead of currents, and staircases and windows instead of electricity and energy; to look at the architectural materials as they stand in the novels and examine them for the purposeful constructions they are instead of dismissing them as vehicles for all of these other organic systems to flow through; to thereby track the way that Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot move from seeing architecture to thinking architecturally to writing about architecture and what this process reveals about their particular realist aims.

1. ‘every door might be Death’s Door’: Narrating House-Tombs in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*

Introduction

Three years before the publication of his novel *Bleak House* (1853), Charles Dickens was given a *Report on a General Scheme for Extramural Sepulture* by his brother-in-law, Henry Austin. Then, on receipt, he wrote to Austin: ‘Many thanks for the Report, which is extraordinarily interesting. I began to read it last night in bed – and dreamed of putrefaction generally’ (124 Fielding).[1] Three months later, Dickens wrote again to Austin, excusing himself from direct involvement with the burial reform cause: ‘If I get fierce and antagonistic about burials, I can’t go back to Copperfield for hours and hours. This is really the sort of condition on which I hold my inventive powers; and I can’t get rid of it’ (124).[2] In addition to the *Report on a General Scheme for Extramural Sepulture*, the catalogue of Dickens’s Gadshill library lists J.D. Parry’s 1847 pamphlet, *Urban Burial: the London Churchyards, with Suggestions for joint Parochial Cemeteries in Town and Country* and G.A. Walker’s *Lectures on the Condition of Metropolitan Grave Yards, four series* (Stonehouse 89). As revealed in his letters to Austin, Dickens found the subject of burial reform disruptive to his writing but was nevertheless well read on the subject.[3]

The sanitary reformer G.A. Walker was a key figure in the debate concerning London’s urgent need for burial reform. In his 1839 report,

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[1] 27 Feb 1850
[2] 12 May 1850
[3] In her article, ‘Is There a Pastor in the “House”?: Sanitary Reform, Professionalism, and Philanthropy in Dickens’s Mid-Century Fiction’ (2003), Lauren Goodlad writes that ‘Although Dickens’s brother-in-law, the engineer Henry Austin, was of one of Chadwick’s faithful allies, the author remained cool to the man many Britons still associated with the heartless politico-economic orthodoxy of the New Poor Law. Dickens was more disposed to support Dr. Thomas Southwood Smith, a less technocratic sanitary reformer whose public career had begun with the protection of factory children’ (528).

Gatherings from Graveyards, Walker surveys numerous churchyards and burying grounds and provides a scathing report on their condition. Walker calls for the 'ENTIRE REMOVAL OF THE DEAD FROM THE IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY OF THE LIVING' (original emphasis 11).[4] Walker's primary concerns are the desecration of interred bodies and the spread of diseases emanating from the burial ground:

> Our best affections are involved, and call upon us to secure, by every contrivance, the peaceful repose of the departed; and, at the same time, to remove as far as possible from the living, THE PESTIFEROUS EXHALATIONS OF THE DEAD. (original emphasis vii)[5]

This is a disturbing visual, suggesting the dead as active agents with the power to negatively impact the living. Walker then proceeds to document, in horrific detail, the disastrous condition of London's overflowing burying grounds and churchyards. Frequently, the living and the dead quite literally cohabitate, as illustrated by Walker's description of the burying ground in Portugal Street:

> The effluvia from this ground, at certain periods, are so offensive, that persons living in the back of Clement's Lane are compelled to keep their windows closed; the walls even of the ground which adjoins the yards of those houses, are frequently seen reeking with fluid, which diffuses a most offensive smell. Who can wonder, then, that fever is here so prevalent and so triumphant? (152)

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[4] The full title of Walker's report is *Gatherings from Graveyards; Particularly those of London: with a concise history of the modes of internment among different nations, from the earliest periods. And a detail of dangerous and fatal results produced by the unwise and revolting custom of inhuming the dead in the midst of the living.*

[5] Dickens later uses the word pestiferous in *Bleak House* when describing the 'hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene' (165).

In this passage and numerous others, Walker emphasises the vulnerability and permeability of the adjacent domestic residences. He includes first-hand accounts of sweating walls, atrocious smells, and spoiled food – the consequences of living near an active and poorly maintained burying ground. Walker also catalogues gruesome desecrations, including corpses being robbed of jewellery, the use of coffins as firewood, the selling of second hand 'coffin furniture' such as coffin nails (199), and the gravedigger's 'management' practices, which include breaking down coffins and removing partially decomposed bodies to make room for new internments (198). Thus, when Walker queries, 'Whence this rude invasion of the tomb?' (189), he is concerned not only with the dead bodies saturating the ground and pressing in on domestic residences, but also the intentional unearthing of, and interference with, the dead by the living.

Walker depicts an untenable situation, a dual encroachment resulting from an unnatural proximity. He describes the ground beneath London as potent with activity, 'overcharged with death' (148) and 'literally overcharged with death' (170). The ground of Ewer St. Chapel is 'literally surcharged with dead' (178), and nearby Deadman's Place is 'equally surcharged with dead' (178). Walker's anxiety is palpable as he describes the ground level rising higher and higher around domestic habitations, at times even obscuring the view from kitchen windows. The tension between the living and the dead is noted by Samantha Matthews in her 2007 article 'The London Necropolis: Suburban Cemeteries and the Necropolitan Imaginary'. She writes of the years following Walker's report, 'London's population explosion necessarily extended to the dead as well as the living, so that the two communities must hereafter compete for space, literally and psychically' (270). The living now vied with the

dead for real estate, and this was a struggle with an accompanying psychological impact, as the living were forced to confront the uncomfortable idea of being edged out by the dead.

Significantly, in formulating his argument against intramural burial, Walker relies on the language of habitation to delineate the realms of both the living and the dead. He writes of his regret that, in England, ‘the putrefaction process emanating from those who have gone to their last homes is allowed to accumulate in the very midst of the habitations of the living’ (90). Later, he describes Enon Chapel as ‘surrounded on all sides by houses, crowded by inhabitants’ (154). Walker is deeply disturbed that ‘in a moral and Christian country, the abode of the dead is openly violated – its deposits are sacrilegiously disturbed, and ejected’ (188-189). For Walker, the dead remain residents of sorts, although he is clearly anxious to have them well-housed apart from the living. Despite being written a decade earlier, it is this aspect of Walker’s report, the idea of death as a state of habitation and one that is vulnerable to intrusion, that resonates with Dickens’s *Bleak House.* While Walker represents a dual domestic invasion – the living violating the dead and the dead violating the living – Dickens merges the states into one, through his metaphorical representation of tomb-like habitations for the living. Through the built-environment-as-tomb emphasis, Dickens takes the overflow and permeability danger illustrated by Walker to its metaphoric limit. This association extends across class lines as Dickens blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead. By doing so, Dickens emphasises the unavoidable reality of human mortality and the inevitability of enclosure within some form of burial architecture. Architecture and the idea of habitation become a key component of Dickens’s realist representation of human mortality.

This chapter is interested in the revealing intersection of death, architecture, and narration in Dickens's novel and attempts to address the question of why a novel preoccupied with the human condition as mortal takes shape in architectural terms. Dickens presents death and architecture hand in hand and the house-as-tomb characterisation remains a constant throughout the novel as Dickens ruminates on the human condition of living and dying within architectural enclosures. For example, the law clerk Mr Guppy tells his friend, Mr Weevle, in a very matter of fact tone, that 'there have been dead men in most rooms' (474). This seemingly offhand remark is at the root of the novel: people have lived and died within the rooms we like to consider our own, and other people will assume our place when we too die – a very uncomfortable truth yet one Dickens is intent on emphasising via insistent house-tomb metaphors. The architecture in which we live can easily become the architecture in which we die (i.e. our body), and as Walker illustrates, ultimately we will all vacate our rooms for residence 'elsewhere'. Thus, in *Bleak House*, a novel brimming with endless varieties of domestic interiors, Dickens explores the human experience of dwelling within architecture both before and after death.

Dickens infuses *Bleak House* with both material and metaphorical architectural structures in tandem with materially dead bodies and imagery of metaphorical decay. He writes into being a London where death is always present, always pressing in on the characters and their built environment. The houses adjacent to cemeteries or burying grounds are permeated by the effluvia of death, in a manner quite similar to what we have seen in Walker's report. But the language of death, decay, and organic disintegration also appears in Dickens's representation of domestic habitations in his novel and is given form

by both the third-person narrator and the first-person narrator, Esther Summerson. Death and human mortality are given architectural shape via two narrators both concerned with the built environment and how they contain human subjects. While there are certainly similarities between the novel's two narrators in terms of their architectural awareness and use of certain architectural metaphors, taking that as a given, this chapter will not provide a detailed parsing of points of contact between the two narrators but will focus instead on the role of Esther's narrative in particular and what exactly it accomplishes in the novel. The critical approach of this chapter is to show how precisely Esther constructs the story of her life and how Dickens imagines a first-time author at work.

To realise his realist exploration of human mortality it is vital that Dickens employ a first person narrator, a participant in this inevitability who must experience, process, and write about a life experience dominated by the knowledge of impending death. While both of the novel's narrators are undoubtedly interested in writing architecture and inhabitants, and both make use of the house-tomb metaphor throughout the novel, Esther alone is uniquely situated as distinctly mortal. She writes as an intimate participant in the life to death trajectory. Consequently, Esther frequently narrates life and death in tandem via the material conduit of an architectural register of imagery. In doing so, Dickens reveals how significant architecture is to the human experience – an experience coloured by our mortal condition that takes shape in the novel through architecture and its association with the tomb. Yet Esther's particular way of seeing, understanding, and writing about architecture has largely gone unremarked and this chapter focuses on the half of the novel narrated by Esther, arguing that Dickens deploys a heroine with a death-inflected architect's

eye. While Dickens is not typically discussed in terms of psychological realism, in this chapter I argue for a reassessment of Esther and her role as narrator based largely on the psychological profile Esther self-constructs in her description of the houses she encounters and her use of revealing architectural metaphors. It becomes clear that Esther exposes her own mental interior in these descriptive moments. Her death-inflected vision becomes an overriding feature of her character and, consequently, this chapter provides new insight into Esther: while the understanding of Esther as gratingly cheerful, naïve, and uninteresting remains critically recurrent, I will offer a reading of Esther's dark outlook and drive to document architectural structures as enclosures for the dead that stems from her knowledge of traumatic events to come.

Numerous scholars have addressed the various manifestations of death and decay in both Dickens's overall cannon and, most frequently, *Bleak House*. As Andrew Sanders writes in *Charles Dickens: Resurrectionist* (1982), 'The *Bleak House* world is pervaded by death and its atmosphere is heavy with decay' (134). Sanders continues, 'It is a commonplace of modern Dickens criticism that death rather than life remains a groundbase, or a controlling idea in *Bleak House*' (142). Robert Alter writes that 'Death stalks the city in much of the later Dickens, beginning with *Bleak House*' (52) and Robert Lougy argues, '*Bleak House* is one of the most death-haunted novels in British Literature' (479). Scholars (Butt, Shelston, Blount, Goodlad, Henson, Stewart) have demonstrated that Dickens's realist aesthetic accommodated the social concerns of his day: there have been studies on the high death-rates in the novel, Dickens's engagement with sanitary issues and his representation of the spread of disease and death across class boundaries. Additionally, Garrett Stewart writes that, 'death furrows and fertilizes Dickensian psychology' (483)

and Haewon Hwang similarly comments, ‘Perhaps no other author engaged with the anxieties of death and the history of Victorian funereal practices as prolifically as Charles Dickens’ (134). Not much, though, has been written on Esther’s role in representing this death-saturated built environment landscape or on the extent to which Esther colours her life experience surrounded by architecture with imagery of death. I am especially interested in Dickens’s intention in employing a first-person narrator and first-time author who writes about domestic interiors insistently via tomb and burial metaphors. While the historical context of the condition of London’s burying grounds has certainly informed this chapter, I will look particularly at Esther’s death-inflected outlook and how that deathly vision materialises meaningfully through her accounts of contact with the built environment world of *Bleak House*.

One particular moment in the novel stands out as pivotal and at the crux of what follows in terms of how precisely Esther will choose to construct her narrative. Esther forcefully introduces the idea of the intimate relationship between person, architecture, and death when recalling a conversation between herself and her guardian, John Jarndyce. This conversation takes place early in the novel, in the fifth chapter narrated by Esther. During this conversation, Jarndyce describes certain houses caught up in the Chancery suit, saying,

> It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame, with the bare blank shutters tumbling from their hinges and falling asunder; the iron rails peeling away in flakes of rust; the chimneys sinking in; the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death’s Door) turning stagnant green; the very crutches on which the ruins are propped, decaying. (109-110)

By first describing these houses in terms of what they are missing, Jarndyce presents a stark portrait of houses divorced from all standard architectural features. In addition to their missing pieces, the houses appear to be dying, disintegrating, and returning to the earth. Simultaneously, the people associated with these properties waste away as they await the results of the seemingly endless lawsuit. The languishing houses powerfully convey misery and despair while anticipating the unavoidable breakdown of the human bodies they enclose: the organic and the built are decaying hand in hand. By merging the organic with the built, the body with the house, Dickens encourages us to think about our built environment as an extension of ourselves. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst writes in *Becoming Dickens: The Invention of a Novelist* (2011),

> For Dickens, home is not only a physical shelter but an extension of the self, like an additional skin or an exoskeleton. At its simplest, this involves fictional scenes in which he jerks buildings momentarily into life, producing doorknockers that leer or windows that stare emptily down the street. More elaborately worked examples include the large number of houses that have grown to resemble their owners. (244)

At the same time as homes come to reflect traits of their inhabitants, 'The biblical sense of "home" as a grave like the "long home" that Ecclesiastes tells us we are travelling towards, is one that often haunts Dickens's fiction' (Douglas-Fairhurst 244). So, in Douglas-Fairhurst's understanding, domestic homes in Dickens's novels are both 'an extension of the self' and a 'grave'. Dickens capitalises on this association of bodies with houses and houses with tombs in *Bleak House*, never allowing his reader to forget about our impending death and the inevitability of removal from one 'home' to another. Jarndyce's

comment that ‘every door might be Death’s Door’ is multifaceted and opens up an original way of thinking about our architectural surroundings. Esther finds this image so compelling that it has a lasting impact on the remainder of her narrative as she repeatedly represents the houses she encounters over the course of the novel as metaphoric tombs. Merging the organic with the built, architecture and inhabitant, this is an early instance in the novel of Dickens’s (and Esther’s) incessant linking of architecture and death.

Dickens experiments with narrating life and death simultaneously by deploying a heroine who recounts repeatedly entering and exiting death-laden architectural spaces. In fact, Esther moves seamlessly between the two realms, repeatedly walking her reader through Death’s Doors and returning to write about her experience. Her narrative choices indicate that she considers herself to be a Persephone-like-figure, inhabiting and moving through the worlds of both the living and the dead.[6] She delves into the realm of the dead by entering numerous architectural enclosures containing the deceased or the dying (her aunt, the brickmaker’s baby, Jo, Richard) and returns unscathed to document what she has seen. Scholars have certainly noted Esther’s last name, Summerson, in the context of her bright and cheerful nature. For example, Lynn Cain writes in *Dickens, Family, Authorship: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Kinship and Creativity* (2008) that Esther’s ‘surname phonetically represents her as a maternal Persephone who will bring back summer and sunshine to the bleak, wintry landscape of Victorian England’ (145). But Esther as a Persephone figure with sustained contact with the realm of the dead has gone

[6] In Greek mythology, Persephone (the daughter of Zeus and Demeter) was abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. Zeus intervened to bring her back to the world of the living but she ate pomegranate seeds given to her by Hades, binding her to him for part of the year. Consequently, she spent part of the year with Hades in the underworld and part with her mother on earth.

unremarked.[7] Throughout her narrative, Esther presents creative variations of the idea that 'every door could be Death's Door', repeatedly architecturalising her representation of death and consequently employing architecture as a key component of enhancing Dickens' realist representation of human mortality.

By representing the concept of death architecturally, Dickens encourages his readers to think about the experience of death as walking through a door from the realm of the living to the dead and entering a new phase of habitation.[8] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'Death's door' as: 'a door imagined to stand between life and death; a near approach to, or great danger of, death, esp. through illness; chiefly in **at death's door'**. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* by Christine Ammer says of the phrase, 'The association of death with an entry was first made in English in the late 1300s, and the phrase itself dates from the mid-1500s'. This phrase assumes particular significance in light of the fact that, at the time in which *Bleak House* was written, intramural internment insured that the bodies of the dead would exert pressure on nearby domestic habitations. As Walker has shown, death can permeate architecture and create both literal and metaphoric death's doors. Deborah Lutz discusses the movement of cemeteries into towns in *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), writing that 'Gradually corpses came to inhabit areas adjacent to living spaces, as if dying might mean simply slipping into the next room' (104). Dickens capitalises on this understanding in his novel by

[7] For a look at later literary heroines who maintain connections with the Persephone myth see Margot K. Louis's book, *Persephone Rises, 1860-1927: Mythography, Gender, and the Creation of a New Spirituality* (2009).

[8] Dickens later returns to the phrase 'Death's Door' in his essay 'Night Walks' published in *Uncommercial Traveller* (1869) when describing Newgate. He writes, 'In those small hours when there was no movement in the streets, it afforded matter for reflection to take Newgate in the way, and, touching its rough stone, to think of the prisoners in their sleep, and then to glance at the lodge over the spiked wicket, and see the fire and light of the watching turnkeys, on the white wall. Not an inappropriate time either, to linger by that wicked little Debtor's Door – shutting tighter than any other door one ever saw – which has been Death's Door to so many' (186).

repeatedly figuring death as the necessary and ultimate stage of human habitation.

In his essay, ‘The Dwelling Door: Towards a Phenomenology of Transition’, Richard Lang provides a phenomenological reading of the image of the door, culminating in the idea that ‘[a]s a radical discontinuity and a place of transition, the door is also a reminder to me of my final threshold – death’s door. By accepting the threshold as an undeniable limit in life, I welcome the tragic dimension of existence’ (208). We will see Esther similarly acknowledge this ‘undeniable limit’ in a novel ‘whose psychological geometry takes its coordinates from mortal limits’ (Stewart 444). Lang writes that a door can be a physical object, ‘a functional solution to transition’, but ‘[t]hinking of the house as embodied, as a kind of second body, means to see it in all its aspects not as thing but as access to things’ (204). In *Bleak House*, a novel where houses are certainly ‘embodied’, doors frequently provide access to that ultimate transition, reflecting the shared experience of habitation for both the living and the dead. For Lang, ‘[t]he door is the incarnation of my experience of transition, animating in a visible manner the dialectic of inside and outside, fundamentally presenting either a welcoming or rejecting face’ (204). So while doors in the novel can certainly represent the ‘ultimate transition’ to death, they also convey significant aspects of Esther’s encounter with the world and her subjective experiences in the built environment of the novel take shape via architecture and architectural metaphor in her narrative. Esther has the ability to go back and forth, Persephone-like, and document her experience in her own words. For Lang, and Dickens I would argue, ‘the door is one of the expressive habitations of human experience’ (204).

Dickens is thinking through the idea of mortality in *Bleak House* and so it is not surprising that he would deploy a heroine with a similar preoccupation. Dickens compels his heroine to conceptualise a major life event (death) through recognisable architecture. He empowers her to orient the unavoidable trajectory from life to death through familiar, tangible, architectural structures. He illustrates his heroine taking a great unknown and attempting to assert control and master the idea of human mortality. But most of all Dickens, like the other authors of this project, foregrounds the utility of material and metaphoric architecture to provide psychologically-revealing insight into the person encountering and, in Esther's case, writing about that contact.

In the first half of this chapter, I examine Esther's role as author, narrator, and architectural reporter. Esther is attuned to her architectural surroundings and lengthy architectural descriptions infiltrate her narrative. Frequently considered a bewildered and insecure narrator, Esther writes confident descriptions of the architecture she encounters. Consequently, her straightforward architectural reporting provides a realist portrayal of the novel's built environment while simultaneously enhancing her narrative authority. While a great deal of critical attention has been paid to Dickens's unusual technique of deploying dual narrators in his novel (Deen, Delespinasse, Frazee, Grenander, Serlen), far less has been written about the distinctive and architecturally infused features of Esther's narrative such as her detailed architectural reporting, scene-setting, pointed efforts to draw parallels between architectural environment and enclosed inhabitant and her use of architectural metaphor. Esther is keenly aware of the narrative potential of architectural enclosures and architecture becomes a significant tool for telling her story. In addition to her architectural reporting, Esther is involved in the creative work of the novel and

frequently turns to architectural metaphor to narrate the events of her past and to describe the pivotal moments of her life. While Esther certainly reaches for architectural metaphors less frequently than heroines like Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe and George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke, she nevertheless displays her understanding of the manifold utility and narrative potential of architecture and architectural metaphor. This section is interested in examining Esther's architectural penetration as well as her architecturally-driven narrative choices.

After establishing Esther as a skilful narrator and architectural reporter, the second half of this chapter examines the extent to which Esther's architectural vision is death-inflected. While death is clearly everywhere in the novel, what becomes especially interesting is precisely how Esther narrates this fact as an inevitable participant in the trajectory of architectural enclosures from homes to tombs. In this section I argue that Esther views architectural structures as inevitable enclosures for the dead and consequently describes the majority of architectural spaces she encounters as metaphoric tombs. Writing with knowledge of events to come, including the death of her parents, Esther's narrative represents an attempt to come to terms with the human condition as mortal. While we might not have direct access to Esther's mental interior, her vision of these architectural spaces is highly revealing of her own psychological condition. Thus an examination of her approach to documenting her experience of these spaces allows for a darker reading of Esther's character. By deploying a heroine who conceptualises mortality via architecture, Dickens takes the reality of the proximity of the living and the dead described graphically by Walker to the extreme through the metaphoric merging of house and tomb. Through Esther and her incessant linking of homes with tombs, Dickens

challenges his readers to think about the fate of their body within that final piece of architecture.

1. Esther as Author, Narrator, and Architectural Reporter in *Bleak House*

Dickens lays the groundwork for his architecturally-driven portrait of human mortality by creating a city where inhabitants and their architectural environment are in unique sympathy. Architectural interiors in the novel frequently convey significant aspects of their inhabitant's psychological condition and the intimacy and reciprocal relationship between rooms and their inhabitants remains a lasting theme across the novel. While later Victorian novelists will internalise architectural structures within the minds of their characters in order to provide accessibility and an architecturally-mediated psychological portrait, Dickens gives his readers access to his character's house and consequently the house provides the means by which Dickens makes psychological health visible. Accordingly, Dickens encourages his reader to extrapolate from his characters' built environment. Each household distinctly pulsates with individual habits and preoccupations and reflects the qualities or flaws of its inhabitant. For example, Mrs Jellyby's chaotic household suggests her single-minded focus on her letter writing campaigns and her disordered domestic priorities and Krook's rag and bone shop, cluttered with papers and information he cannot access, is a perfect metaphor for Krook's disordered mind. This intimacy between self and house sets the stage for the shift to house as tomb and inhabitant as corpse. Dickens's first person narrator, Esther Summerson, exploits this trajectory for her narrative purposes as she articulates her particular vision of architecture containing human subjects that inevitably become dead bodies. In this way, Dickens capitalises on Esther's architect's eye to advance the realism, both of the built environment and psychological

characterisation of his characters. This portion of the chapter will chart Esther's various roles as author, narrator, and architectural reporter, arguing that Dickens allows Esther to reveal significant aspects of her own character as she participates in these various roles.

From the beginning of the novel, 'the narrative of *Bleak House* presupposes a correspondence between the external appearance of things and their inner condition' (Ousby 975). Numerous scholars have noted that Dickens's emphasis frequently falls on the literal environment surrounding the character, rather than on character development. J. Hillis Miller makes the distinction that a character's suffering 'is visible rather in Dickens's descriptions of the environment of these characters than in direct presentations of their subjective states' (*Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels* 186). Instead of direct access to a character's mind or the use of the architectural internalisation technique that we will encounter in later chapters of this thesis, we are given access to their house in intimate detail as Dickens shows us how the built environment of characters can be manipulated to convey significant aspects of their personality and mental condition. As Alan Pritchard writes of Dickens, 'in his world character and setting are often inseparable' (434). I agree with Pritchard that character and setting go hand in hand in *Bleak House* yet while this and similar points have been made about the connection between character and setting in the novel, less remarked is how exactly Esther exploits this connection in her narrative. This technique has been noted as a fact but has not been probed as a self-conscious literary device adopted by Dickens's first time author-narrator. Architectural metaphor works in two significant ways in this novel: Esther manipulates her representation of the architectural structures enclosing characters to suggest aspects of their psychological condition while

she constructs her own psychological portrait through her writing and narrative choices.

Esther makes it clear from early on that in addition to narrating half of the novel she is also offering up a tangible, written record of the events of her life. In *Bleak House*, Dickens gives us a narrator who is reflective and up-front about the difficulties inherent in authorship and Esther's first written words express this: 'I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages' (24). By referring to 'my portion of these pages', Esther indicates her awareness that her narrative is part of a larger, albeit indeterminate, project. Later Esther states, 'It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life! But my little body will soon fall into the back-ground now' (35). Esther clearly has a job to perform but that seems to be to write her story without dwelling on herself. She does not consider herself to be the main character of her narrative, making her a first-person narrator very different from Brontë's first-person narrator Lucy Snowe, who writes the story of her own journey to self-sufficiency. Regardless of whether or not Esther considers herself the 'main character' of her narrative, her writing reveals significant information about her thoughts and emotions. Esther opens the ninth chapter of the novel by stating,

> I don't know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible, and I am sure, when I find myself coming into the story again, I am really vexed to say, 'Dear, Dear, you tiresome little creature, I wish you couldn't!' but it is all of no use. I hope any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I

> can only suppose it must be because I really have something to do with them, and can't be left out. (125-126)

In this passage Esther self-consciously addresses her role as author of her narrative as well as active participant in the events she recounts. Despite her claim that writing about herself makes her uncomfortable, Esther repeatedly draws attention to the act of writing as well as asserting that she herself is significant and 'can't be left out'.

Through Esther and her comments on her authorial process, Dickens creates a realistic portrait of an author's narrative authority. He reminds the reader repeatedly of the author's prerogative to include or excise. 'Reluctantly' describing praise from her friends, Esther states, 'I must write it, even if I rub it our again, because it gives me so much pleasure. They said there could be no East wind where Somebody was; they said that wherever Dame Durden went, there was sunshine and summer air' (448).[9] In this passage Dickens alludes to the drafting process and the fact that the author might write countless pages that never reach the reader's eyes. He highlights Esther's narrative authority and makes the reader wonder what else Esther might have rubbed out. While Esther says that these compliments from friends give her pleasure and thus must be truthfully included, I would argue that it is the writing of them that gives her enjoyment. For Esther, the physical act of writing is meaningful.

Esther clearly enjoys writing about the compliments she receives but she also takes pleasure in holding back relevant information. She later admits her omissions, a technique that draws attention to her narrative authority while also bringing her emotional preoccupations into stark relief. By admitting her omissions, Esther heightens the significance of the information she ultimately

[9] This moment anticipates a scene that will be discussed in the following chapter on *Villette*, when Brontë's heroine Lucy Snowe writes two letters to Dr Bretton, one dictated by emotion and the other by reason, knowing that only one letter will be sent and the other will be destroyed.

reveals. At the end of Chapter 13, she states 'I have omitted to mention in its place, that there was someone else at the family dinner party. It was not a lady. It was a gentleman' (197). Later she writes, 'I have forgotten to mention – at least I have not mentioned – that Mr Woodcourt was the same dark young surgeon whom we had met at Mr Badger's' (219). Esther cuts herself off abruptly from relating a conversation with Ada, instead saying, 'I don't think it matters what my darling said. She was always merry' (219). Describing a restless night, saying that she was 'wakeful and rather low-spirited. I don't know why. At least I don't think I know why. At least, perhaps I do, but I don't think it matters' (252). Esther frequently reminds her reader that she is in control of the story and will give out information as she sees fit. After receiving a letter from her mother, Lady Dedlock, she states, 'What more the letter told me, needs not to be repeated here. It has its own times and places in my story' (539). Esther is also up-front about keeping secrets in her narrative: 'And now I must part with the little secret I have thus far tried to keep. I had thought, sometimes, that Mr Woodcourt loved me' (526). Esther clearly enjoys her authorial prerogative to conceal and reveal.

Over the years scholars have discussed the dual narration of *Bleak House*, espousing various views on Esther's role as partial narrator of the novel from frustration with her obfuscations and coyness, to a more recent acknowledgement of Esther's significance and narrative contribution. Indeed, opinions about Esther and her role in the novel's narration run the gamut from total disdain (Hornback), lukewarm acceptance (Grenander), and high praise.[10] Yet focusing exclusively on the fact that the novel has two narrators can distract from the specific work that Esther accomplishes as a narrator and the

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[10] Bert G. Hornback calls Esther the most incompetent narrator 'ever in the history of fiction' (183) while Grenander admits that Esther has 'good qualifications for a narrator' (305).

unexpected literary skill that Dickens intentionally affords a self-avowed first-time author.[11] I am in agreement with Joseph Sawicki who expresses frustration that ‘When Esther exhibits some narrative sophistication, critics have almost universally viewed it as a slip on Dickens’s part’ (211). As a result, Esther has not always been given the due that Dickens intended for her. For example, despite his positive reading of Esther’s abilities as a narrator, Alex Zwerdling nevertheless suggests, ‘We are asked to look very much *at* Esther rather than *through* her, to observe her actions, her fantasies, even her verbal mannerisms with great attention’ (429). While I agree that Esther has frequently been underestimated, we should not discount the idea of looking through Esther, especially in terms of her detailed architectural reporting. This narrative feature substantially contributes to the realism of the novel’s built environment. We will see Esther remark on the architecture of the built environment she encounters with both confidence and precision while also employing architectural metaphors to narrate her past: Esther leads her reader through the tangible architecture of the novel while also utilising architecture to its fullest metaphoric potential. She conceptualises her subjectivity in architectural terms and generates psychological realism through the act of writing: Esther gives voice to her own psychological profile through revealing descriptions of material and metaphoric architectural structures. Thus, Esther reveals herself to the reader through the act of writing and, in particular, writing about architecture. At the same time, she accomplishes notable artistic work in her half of the novel, namely, employing architecture as a way to guide her reader through the novel’s built environment as well as through the story she narrates, to convey character, reflect foreshadowing, describe intimate moments from her past, and

[11] For more on the novel’s dual narrators see Serlen, Deen, and Delespinasse.

illustrate her commitment to the idea that architectural enclosures echo human mortality and that 'every door might be Death's Door'.

I am especially interested in the scholarship that discusses Esther as a self-aware narrator who embraces her role as author of half of the novel. As mentioned previously, the reader is first introduced to Esther when she opens her narrative by expressing the struggle of a first-time author: 'I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages, for I know I am not clever. I always knew that' (24). Merritt Moseley makes a revealing point in his article, 'The Ontology of Esther's Narrative in *Bleak House*' (1985), when he suggests that, rather than focusing on the self-consciousness revealed in Esther's first words of her narrative,

> The more interesting implications of Esther's words is that Esther knows that she is writing *part* of the pages which follow. In all the discussions of dual point of view in *Bleak House* with which I am familiar, no one seems interested in, or sufficiently surprised by, Esther's knowledge of it. She knows she shares the duties of narrating this story with another. (39)[12]

I agree with Moseley that there has not been much critical discussion about Esther's own understanding of the project in which she is engaged, especially considering the fact that Esther repeatedly mentions the act of writing. Who, then, has called on Esther to write her story? Who is the intended audience of

[12] Despite raising these important questions about Esther and her authorial role, Moseley is not overly impressed with her, calling Esther, 'good, innocent, reasonably perceptive, and usually frank in revealing what she perceives' (36). While Moseley suggests Esther might not be an intriguing character in her own right, she is 'at least a good transmitter of those other, richer lives' (36). Regardless, Moseley does not put her on an equal footing with the third person narrator, writing, 'Esther's narrative, though it amounts to roughly one half of *Bleak House*, is less a coordinate contribution by a narrator equivalent to the omniscient narrator than a large but still subordinate element embedded in the main narrative' (45). Sanders disagrees and considers Esther's portion central: 'Esther Summerson's story ought to be seen as the positive, if often troubled, core of *Bleak House*, the centre around which all other lines of plot revolve and eventually resolve themselves' (134).

Esther's account? Sawicki also examines Esther's role as narrator in his article '"The Mere Truth Won't Do": Esther as Narrator in *Bleak House'* (1987). Like Moseley, Sawicki draws attention to Esther's first written words in the novel, suggesting, 'we can conceive of a situation in which Esther is writing *her* narrative with the other narrative in mind, perhaps already completed' (218). Consequently, 'not only is Esther contending with the responses of her anonymous readers but she is also perceiving herself as a kind of co-author, collaborating with the third-person narrator' (218). The idea that Esther pens her narrative after reading the other half of the novel is intriguing. If this is the case, Dickens encourages his readers to look at Esther's portion of the narrative as crafted intentionally to cohere with the other half. What has been seen as Esther's self-centred and coy omissions can then be read as participation in sophisticated authorial techniques such as suspense and foreshadowing.

Throughout the novel, architecture and narration are intimately bound. In Esther, Dickens gives his reader an unusually mobile heroine with an eye for detail and an interest in writing architecture. Esther's architect's eye is a significant and frequently overlooked aspect of her character: she meticulously describes the architectural structures she encounters and her architectural reporting enhances the novel's realism as she foregrounds her direct experience of the novel's built environment. Esther begins her narrative by describing her difficulties, yet her authorial insecurities and justifications vanish when she reports on her architectural surroundings. For example, Esther describes her arrival in London step-by-step and structure-by-structure, hoping to recreate her experience for her readers. She recalls arriving at the law offices of Kenge and Carboys: 'We drove through the dirtiest and darkest streets that ever were seen in the world (I thought), and in such a distracting state of

confusion that I wondered how the people kept their senses' (37). Esther indicates her subjectivity and small window of experience when she adds the aside, '(I thought)' after claiming the streets are the 'dirtiest and darkest' in the world. She recounts, 'we passed into sudden quietude under an old gateway, and drove on through a silent square until we came to an odd nook in a corner, where there was an entrance up a steep broad flight of stairs, like an entrance to a church' (37). This is a strange description, where architecture is disorienting and things are not as they appear. Every inch of space in the *Bleak House* world is utilised, as they find the building's entrance located in an 'odd nook in a corner'. They travel up stairs that remind Esther of a church, and from the staircase window she discovers that they are, in fact, adjacent to a churchyard: 'And there really was a churchyard, outside under some cloisters, for I saw the gravestones from the staircase window' (37). This is an early reference to the ever-present cemetery, pressing in on other architectural structures as Esther connects architecture with death from the very beginning of her narrative. Sawicki argues that 'Esther's passivity as a character has succeeded in masking the fact that she becomes more expert and confidant as a narrator of her own story; Esther developed a narrative skill and authority that is not discernable at the beginning of her "autobiography"' (221). I agree with Sawicki and suggest that this is an authority gained through her architectural reporting.

Readers of *Bleak House* cannot fail to note the dizzying amount of architectural interiors represented by Dickens in his novel. The novel is architecturally profuse and the built environment landscape is a mass of houses, businesses, doors to enter into and exit from, characters to encounter and leave behind. We follow Esther and the third person narrator in and out of domestic residences and businesses, up grand staircases and down into

subterranean dwellings. The architectural spaces represented in the novel range from the grandeur of Chesney Wold to the slum of Tom-All-Alone's and everything in between, including the Jellyby's chaotic household, Miss Flite's bare room, the brickmaker's impoverished cottage, the Bagnet's warm and loving household and Esther's godmother's severe house in Windsor. In addition to the numerous domestic residences, the reader encounters a school, court, theatre, dancing academy, rag and bone shop, shooting gallery, prison, lodging house, law offices, churches, and pubs. These diverse architectural spaces are a key aspect of Dickens's realist portrait of life in the city: for Dickens, creating literary architecture is a significant aspect of his particular form of realism.

Dickens constructs fifty-eight unique architectural interiors in *Bleak House*. Readers encounter certain key domestic homes like Bleak House and Chesney Wold again and again, while seeing others only once or twice, such as brief but memorable visits to the Smallweed and Skimpole family homes. As a result of the novel's dual narration, there are numerous interiors described by both the third-person narrator and Esther, but there are also views presented by one narrator alone. On my count, the third-person narrator describes seventeen interiors unseen by Esther, while Esther describes twenty-seven interiors unremarked upon by the third-person narrator. The reader is entirely dependent on Esther's vision for an understanding of these twenty-seven architectural interiors, structures that include, significantly, both Bleak House and the new Bleak House. Over the course of the novel the reader is brought within an architectural interior a total of one hundred and fifty-two times: seventy of these interior looks are presented by the third-person narrator and the remaining eighty-two interior looks are described by Esther. These numbers indicate that

Esther is responsible for conveying roughly half of the novel's built environment. Despite this fact, even recent criticism has continued to perpetuate the distinction between the two narrators in terms of expansive openness and domestic enclosure. Caroline Levine writes in her chapter on realism that '*Bleak House* is unusual in switching back and forth between an impersonal, detached, ironic, mobile, and knowledgeable narrator who speaks in the perpetual present tense and Esther Summerson's situated, immersed, naïve, past-tense account' (100). Such criticism seems to discount the fact that Esther is in fact highly mobile: numerous characters invite her into their homes but she also takes herself places (both domestic and institutional) under her own authority, documenting the architecture she encounters as she goes.

The architectural emphasis of *Bleak House* has not gone unnoticed by critics. In his article 'The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House'*, Allan Pritchard indicates that Dickens preoccupation with houses and architecture infiltrates even minute passing descriptions: 'None of his other novels is so filled with images and symbols of houses as this one: in *Bleak House* a character cannot even gesture or a child play a game without some reference to houses' (434). Here Pritchard is referring to a moment when Esther recalls searching for Peepy Jellyby: 'The oyster shells he had been building a house with, were still in the passage, but he was nowhere discoverable' (199). This scene represents architectural manipulation on a minute level, highlighting the human compulsion to design and construct architectural structures over which they will have control. I find the term architectural manipulation useful for discussing the mutability of various architectural manifestations apart from the built environment landscape of the novel. It is instructive to recall Peter Brooks and his idea of likening the efforts of Victorian realist authors to the delight in architectural play with scale models.

Dickens compounds this idea by creating the architecturally realistic built environment world of *Bleak Hou*se but also allowing his heroine to participate in this 'form of play' (Brooks 3) through her materially and metaphorically rich accounts of architecture in her written account. Her psychologically-revealing authorial efforts become a texture in Dickens's overall realist aims for his novel as he allows his heroine to express her internal preoccupations.

Critics also turn to architectural metaphor to describe both the novel as a whole and Dickens's cannon. Alexander Welsh writes, 'For the large edifice called *Bleak House*, which contains all of these properties and more, Dickens employed so many materials and fasteners, characters and relationships, that no architectural critic can positively know where to enter' (18).[13] Welsh's understanding of the novel as architecturally profuse but also architecturally bewildering, even to an expert, is noteworthy. Through Esther, Dickens experiments with architectural manipulation and the limits of writing architecture. Architectural comparisons are critically recurrent and especially apt for Dickens's work, as 'Dickens's novels do not merely describe homes; in some ways, they *are* homes. *Bleak House* is the star example here, because Dickens deliberately encourages the idea that his twisting and turning narrative reflects the titular house's higgledy-piggledy architecture' (Baumgarten 245-246). One aspect of architecture in *Bleak House* has yet to receive thorough critical attention, namely, Esther's use of architecture as a narrative technique in her portion of the novel. All too often Esther's role in the novel has been discounted, and practically dismissed out of hand by scholars like Levine who claims:

[13] John Dusseau employs an extended architectural metaphor to describe Dickens's cannon: 'The House of Dickens is a ramshackle structure, drafty and bleak; but it is a house built from compassion for human suffering and anger against evil. It is a tenement made from the dirt and cracked plaster of the Italy that Dickens so loved and from the crowds and turmoil of the London he had so fondly observed – a tenement swarming with people, each of them clamouring for our attention' (598).

'Esther herself is at the center of the story not so much because she is a remarkable person in her own right – as she tells us all too often – but because she is located at the intersection of a clandestine affair, a vast and sprawling lawsuit, and a murder investigation' (92). This chapter focuses on Esther's overlooked contribution to the novel and aims to establish Esther and her architect's eye as a figure of interest in her own right.

Explicating a single architecture structure as described by Esther, the eponymous Bleak House, immediately reveals the care and detail Ether puts into her architectural descriptions. In addition to a realist portrayal of the house's architectural makeup, Esther employs the sophisticated technique of conveying information about the house's inhabitants (and herself) via an architectural conduit. She also uses the architecture of Bleak House to express foreshadowing and to play with her role as guide through a labyrinthine house as well as a labyrinthine novel. She walks her reader through the architectural blueprint of the house while simultaneously striving to recreate the initial feeling of disorientation she experienced upon her first visit. An examination of the literary techniques employed by Dickens's heroine reveals the extent to which architecture is a vital and highly revealing component of Esther's narrative.

After detailing the chaotic Jellyby household (49) and Miss Flite's bare room (66), Esther hits her stride with an extended account of her first vision of Bleak House. Esther's description of the house is crucial considering that the third-person narrator never describes the title architectural structure. There is no corroboration in this instance and the reader only sees what Esther remembers. She recounts 'what seemed to be an old-fashioned house, with three peaks in the room in front, and a circular sweep leading to the porch' (75). Later, she notes 'its various-shaped windows, some so large, some so small, and all so

pretty' (106). In addition to an exterior description, Esther provides a thorough account of the house's architectural layout: 'It was one of those delightfully irregular houses where you go up and down steps out of one room into another, and where you come upon more rooms when you think you have seen all there are' (78). Bleak House is 'delightfully irregular', an unusual architectural creation worthy of extended description. Dickens himself uses the phrase 'pleasantly irregular' to describe Gad's Hill Place (Douglas-Fairhurst note 7). What is it that makes irregularity delightful to the human eye? An irregular structure is unbalanced and can lack an intuitive flow. Consequently, the person exploring it will likely be disoriented and required to rely on a guide (Esther). This description appears early in the novel and we might think about why Dickens chooses to figure the dominant house of his novel in this way. van Buren Kelley also picks up on the word 'irregular' and suggests of *Bleak House*, 'Not only are the house and the plot wide-spread and irregular, but both are also mazes of a sort' (266).

Bleak House does indeed possess an abundance of liminal spaces: 'there is a bountiful provision of little halls and passages, and where you still find older cottage-rooms in unexpected places, with lattice windows and green growth pressing through them' (Dickens 78). This passage solidifies Esther's role as architectural reporter and her importance as a guide through this disorienting structure. In fact, Esther guides the reader through the irregular, labyrinthine architectural structure of Bleak House as well as through half of the labyrinthine novel. The labyrinth is a significant and recurrent architectural structure across the chapters of this thesis, a structure unique for its ability to guide and thwart, reveal and conceal. Through his inclusion of the labyrinth

early in the novel, Dickens signals his intention to capitalise on the revealing literary technique of a creative manipulation of architectural space.

Esther strives for architectural realism in her narrative. Not only does Esther describe the rooms of Bleak House, she attempts to replicate their architectural layout, asking her readers to walk with her through this house precisely as she remembers it. To do so, she writes with confidence and architectural precision, meticulously documenting the number of steps up and down between rooms: ‘Out of this room you went down two steps […] Out of this you went up three steps’ (78). By providing such details as the exact number of stairs to go up and down to enter each room, Esther reveals her dedication to provide her readers with architectural realism and to convey Bleak House’s three-dimensionality. She attempts to diagram the entire house for the reader, in a sense providing them with a blueprint of Bleak House in an effort to make that structure navigable and knowable. While Esther clearly enjoys describing Bleak House, Dickens also seems to be experimenting with the limits of writing architecture: despite Esther’s best efforts, how much can you expect the reader to follow? How knowable can literary architecture actually be?

Esther’s dedication to architectural realism is complicated by her additional goal of expressing her subjective experience within that architectural space. In this instance, it means replicating the disorientation of a house that is not intuitive or easily navigated, something she skilfully achieves. Consequently, Dickens uses architectural realism to convey a sense of the material place ‘Bleak House’, but also to give his readers a sense of his heroine’s subjective experience of that place. Resuming the reader’s guided tour, Esther writes,

> Out of this room, you passed into a little gallery, with which the other best rooms (only two) communicated, and so, by a little

> staircase of shallow steps, with a number of corners in it, considering its length, down into the hall. But if, instead of going out of Ada's door, you came back to my room, and went out at the door by which you had entered it, and turned up a few crooked steps that branched off in an unexpected manner from the stairs, you lost yourself in passages with mangles in them. (78)[14]

This portion of Esther's tour is difficult to follow and the reader has the impression of a blur of steps, staircases, doors and passageways. You read the words but are left with a feeling of uncertainty rather than a clear vision of the house's architectural layout. In this passage, Esther sublimates her goal of constructing an architectural blueprint to instead recreate the disorientation she experienced on her own first memorable encounter with Bleak House: Esther is narrating not just the reality of the built structure but replicating her first experience within its walls. Here Dickens moves into a psychological realist mode. The house is not intuitive and remains for the reader, as Dickens likely intended, both knowable and disorienting at once, a jumble of doors, stair, rooms, and passages, leaving the general impression of being a completely unique architectural structure. It is a one of a kind creation, remarkable in its own right apart from its dark history and current inhabitants.

Like the novel itself, Dickens suggests that there is something enjoyable about losing yourself and being resigned to the need for a guide to lead you where you might not otherwise travel. Completing the tour, Esther describes the walk to Mr Jarndyce's room (78) and then, finally,

> Out of that, you came into another passage, where there were backstairs […] Or you might, if you came out at another door

[14] Esther clearly prizes corners, mentioning them again here in addition to in her description of her own room and the location of the Kenge and Carboys law offices.

> (every room had at least two doors), go straight down to the hall again by half-a-dozen steps and a low archway, wondering how you got back there, or had ever got out of it. (78-79)

The reader's thorough disorientation at this point insures the necessity of a guide and solidifies Esther's role in leading the reader through half of the novel, explaining and concealing in turn. Esther enforces the idea that the reader must rely on her as a guide and trust in her ability to lead. The aside that 'every room had at least two doors' brings to mind Jarndyce's comment that 'every door could be Death's Door' and with this image firmly implanted in our minds, doors in the novel assume a certain foreboding. The aside itself is strange and noteworthy, suggesting infinite connections between people and places, movement and intimate access, enclosure and openness concurrently. van Buren Kelley draws on Esther's comment to make the point that, like the rooms in Bleak House, many of the plot lines have at least two doors leading into one another 'and the passage-ways between plots are so confusing that it is often a puzzle to trace the path of progress from one to the other. (266)'.[15] I don't believe that the passageways between plots are puzzling, as we have Esther to lead us through the labyrinthine architecture of Bleak House and the novel itself. We are guided by a heroine who is constantly on the move and who leads the reader through door after door, making sense of what she discovers within.

Rooms and houses provide far more than settings in Dickens's novel. He uses the opportunity that architecture affords to give the idea of character three-dimensionality – to write character onto material space. If architectural imagery can be used to provide texture and tangibility to his representation of a feature of the organic body (such as Mrs Todgers's heart with its opening doors in

[15] Alan R. Burke reiterates the significance of doors, writing, 'Printed matter and apertures such as windows and doors are thus the two most important means of interrelating city dwellers in *Bleak House*' (667).

Martin Chuzzlewit) via the architectural internalisation technique, then we should also be attuned to the weight of information Dickens conveys through the built environment he erects around his characters. The houses in *Bleak House* feel particularly animated as a consequence of this treatment, as Dickens enlivens his *Bleak House* houses by constructing them as personality-embodying structures. By doing so, Dickens experiments with architectural realism by simultaneously presenting what is present in the built environment setting of his novel while also suggesting that architecture can give voice to a character's interiority.

In a novel where house and inhabitant are practically inseparable, Esther illustrates the extent to which a person can be encapsulated by their surrounding architecture: architectural enclosures lay bare a character's psychological, economic, and mortal condition. Architecture, then, both literal and metaphorical, provides a key tool for Esther's work of characterisation and narration: from early in her narrative, Esther reveals her understanding that she can write about character via architecture, imprinting a sense of herself and her friends onto the enclosures she narrates with her architect's eye. While the structural arrangement of the house itself is revealing, so are Esther's narrative choices in documenting her memory of that space. She reports:

> Mine, which we entered first, was of this kind, with an up-and-down roof, that had more corners in it than I ever counted afterwards, and a chimney (there was a wood-fire on the hearth) paved all round with pure white tiles, in every one of which a bright miniature of the fire was blazing. (78)

Esther is clearly proud of her room ('mine') and her ownership of that space, and gives the reader an impression of brightness, warmth, and purity, qualities

she herself is said to reflect. Similarly, the fact that her room has numerous corners is significant as architectural corners maintain an association with secrecy and suggest that there are aspects of Esther tucked away, hidden from immediate view and only discoverable over time. Thus Esther reveals herself through a description of her room. van Buren Kelley suggests that Esther's room reflects her character, 'but she never realizes the number of lives she warms any more than she sees any parallel between herself and her room' (267). I disagree because Esther describes the Bleak House rooms meticulously, through the distance of seven-years' time and with full knowledge of what will occur to each of the house's inhabitants. Establishing herself to her readers, it seems a given that she would convey her own character in the bright warmth and hidden corners of her room. While van Buren Kelley's article brings early attention to the significance of architecture in *Bleak House*, she does not look at Esther's role in narrating these structures. For example, she suggests, 'the shape of the plot and the fate of many of the characters are paralleled by the actual physical makeup of the house' (266) and '[c]lues to the unravelling of several of the subplots can be found in the decoration of Bleak House in the same way that the mysteries themselves are mirrored in the architecture' (266). Yet we see Bleak House exclusively through Esther's architectural eye (never once from the third-person narrator's perspective) and the revealing connections that van Buren Kelley makes between house and character stem from Esther's own architectural descriptions. Dickens encourages this reliance on Esther: she exists in the novel precisely so we can see through her eyes. She makes the architecture of Bleak House appear tangible to her reader while also expressing her personal relationship with that particular place.

Esther gives form to character via architecture and consequently a character become knowable through her or his built environment. Esther displays her understanding of the utility of architecture to further narration when she describes the bedrooms of her new companions. Ada’s room has ‘a fine broad window, commanding a beautiful view’ but Esther recalls ‘a great expanse of darkness’ extending beneath the stars. Also unsettling is Esther’s description of Ada’s ‘hollow window-seat’ and her suggestion that ‘three dear Adas might have been lost at once’ inside of it (78). So Esther pointedly associates Ada with beauty but also an impending darkness, premature burial, and a loss of identity. Richard’s room is also revealing as Esther figures it as an amalgam of different rooms intended for different purposes: ‘part library, part sitting-room, part bed-room, and seemed indeed a comfortable compound of many rooms’ (78). There is an unsettled air to this room, which the reader will come to find out foreshadows Richard’s own unsettled character: ‘Richard Carstone’s room prepares us both for his present nature and his future destruction’ (van Buren Kelley 267). Esther builds up to fully revealing Richard’s character and his inability to resist the lure of the lawsuit and settle on a profession yet lays the groundwork in presenting the first room that he inhabits in the novel.

The most powerful example of a house reflecting a psychological condition exists in the architecture of Bleak House itself. Over the course of the same conversation when Jarndyce tells Esther about the Death’s Door properties entangled in the lawsuit, he describes the parallel fates of Bleak House and Tom Jarndyce: ‘I was his heir, and this was his house, Esther. When I came here, it was bleak, indeed. He had left the signs of his misery upon it’ (109). Jarndyce continues, ‘It had been called, before his time, the Peaks. He

gave it its present name, and lived here shut up' (109). Tom Jarndyce renamed his home and insured that it become bleak accordingly: as he spent countless hours 'poring over the wicked heaps of papers in the suit', 'the place became dilapidated' (109). The built architecture of the house reflects its owner's mental disintegration as it begins to decay. The walls cracked, the roof leaked, and weeds blocked the path to the 'rotting door' (109). Jarndyce disturbingly recalls, 'the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined' (109). In this unsettling passage Jarndyce emphasises the intimate connection between home and inhabitant. His uncle's unhealthy obsession with the lawsuit is manifest in his neglected and decaying home. Tom Jarndyce stays 'shut up' in the house as the house itself falls into disrepair and becomes 'dilapidated'. The organic elements of wind and rain intrude upon and permeate the built structure. Weeds block access to the 'rotting door', a description that recalls 'Death's Doors'. Finally, home and inhabitant merge when Tom Jarndyce commits suicide: Bleak House now reflects his complete bodily destruction.[16] This passage sets the tone for Esther's technique of documenting house-tombs.

Jarndyce's ward, Richard Carstone, similarly falls victim to the danger of 'poring' over papers. When Esther visits Richard in his barracks she recalls, 'he looked as wild as his room' (647). Esther asks for the letter he was writing her, to which he replies, 'You may read it in the whole room. It is all over here' (647). Richard suggests that he does not need to describe his troubles – they are legible in the very room surrounding him. Esther recounts a later visit: 'Thus we came to Richard, poring over a table covered with dusty bundles of papers which seemed to me like dusty mirrors reflecting his own mind' (724). Richard's

[16] Later, Krook's spontaneous combustion provides a parallel representation of total mental and bodily disintegration.

rooms reflect his mental stagnation: his mind assumes the form of the papers he surrounds himself with as he begins to embody the decomposition associated with his hopeless entanglement with the case. While the reader can judge Richard's mental state from his mouldering environment, the actual workings of his mind remain inaccessible and we do not get the full interior view that Brontë and Eliot will later provide.

Esther moves from cogent descriptions of architectural exteriors and domestic interiors, to a skilful deployment of architectural metaphors. Esther heightens the significance of architectural imagery in her narrative by turning to architectural metaphor to describe her most intimate thoughts and memories. By allowing his heroine to experiment with architecture as self-expression, Dickens indicates his interest in creating a heroine who self-consciously constructs her own psychological portrait. In his article, 'Esther Summerson Rehabilitated' (1973), Alex Zwerdling claims that Esther has been misread by most critics, writing of Dickens's creation, 'She is, I think, one of the triumphs of his art, a subtle psychological portrait clear in its outlines and convincing in its details' (429). To understand her full psychological portrait, I argue, we must look at how Esther constructs her narrative through various architectural strategies as well as how she turns to architectural metaphor to express her own concealments, revelations, and most notably, as we will see in the second half of this chapter, a preoccupation with death.

Dickens offers a prolonged meditation on architecture as self-expression by crafting a heroine who frequently turns to architectural metaphor to represent her most intimate thoughts and memories. Narrating her past experiences, Esther frequently reaches for architecture when detailing the pivotal moments of her life. For example, when she falls gravely ill she recalls that, in her delirium, 'I

laboured up colossal staircases, ever striving to reach the top, and ever turned, as I have seen a worm in a garden path, by some obstruction, and labouring again' (513). Esther remembers her illness through the image of an insurmountable staircase as she architecturalises the otherwise hard-to-pin-down experience of being delirious. The staircase represents her struggle to regain her health and resume control over her mind and body. Shortly after her recovery, Esther describes sending her maid, Charley, to Mr Jarndyce to receive the letter she rightly expects will contain a proposal of marriage:

> Charley went up the stairs, and down the stairs, and along the passages – the zig-zag way about the old-fashioned house seemed very long in my listening ears that night – and so came back, along the passages, and down the stairs, and up the stairs, and brought the letter. (637)

While Charley's exact movements through the house are not particularly important or interesting to the reader, this passage conveys Esther's anxiety and anticipation as she listens out for Charley's footsteps. In this passage, Esther and the house seem to merge. In addition, by narrating Charley's movements Esther reminds her reader of the three-dimensionality of the scene, expanding it to encompass not just the room in which she waits, but the entire house. By enclosing her anxiety within Bleak House, Esther experiments with architecture as tangible self-expression as she deftly turns to architecture to narrate an emotional experience. In this case it is about anticipation and possibly dread as well as Esther's distinct understanding that her life is about to permanently change.

Architecture is an ordering principle for Dickens, Esther, and the novel.

Esther confides to her reader that Richard employs architecture as a vehicle for self-expression by turning repeatedly to the metaphor of an unfinished house to describe his vocational paralysis stemming from the lingering lawsuit. He tells Esther, ‘If you lived in an unfinished house, you couldn’t settle down in it’ (342). Later he expands his metaphor, explaining to Esther, ‘If you were living in an unfinished house, liable to have the roof put on or taken off – to be from top to bottom pulled down or built up – to-morrow, next day, next month, next year – you would find it hard to rest or settle. So do I’ (551). The architectural metaphor of an incomplete house perfectly encapsulates Richard’s restlessness and is referenced twice as one of many examples of the novel’s insistence on a connection between self-identity and architectural environment. Dickens himself verbalised this connection in his private writing. When Dickens was waiting to get into his new study at Tavistock House to begin working on this novel, he indicates in a letter to Miss Coutts that the disorder of his physical environment was impacting his creative work:

> I am three parts distracted and the fourth part wretched in the agonies of getting into a new house – Tavistock House, Tavistock Square. Pending which desirable consummation of my troubles, I *can not* work on my new book – having all my notions of order turned topsy-turvy. (Welsh 8)

For Dickens, architecture is capable of creating intellectual turmoil while also providing a tangible vehicle for representing emotional and creative unrest. When he is able to write his novel, Dickens deploys Richard to express a similar inability to function when things are unsettled and ‘notions of order’ are distressed.

We learn a great deal about Esther by examining her various roles as author, narrator, and architectural reporter. As a first-time author, Esther turns to architecture to substantiate her narrative. By directing her architect's eye towards the material built environment world of the novel, Esther establishes herself as a skilled and interested architectural reporter. At the same time, Esther learns that the utility of architectural descriptions goes beyond a realist representation of the built environment. Accordingly, Esther capitalises on architecture to advance her various narrative strategies: for self-expression, representation of character, foreshadowing, guiding and confounding, revealing and concealing, as well as asserting her narrative authority.

2. 'Death's Doors' and Esther's Narration of Mortality

In *Bleak House*, Dickens explores what it means to write about life with the unavoidable understanding that death is inevitable and that the human body will ultimately be enclosed within a grave or a tomb. This exploration manifests in the novel as a layering of literal and metaphoric approaches; representing squalid burying grounds and stoic mausolea, describing tangible architecture containing the bodies of the dead and dying, employing house-tomb metaphors to cloud the lives of the living with the shadow of death, writing the human experience as a parade of enclosures tending to the same place, and capitalising on the psychological undertones of funerary architecture. While both portions of the novel are death-laden and both narrators share an equally dark vision of life experience intrinsically coloured by death expectations, only Esther writes as an intimate participant in the house to tomb trajectory. Accordingly, she infuses her narrative with her understanding of this inevitability and walks her readers through a seemingly endless parade of Death's Doors. In this section I will explore Esther's encounter with the pauper burying ground, as well

as her Persephone-like role in entering, exiting, and narrating metaphoric house-tombs. I argue that Esther is at the centre of psychological realist form depicted through architecture. She is a narrative force and a self-generating psychological portrait. Her psychology is death-inflected and her vision of the world around her is accordingly affected by her internal preoccupation with death and mortality. As a result, her psychological fixation with death is writ large on the built environment world of the novel she documents: her death vision unites with architecture and results in house-tombs. Esther reveals her personal death-inflected vision and accompanying psychological profile by writing architecture in this way. It is not just a reflection of death in the material world but about *how* she sees and *what* that particular way of seeing tells us about her.

Esther's death-inflected vision is an overriding feature of her character but one that has gone largely unremarked. Death is all around Esther in a material sense with the overflowing cemeteries and the dead bodies she herself encounters, but it is also how Esther sees and navigates the world: Esther predominantly views houses as containers for the dead. While scholarship tends to consider Esther a positive figure, 'a paragon of all the virtues' (Grenander 305) and a 'specific locus' (Deen 214) for good in contrast to the third-person narrator, Esther has a darker side and carries death with her. There is an intimacy in exposing your outlook, especially an outlook this dark. One of her very first acts in the novel is to bury her doll (31), something that could be read as symbolically representing the end of her youth and the beginning of adulthood but should also be regarded for what it is in fact – a death that she herself hastens and burial that she can control. Thus Esther hints at her darker preoccupations from the very start of her account. It is instructive,

then, to work backwards, to look at what Esther experiences and how she grapples with that knowledge in her death-laden account.

Writing years after the events she describes, Esther purposefully infuses her architectural descriptions with imagery of death. In *Supposing Bleak House* (2010), John O. Jordan explains, 'In *Bleak House*, this means that Esther Woodcourt knows from the beginning everything that will happen to Esther Summerson' (4). For Esther's narrative, 'In retelling it, she is in effect re-experiencing it as she writes, and this re-experience has the potential to shed new light, for her as for the reader, on events that have already happened' (5).[17] From the very beginning of her narrative Esther reveals her belief that architecture is intimately linked to the task of writing. Her architect's eye assesses the material architecture of her built environment and understands how to digest and then refigure that architecture as a compelling literary device to tell her story. Esther also uses architecture as an emotional vehicle, writing her anxiety and grief into the structures she narrates. By doing so she reveals precisely how architecture lends itself to a form of psychological realist writing: Esther projects her knowledge of the events to come onto the architectural spaces she details for the reader. Most notably, in the midst of writing about her life, Esther cannot ignore the fact that death hangs over each character, as well as herself. Consequently, death infiltrates her representation of almost every single architectural structure in her narrative.

Esther's experience of locating her mother's body at the pauper burying ground sets the stage for her death-infused representation of architecture in her

[17] Delespinasse makes a similar point in her 1968 article, 'The Significance of Dual Point of View in *Bleak House*'. Delespinasse emphasises Esther's subjectivity (254) and claims that, 'Esther's knowledge of the future colors her past-tense narrative' (255). Unlike the third person narrator who must 'represent events disconnectedly unfolding and uncontrollably being connected before his very eyes', Esther, employing the past tense, 'is better able to suggest temporal and causal connections between events, leading to a more ordered world view' (259).

narrative. The memory of her discovery is foundational across her written account. After a night of tracking Lady Dedlock through the city, Esther and Inspector Bucket come to the burying ground where Captain Hawdon was previously interred.[18] It is here that Esther discovers her mother's dead body and she recalls, 'She lay there, a distressed, unsheltered, senseless creature' (847). The surrounding houses inadequately shelter her mother's body which, unburied, mocks the typical practice of shallow burying ground internments. Esther indicates that an unburied body jars with human feeling and activates the desire to enclose and protect.

Esther's account of this moment of discovery is deeply personal, yet her description of the burying ground also encapsulates many of Walker's key concerns. Like Walker, Esther draws attention to the unhealthy proximity of the living to the decomposing dead, writing,

> The gate was closed. Beyond it, was a burial-ground – a dreadful spot in which the night was very slowly stirring; but where I could dimly see heaps of dishonored graves and stones, hemmed in by filthy houses, with a few dull lights in their windows, and on whose walls a thick humidity broke out like a disease. (844)[19]

Dickens illustrates the potential dangers of comingling the living with the dead and Sanders writes that, 'By association at least, the dark church-yard where Captain Hawdon is buried is assumed to be a breeder to the disease which Tom propagates. It serves Dickens as an equally forceful reminder of the

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[18] In a 4 April 1868 letter to Miss Palfrey, Dickens indicates that the burying ground he wrote of in *Bleak House* had its origin in St. Martins-in-the-Fields: 'I do not remember that the graveyard is accessible from the street now, but when I was a boy it was to be got at by a low covered passage under a house, and was guarded by a rusty iron gate. In that churchyard I long afterwards buried the "Nemo" of Bleak House' (Dexter 624).

[19] The third person narrator has previously referred to the cemetery as 'hemmed-in' (165).

intimate relationship between the living and the dead' (148).[20] The burying ground is completely surrounded with houses, 'filthy' from their unavoidable contact with the dead. Consequently, the living and the dead meet in the 'intimate' space of domestic interiors permeated by the effluvia of bodily decomposition. Dickens certainly represents the living and the dead as connected through the spread of disease but also suggests a fluid relationship where the living and the dead connect via architecture.

Through his representation of the pauper burying ground, Dickens is visibly engaging with ongoing Victorian debates about burial. This engagement has been noted by numerous scholars, including Trevor Blount, whose 1963 article, 'The Graveyard Satire of *Bleak House* in the Context of 1851', situates the novel within the context of the intramural burial debate. Blount writes,

> At the time at which the novel was conceived and published [. . .] the administrative reform of intramural burial-grounds in the London Metropolitan area was pressing and topical. The saturation of the limited space, together with the methods used to get rid of the corpses before decomposition, was loathsome in itself, disrespectful to the feelings of the bereaved, and a positive danger to health. (370)[21]

Many churchyards were filled to capacity and 'The raising of the ground above its natural level often meant that accommodation for the living was separated from masses of decomposing corpses by damp and crumbling walls' (Curl 286).

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[20] Sanders puts Dickens's novel on par with Edwin Chadwick's Sanitary Report (1842) for its impact on sanitary reform: 'Chadwick's report reminded early Victorians, as much as *Bleak House* reiterated the fact to mid-Victorians, that diseases bred in the slums took their revenge on society as a whole' (3).

[21] Taking a slightly different view on the timeline, Andrew Sanders writes in his book, *Charles Dickens: Resurrectionist*, 'By 1852 Dickens's comment on the "pestiferous" and "obscene" church-yard to which Captain Hawdon's body is borne may well have seemed outmoded to many of his readers and merely a further expression of the manner in which the novel is set back in the immediate past' (11).

The organic and the built decompose in tandem and Dickens addresses this disturbing idea of the permeability between organic matter and the built environment.

For those living around the burying ground, the gate cannot block out the encroaching bodies or the constant, tangible, reminder of human mortality as bodies permeate the domestic homes in a physical manifestation of the idea of Death's Doors. In fact, there is a distinct futility to the gate, as it cannot protect the dead from desecration or the living from the spread of disease. Haewon Hwang writes in *London's Underground Spaces: Representing the Victorian City, 1840-1915* (2013), that in the nineteenth century,

> the image of the underground as a resting place for the dead, separate from the living world above, was supplanted by a more porous image of pestilence and pollution. The proximity of the church no longer afforded the living or the dead safe passage in this life or the next. (121)

As we have seen from Walker, the 'underground' was too charged with activity to be considered a viable 'resting place'. Instead, underground space was routinely unearthed and intruded upon.[22] Dickens consequently frames his

[22] In *Bleak House*, Dickens represents many of G.A. Walker's concerns from *Gatherings from Graveyards*, as well as alluding to frightening graveyard 'management' practices described by Ruben Room, a gravedigger. In 1846 Walker followed up his *Gatherings from Graveyards* report with *Burial Ground Incendiarism: the last fire at the bone-house in the spa-fields Golgotha, or, the minute anatomy of grave-digging in London*. In this text he reports on the nightly coffin burnings in Spa-Fields. Walker includes the following excerpt from *The Times*' 'The Spa-Fields Burial Ground' (5 March 1845) in which Ruben Room provides this extremely disturbing statement: 'Our mode of working the ground was not commencing at one end and working to the other, but digging wherever it was ordered, totally regardless whether the ground was full or not; for instance, to dig a grave seven feet deep at a particular spot, I have often disturbed and mutilated seven or eight bodies; that is, I have severed heads, arms, legs, or whatever came in my way, with crowbar, pickaxe, chopper, and saw. Of the bodies, some were quite fresh and some decomposed […] I have often put a rope round the neck of the corpse to drag it out of the coffin […] The coffins were taken away and burnt with pieces of decomposed flesh adhering thereto […] We have buried as many as 45 bodies in one day, besides still-borns […] I have been up to my knees in human flesh by jumping on the bodies so as to cram them in the least possible space at the bottom of the graves in which fresh bodies were afterwards placed […] These occurrences took place every day' (21-22). Room's account reveals a chaotic method

portrait of the burying ground in corporeal rather than spiritual terms: bodies are removed from the house to the cemetery yet return to permeate the surrounding residences. Louise Henson suggests that Dickens and his *Household Words* contributors

> utilized popular folk beliefs about the return of the dead and produced a new kind of ghost story in which death led to a sinister resurrection. Rising from their graves in the form of harmful miasma, the dead pollute the air, permeate the wells, and bring disease and death to the living. (11-12)

Citing a study about London residents' exposure to poisonous gas as a result of overcrowded burial areas, Henson writes that ultimately, 'The miasma hypothesis suggested that the physical traces of the dead were in the very air, and literally present in the buildings they were supposed to haunt' (13). Dickens embraces this disturbing concept of the dead permeating architecture in *Bleak House*. It provides a compelling way to think about human mortality as the dead 'live on' within architecture and assume a second residence in the architecture surrounding their burial place.[23]

Architecture, death, psychology and narration intersect as Esther describes the 'filthy houses' encircling the burying ground containing the interred body of her father and the exposed body of her mother. Writing with her confident architect's eye, Esther must think about where her parents now reside. Are they nestled safely in the ground or have they permeated the surrounding buildings? Will they stay where they are placed or be removed by

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that practically ensured bodily desecrations. His encounters and engagement with the dead were so regular, so sustained, that he could calmly recite a seemingly endless list of incursions.

[23] In her article '"Trading in Death": Contested Commodities in *Household Words'*, Catherine Waters writes, 'While supporting the commercial activity of cemetery companies as an attempt to solve the sanitary problems associated with the overcrowded city churchyards, *Household Words* nevertheless expresses concerns about the transformation of the burial place into a piece of real estate, a consumption good, and about the forms of commodity spectacle associates with cemetery development' (321-322).

an unknown hand? Are they in the air and inhalable? Esther exhibits the psychological impact accompanying this understanding of the dead exerting their agency as migratory figures infiltrating the air or potentially cohabitating with the living in material architecture. This is an uncomfortable reality and Esther clearly does not enjoy writing this part of her history, twice repeating the phrase ‘I proceed to other passages in my narrative’ (847). Esther drags her mind forward, away from these upsetting memories by the act of writing.

Dickens describes the burying ground as a space defying barriers or boundaries, a chaotic, surging mass of disease and decay, yet the contrasting form of internment, burial in a mausoleum, also makes a prominent appearance in the novel. Dickens unites these two burial option extremes by having Lady Dedlock, in effect, experience both. In *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock’s body is removed from the burying ground and deposited in the Dedlock family mausoleum. While she attempted to escape entirely from the architecture of Chesney Wold and join Captain Hawdon in the wild open chaos of the pauper burying ground, she is returned to her expected place. Lady Dedlock had previously taken a guided tour, led by the street sweeper Jo, and had full cognizance of the horrors occurring there (240). Her body will not be allowed to decompose into to the soil and will instead remain a tangible object, architecturally enclosed. In his article, ‘Dickens and the Burial of the Dead’ (2005) Alan Shelston writes:

> in *Bleak House* the contrast between high and low is never more starkly demonstrated than it is by the extremes of the mausoleum at Chesney Wold where Lady Dedlock is finally laid to rest and the burial ground in Tom-all-Alone’s where her lover lies in the unmarked grave. Two of the three final illustrations of *Bleak*

> *House* are of these locations: they remind us, finally and emphatically, that in their deaths the Victorians were very much divided. (78)

Dickens, though, has been at pains to represent the impossibility of total division, especially in terms of the spread of disease. While I certainly agree with Shelston that the architecture of internment varied greatly according to wealth and social status, I think that it is significant that Lady Dedlock attempts to bridge the divide and cross over, seeking the death and, by extension, the burial of her own choosing. While she is overruled in death and ultimately carted back to the mausoleum, she dies on her own terms while simultaneously making a remarkable and defiant statement about the choices she has made in her life.[24]

Dickens presents the extremes of both burial options – the exposed decay of Captain Hawdon's burying ground and the sombre, sealed Dedlock mausoleum. At the same time, he illustrates the fluidity between the methods of internment as the organic and the built struggle for balance. Organic matter permeates the built residences surrounding the burying ground while the built structure of the mausoleum mirrors architectural details of the domestic home while also struggling to contain the organic matter it encloses. Architects and landscape designers also expressed interest in mediating this intersection of the organic and the built, the body and the monument. Writing two years before the publication of Walker's *Gatherings from Graveyards*, architect J.A. Picton focuses his essay for *Architectural Magazine* on the potential beauty of the

[24] Dickens's own burial wishes were ignored. His biographer Fred Kaplan writes that Dickens's plans for burial at Rochester Cathedral were cancelled in favour of a quiet burial at Westminster Abbey. Dickens was famously antagonistic toward elaborate funerals and mourning customs. His May 12 1869 clearly lays out his wishes: 'I emphatically direct that I am buried in an inexpensive, unostentatious, and strictly private manner; that no public announcement be made of the time or place of my burial; that at the utmost not more than three plain mourning coaches be employed; and that those who attend my funeral wear no scarf, cloak, black bow, long hat-band, or other such revolting absurdity' (Kaplan 543).

cemetery: 'the tide of public opinion having taken a favourable turn, the guiding and directing hand of taste is alone wanting to change what has hitherto been the disgrace and deformity of our cities, into one of their principle beauties and attractions' (426).[25] Picton believes that it is possible to construct a cemetery that actually informs and improves the taste of the public. J.C. Loudon's 1843 text, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the improvements of Churchyards*, similarly reveals an interesting merging of morality and spatial economy. He writes,

> The *main object* of a burial-ground is, the disposal of the remains of the dead in such a manner as that their decomposition, and return to the earth from which they sprung, shall not prove injurious to the living; either by affecting their health, or shocking their feelings, opinions, or prejudices. A *secondary object* is, or ought to be, the improvement of the moral sentiments and general taste of all classes, and more especially of the great masses of society. (1)

Loudon is against the use of tombs and vaults, as they prevent the body from returning to the soil, and he goes as far as to suggest that all vaults be cleared out, including those beneath Westminster Abby (45). Instead, Loudon suggests internment in a wooden coffin, in a grave 5-6 feet deep, secure from violation in a place where no previous burials have occurred. Like Picton, Loudon believes that cemeteries can play a role in inspiring good taste and 'might become a school of instruction in architecture, sculpture, landscape-gardening, arboriculture, botany, and in those important parts of general gardening, neatness, order and high keeping' (12-13). In Loudon's view, proper burial

[25] J.A. Picton, 'On Cemeteries' *Architectural Magazine* (September 1837).

practices would be mutually beneficial to both the living and the dead. The dead would decompose without violation, while the living could participate in taste-improving beautification via landscaping and architectural memorials. Loudon hopes to create a space where the organic and built exist in perfect harmony.

Death and architecture meet perfectly in the built structure of the mausoleum.[26] It is a structure that mimics aspects of traditional domestic architecture with its doors, windows, and steps. These familiar features suggest an attempt to assert order over the chaos, to provide texture and tangibility to an unknowable experience. It is a house for the dead, a final architectural enclosure that makes visible Dickens's idea of Death's Doors. James Stevens Curl discusses the architectural history of mausolea and their increasing popularity in the nineteenth century in *A Celebration of Death: An introduction to some of the buildings, monuments, and settings of funerary architecture in the Western European tradition* (1993).[27] Curl defines a mausoleum as: 'a funerary structure, with the character of a roofed building, set aside for the burial of the dead. Such buildings are objects in space, set immutably in the landscape, silent, and grand' (168).[28] Curl links the creation of tombs and mausolea with the idea of habitation: 'Grand mausolea were built, because the dead would be longer in the tomb than in any dwelling during life, so the tomb had to be of

[26] In his book, *Architecture and the After-Life* (1991), Howard Colvin describes the transition of prehistoric tombs from subterranean mounds to mausoleums. The prehistoric tomb, 'buried in its mound, has no exterior other than its entrance [. . .] However large, such a tomb was subterranean in character, whereas the mausoleum of the classical world was an autonomous structure standing above ground and designed to be seen as such' (15). Colvin indicates that this change was 'more than just an architectural one' (15). The prehistoric tomb contained provisions for the afterlife and was designed to protect its inhabitant from any disturbance. In Antiquity, 'the primary purpose of funerary monument was to address the living and to inform them of the rank and achievements of the diseased: in other words, to preserve his memory as well as his physical remains' (15). Tomb architecture moved from the subterranean to the monumental, ultimately resulting in the house-like tombs of the nineteenth century.
[27] See Curl's book, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (1972) for a detailed look at Victorian funeral customs. See also Patricia Jalland, who describes all aspects of dying in the Victorian family in her book, *Death in the Victorian Family* (1996).
[28] Curl explains that 'All mausolea are named after the great tomb built by Queen Artemisia for her husband, Mausolos, at Halicarnassos in the fourth century BC' (168).

some splendour. The dead had to be protected, made comfortable and commemorated, but they also had to be provided with an attractive home so that they would not return to bother the living' (357).[29] As Curl clearly lays out, the earliest mausolea were crafted to extend the idea of habitation into death: the tomb was a 'dwelling' and, ideally, a well 'furnished' and 'attractive home'. Significantly, the tomb had to be well provisioned as well as visually appealing and these preparations imply an expectation of continued consciousness after death and the inability or unwillingness to conceive of an insentient state.[30]

Tombs of the nineteenth century retained their earliest association with habitation and Curl emphasises the house-like architecture of mausolea by an extended exploration of Paris' Père-Lachaise Cemetery, established in 1804. Curl states, 'By far the commonest type of mausoleum in Père-Lachaise is the little house-tomb' (164). Curl's description of a mausoleum as a 'little house tomb' is an image that resonates with Dickens's novel and his creative representation of house-tomb metaphors to represent the domestic habitations of many of his *Bleak House* characters. Curl continues,

> The cemetery of Père-Lachaise has an urban quality, with paved streets lined with house-tombs. The streets are named and signed, with cast-iron street furniture similar to that of streets in the cities of the living. The urban flavour is enhanced by the detached mausolea, like villas, with their neat front doors. (159-160)

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[29] See Curl page 212 for a fascinating illustration of Thomas Wilson's 1824 design for a giant pyramid tomb. Wilson's tomb would have held five million bodies but his plan was not accepted. See also Wilson 'The Pyramid: A General Metropolitan Cemetery to be Erected in the Vicinity of Primrose Hill' (1830).

[30] Dickens offers his thoughts on this very idea when he ruminates on consciousness and enclosure by contrasting the abilities of Tulkinghorn dead in his hearse and highly alert Inspector Bucket sitting in his carriage. Describing Tulkinghorn's body as 'the sacked depository of noble secrets' (744), the narrator ponders, 'Where are all those secrets now? Does he keep them yet? Did they fly with him on that sudden journey?' (744).

These tombs, with their 'neat front doors', give observers the impression of opening and closing and retaining the capacity to exercise hospitality, an architecturalised representation of taking up residence in the realm of the dead.

Esther's use of architecture as a death medium can be tied to the psychological component of funerary architecture and the tendency to anticipate death as a stage of habitation with recognisable architectural features. Cemetery designers were thinking along the same lines and encouraging familiarity by association of tomb with home. Esther, already thinking through death and architecture advances this connection as a sophisticated literary device in her narrative. Describing the suburban cemeteries of London, Samantha Matthews writes,

> Its internal organisation and infrastructure signalled its parallel identity as a microcosm of urban society, perpetuating divisions of religion, wealth and class. Like the city, the cemetery has a network of named roads, and plots are allocated on a grid. (268)

The layout of these cemeteries 'humanized' the area, making it navigable and approachable. In addition, architectural aspirations applied to both the living and the dead, as 'the arrangement of graves dictated further social stratification: the most expensive plots were prominently located on main avenues, junctions, or near major architectural features' (269). Finally,

> Just as wealthy, fashionable Londoners had grand houses in prestigious districts, so they commissioned unique mausoleums at prominent locations in the cemetery: the mausoleum – a roofed tomb resembling a temple or house – further connoted the aristocratic country estates where it originated, enshrining the high social status and wealth of the commemorated family.

> Correspondingly, middle-class citizens chose modest houses in suburban terraces, and modest headstones with formulaic inscriptions from the masons' pattern book. (269)

The real estate of the dead reflected their inhabitants' living homes and these mausolea indicate the desire to maintain status and continue to exert influence after death.[31] Dickens signals this eventuality by envisioning the domestic homes of his characters through various tomb and burial metaphors. These house-tomb metaphors anticipate death and burial, signify inescapable mortality, and remind the reader of the progression of the human body within architectural enclosures.

Through the emphasis on burial and internment in the novel, Dickens challenges his reader to think about the fate of their physical body and the inevitability of death and decomposition. Where will the reader's body be housed after death? Will it join the surging chaos of the burying ground or be kept apart in a tomb with architectural features reminiscent of a house? Will it be handled roughly or with care? Will it be exposed to dismissive eyes or closeted in privacy? This is the historical context Dickens was writing in and this is what informs the urgent questions that undergird the mortal aesthetics of the novel. Dickens suggests that the discomfort surrounding these questions contributes to the human tendency to consider death as a form of habitation. By architecturalising a major life event (death), Dickens draws on the universality of architecture to express this major transition. Like Bachelard who explores

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[31] Colvin includes a fascinating discussion of the architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837), who famously collected antiquities and obtained the Seti sarcophagus in 1825. Colvin writes, 'in England the outstanding exponent of the sepulchral in architecture was Sir John Soane. Soane's life-long preoccupation with what Sir John Summerson has called "the furniture of death" is well-attested' (358). Colvin continues, 'Although Soane did not choose, like Desenfans, actually to be buried in a domestic mausoleum, it is in his house that his predilection for funerary themes is most strikingly apparent' (360). Soane designed his wife's tomb and was later buried with her. See also Chris Willis, 'A House for the Dead: Victorian Mausolea and Graveyard Gothic' (2003) pg. 157 for examples of noteworthy mausolea.

metaphors based on the home as foundational and linked to the author's literary imagination, Dickens deploys a heroine who sees death everywhere and cannot separate habitation from the idea of entombment.

Death is brought to the forefront of the novel as Dickens represents the domestic homes of many of his characters as anticipating tombs – a truth Esther must navigate and then convey in her narrative. As Sanders writes, 'With the exception of Bleak House itself, all the novel's settings share the dreadful mortality and hopelessness of the burial-ground. The deadness, and the moral and spiritual emptiness, is also shared by many of the characters' (150). I would not except Bleak House from this connection with death and would actually argue that the history of Bleak House provides one of the most significant examples of a house embodying the hopelessness of the burying ground. van Buren Kelley writes, 'of all the examples of cheerless households scattered throughout the novel, Bleak House itself is in fact the least bleak' (253). And Alexander Welsh states, 'Bleak House, the place in the novel, is not that bleak' (2). Scholars have also discussed the title of the novel, drawing attention to the fact that it is Dickens's only novel named after a household (Welsh, van Buren Kelley, Pritchard).[32] van Buren Kelley writes, 'With *Bleak House* so full of dreary houses, it is significant that Dickens chose to call his book after a house that is bleak in name only. From the very moment it is introduced, Bleak House presents a picture of laughter, sunlight, and color' (264). While Bleak House ranks third for brightness in my mind after Boythorn's cheerful residence and the warm domesticity of the Bagnet family, it nevertheless retains a distinct association with death: while Bleak House appears cheerful as it stands, it is

[32] Alexander Welsh lists the different titles for the novel considered by Dickens: Tom-all-Alone's, The Ruined House, Bleak House Academy, The East Wind, Bleak House/and the East Wind/How they both got into Chancery/and never got out (2). Welsh claims, 'The swift compression of the title, a poetic act in itself, reflects Dickens's confidence and daring at this time' (2).

important to remember that it retains a dark history of a suicidal previous owner who allowed the house to succumb to a state of architectural decay mirroring his own mental deterioration. As mentioned previously, Jarndyce's uncle allowed the structure to become dilapidated before committing suicide, and Jarndyce tells Esther, 'When I brought what remained of him home here, the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined' (109). This is an extremely powerful representation of mental disintegration, encapsulating suffering, despair, and suicide, while simultaneously illustrating the house/body link that is so intrinsic to the novel, as the house itself mirrors its inhabitant's mental deterioration. Esther internalises the association of the architecture surrounding her with death and capitalises on the narrative potential of the house-tomb metaphor for the remainder of her account. Significantly, the house is also bleak because Esther lives there, and she brings death with her, psychologically speaking. As a result of Esther's death-inflected vision, Esther sees death everywhere and writes about death constantly.

For Esther, the domestic architecture she encounters represents anticipating tombs and unavoidable enclosures for the dead and she expresses this fact directly in her narrative. For example, Esther includes two death-tinged descriptions of the architectural enclosures inhabited by her parents prior to their death and imprints her grief onto these structures. Esther briefly glances into the room that belonged, unbeknownst to her, to her father. Looking in, she recalls, 'A sad and desolate place it was; a gloomy, sorrowful place, that gave me a strange sensation of mournfulness and even dread' (214). Without giving away the mystery surrounding her parentage, Esther expresses the sadness of never knowing her father. Similarly, Esther infuses her lengthy description of

Chesney Wold's exterior with images of tranquil peace and 'undisturbed repose' (265), words with intrinsic death associations. Esther cannot divorce her knowledge of her mother's premature death, and the trauma of discovering her lifeless and exposed body, from her description of her mother's home.

When Esther enters the brickmaker's cottage, she is immediately aware that she is trespassing on a family's grief. The angry brickmaker shouts at the obnoxious do-gooder Mrs Pardiggle, saying of his cottage, 'Yes, it is dirty – its nat'rally dirty, and its nat'rally unwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides' (121). In *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery*, Chris Brooks discusses the threat imposed by the 'resurrection men' prior to the Dissection Act of 1832. Brooks writes, 'They constituted a sacrilegious attack upon the pieties of sentiment, upon the contemplative tomb, upon the domesticated dead. Body-snatching violated the security of the beloved grave, and dissection violated the intactness of the beloved body' (6). The 'domesticated dead' is a significant phrase, connecting death with habitation. Brooks returns to this idea when illustrating the spread of disease: 'In the single rooms occupied by working-class families, the dead were literally, not metaphorically, domesticated, and continuity between the living and the dead was forged not by affection but by infection' (35). The brickmaker's cottage is a prime example of the domestication of the dead, as it doubles as a temporary tomb for the family's dead infants.

In the midst of both literal and metaphoric burial, Esther inserts a symbolic undertaker. Vholes acts as the premature funeral director on the scene, overseeing Richard's death from a place of detachment and making money from it. As Sanders states, 'Vholes becomes the appropriate companion

for Richard's steady journey to the grave' (154). Esther describes Vohles as 'Dressed in black, black-gloved, and buttoned to the chin, there was nothing so remarkable in him as a lifeless manner' (560). Later, she describes him as 'So slow, so eager, so bloodless and gaunt. I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this advisor, and there were something of the Vampire in him' (854). Esther recalls Vholes' 'cold-blooded, grasping' (642) manner and 'his funeral gloves' (644) and 'his dead glove' (645). The reader, if not Richard, is aware that nothing good can come of the young man's association with the lawyer.

Esther indicates that Richard's fatal association with his lawyer infiltrates his own lodgings. When Esther and Ada visit Richard, 'we came to Richard's name in great white letters on a hearse-like panel' (724). Esther notes the 'musty rotting silence of the house' (730) and recalls, 'I put my lips to the hearse-like panel of the door' (730). Esther's narrative method ensures that readers cannot fail to note that Esther's foreknowledge of events colours her vision of the architecture surrounding Richard. Here, at the end of the novel, Esther deploys these death metaphors with creative confidence, utilising architecture to its fullest metaphoric potential and revealing to the reader that her portion of the narrative is intimate and psychologically revealing. Esther's death-inflected vision, where the architecture of the past becomes mutable, highlights Dickens's psychological realism aims for his novel.

Esther cannot seem to write about life without the shadow of death creeping in, even when describing her own avowed happiness with her husband and two daughters. Esther recalls her first vision of the New Bleak House, writing that it was 'a cottage, quite a rustic cottage of doll's rooms' (888). At this moment the novel comes full circle around dolls as we recall Esther's

confession that she buried her own doll before departing her aunt/godmother's house (31). What then does this dollhouse image say about how Esther thinks about her own ending? I find that by describing the New Bleak House in these terms, Esther seems to be writing her own death scene. She dies for the reader before her actual death and we follow her into the New Bleak House but no further. Esther writes herself into this final space and then concludes her narrative on a tangent, abruptly severing her connection with the reader. The last words of the novel read as last words in the most definitive sense: 'they can very well do without much beauty in me – even supposing – ' (914).

The final words of the novel also represent the death of Esther's vocation. She has answered the call to write, even though from early in the novel Esther reveals that she is unsure of her intended readership. This is an unusual position for any author and one she reiterates at the conclusion of the novel:

> The few words that I have to add to what I have written, are soon penned; then I, and the unknown friend to whom I write, will part forever. Not without much dear remembrance on my side. Not without some, I hope, on his or hers. (910)

By mentioning the unknown gender of her reader, Esther is specific about the mystery of her imagined readership. Is this 'unknown friend' intended to indicate the organiser of the project or to denote any reader who later encounters her writing? Despite not knowing her readers, Esther says that she will maintain 'much dear remembrance on my side', a comment that by extension seems to apply more to the act of writing and the work in which she has been engaged. Esther has certainly enjoyed her task, but that task has now ended and Esther gives no indication that writing will be a part of her life in the future. This one-

time opportunity raises the stakes for Esther: she must writer herself into the fabric of this narrative now or never, and this knowledge results in a distillation of her subjectivity.

Esther organises her narrative as a tour through various Death's Doors and consequently reveals her dark vision of the architecture she encounters. From the unique structure of Bleak House to the grandeur of Chesney Wold, Nemo's abandoned room to Vohles's office, everything appears funereal to Esther. By building up these death-inflected architectural enclosures for her reader, Esther simultaneously expresses qualities of her own mental interior and psychological health. Dickens actively turns to architecture as a psychological intermediary and allows his heroine to construct her own psychological profile through her representation of architecture in her narrative.

Conclusion

It is instructive by way of a conclusion to turn again to G.A. Walker and *Gatherings from Graveyards*. In an effort to understand contemporary man's treatment of the dead, Walker writes that, 'while every man readily sympathizes with others, at the disturbance of their dead; he believes his own depository secure, and his future repose inviolable' (190). Walker here indicates the lack of control people truly possess over their bodies. The self-delusion he suggests prevents people from fully considering their own mortality and the subsequent vulnerability of their body is impossible in *Bleak House*, as Dickens anticipates death by creating habitable house-tombs for the living. In this way, Dickens goes beyond a disturbing illustration of the state of London's burying grounds to explore the continuum of the human experience within enclosures. This interest appears prominently in later essays, such as 'Travelling Abroad' and 'Some Recollections of Mortality', in which Dickens describes his encounter with the

Paris morgue. In the essay 'Travelling Abroad' from *Uncommercial Traveller* (1861), Dickens describes his uncontrollable attraction to the Paris morgue, where bodies were put on display for public viewing. He writes,

> Whenever I am at Paris, I am dragged by invisible force into the Morgue. I never want to go there, but am always pulled there. One Christmas Day, when I would rather have been anywhere else, I was attracted in, to see an old gray man lying all alone on his cold bed. (96)

Discussing Dickens's fascination with the Paris morgue evinced in these essays, Paul Schlicke makes an compelling point when he notes that Dickens's trips to the Paris morgue 'may be linked less to an obsessive interest in exposed corpses than to an habitual concern with houselessness and lack of community' (149). Sanders suggests, 'He is disturbed […] by the vacancy and loneliness of death in a public place' (48) as the bodies at the morgue 'were displaced and lacking in human context' (48). The unidentified remains at the morgue are houseless in an unsettling way, especially considering the middle-class tradition of 'domesticating the dead' and displaying a body within the home for days.

In his efforts exploring mortality via architecture, Dickens deploys a narrator with a similar interest in penetrating the house of the dead. Like Dickens visiting the Paris morgue, Esther enters, encounters, observes, and re-emerges from various death houses to write about her experiences. For Esther, as well as Dickens, there is something enlivening about these brushes with death and they have a distinct creative impact on the novel. After discovering her mother's body surrounded by houses but nevertheless exposed, Esther turns to write a narrative saturated with architectural detail. The texture and

tangibility of architecture provides her with the material vehicle to describe character, represent psychological health, foreshadow, and assert narrative authority. Ultimately, though, what underlies the majority of these architectural descriptions is the sense that Esther strives to represent the inevitability of death and burial and the accompanying psychological impact of this knowledge. It is essential to Dickens's realist portrayal of human mortality that he employ a narrator who, as a self-aware participant in this trajectory, endeavours to write about this fact even as she represents architectural structures temporarily animated by their inhabitant. Esther links the domestic home with the tomb, the tomb with the home, and relentlessly reminds her reader that 'every door might be Death's Door'.

This chapter has illustrated how Dickens's representation of death and burial in *Bleak House* goes beyond a critique of the condition of London's burying grounds and cemeteries to contribute a new perspective on Esther and her outlook. While she might claim to be cheerful and content, this chapter picks at the seams of these claims and foregrounds her technique of repeatedly yoking architecture with death in her narrative. This chapter has taken issue with scholarship that considers Esther as primarily a vessel for the relaying of more interesting characters and events, 'serving as a conduit for a bundle of other stories' (Frazee 234) and existing as 'a space of willed unconsciousness rather than a character' (Danahay 429). A careful analysis of architecture as represented by Esther reveals that she is a careful and skilled architectural reporter. At the same time, she knows how to utilise architecture as a mutable vehicle to accomplish her narrative aims. Finally, by projecting her death-inflected vision onto the architecture she describes, Esther reveals qualities of her own psychological profile. Far from vacuous and trite, Esther is a dark

figure, a harbinger of death who takes it upon herself to remind her readers of their own inescapable mortality at every turn.

2. Dwelling in the Heart-Shrine: Lucy Snowe as Creative Architect and Unconventional Homemaker in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*

Architecture is the only art object we actually live in. However, we live in another construction – we do not commonly call it art – also of our making: consciousness.

-Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture*

Introduction

On 23 May 1850 Charlotte Brontë responded to a letter written by an admirer of her work, writing of her heroines:

> If they cannot make themselves at home in a thoughtful, sympathetic mind, and diffuse through its twilight a cheering, domestic glow, it is their fault; they are not, in that case, so amiable, so benignant, not so *real* as they ought to be. If they *can*, and can find household altars in human hearts, they will fulfill the best design of their creation, in therein maintaining a genial flame, which shall warm but not scorch, light but not dazzle. (Gaskell 345)

Brontë gives her readers' encounter with her literary work three-dimensionality as she envisions her heroines taking up residence within her readers' minds and hearts. Describing this habitation through a distinctly domestic framework, Brontë indicates that she strives for her heroines to be 'at home' within the minds of her readers, not only comfortably belonging in that space but also influencing it, emanating 'a cheering, domestic glow'. Brontë suggests that if her heroines can successfully lodge themselves within the minds of her readers, they will simultaneously gain access to 'household altars in human hearts'. A household altar, a sacred space within the home, is a place of private worship and reverential devotion. If her heroines can enter this intimate space, Brontë

expects them to diffuse a comfortable quantity of warmth and light. She connects these two parts of the body, often treated as dichotomous, suggesting that it is equally important to influence both the hearts and the minds of her readers. Brontë creates expansive space within the physiological body with these intimate, domestic metaphors and suggests that if her heroines cannot exist within these places, given form through domestic architecture, they are 'not so real as they ought to be'.[1] In her letter, Brontë associates her literary realism with mental habitation and the idea that her heroines aspire to dwell within her readers and become domesticated within their minds. Thus, her conceptualisation of realism is linked with the aim of her heroines' continued existence outside of her novels, carried within her readers, taking up residence and exerting a subtle influence. Brontë reveals that she is interested in using architectural metaphor to explore the intimate connections existing between architecture, narrativity, subjectivity, and the realist aesthetic.

In describing her realist aims in her letter, Brontë employs the literary technique I discussed in the introduction to this thesis: 'architectural internalisation'. I argue that this technique, whereby an organ of the human body or a thought or emotion contained within that organ is described metaphorically in architectural terms, allowed Brontë to provide, to use Ellen Eve Frank's term, 'spatial extension' to intangible thoughts and emotions. Through this technique, Brontë and the other novelists of this study merge the organic with the built, using architectural metaphor to create a tangible and navigable space within the human body. The architectural internalisation technique enhances the psychological realism of these novels, substantiating a

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[1] Brontë is certainly not the first to use the body as building metaphor. In her book, *Relics of death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), Deborah Lutz mentions the popular middle ages conception of the mind as a shrine containing relics: 'This sense of the mind as a mansion with many rooms continued through the nineteenth century and can still be encountered today' (111).

character's thoughts and emotions while simultaneously illustrating a heroine's impulse to create these structures for herself, to provide fitting architectural enclosures for her own thoughts and emotions. As Brontë hopes that her heroines will build up an architectural dwelling within her readers, certain Brontë heroines similarly employ the architectural internalisation technique to convey their subjectivity, providing readers with unprecedented access to their thoughts and emotions. At the same time, architectural internalisation allows heroines to capitalise on the creative and expansive potential of architectural metaphors as they bring their story to life via creative literary architecture.

This chapter provides an analysis of the mode of narration employed by Lucy Snowe, the heroine and first-person narrator of Brontë's novel, *Villette* (1853). In this chapter I will be referring to Lucy as both a narrator and a fictional author. After going to confession, Lucy says that if she had met with the priest a second time 'I might just now, instead of writing this heretic narrative, be counting my beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent on the Boulevard of Crécy in Villette' (155). Lucy makes it clear that she is not just speaking to an audience, but is creating a written record of her life. Lucy, like Dickens's Esther Summerson, writes and narrates a first-person account structured around architecture as a psychologically-revealing vehicle.[2] As Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz writes of Lucy, 'She portrays herself as an observer, who is supposedly silent and isolated […] Yet she has written the book we are reading, and controlled use of language is important to her throughout' (249). This chapter is interested in the idea of Lucy Snowe as fictional author and examines

[2] As Robert Newsome, Eleanor Salotto, and Jean Blackall all note, Brontë was not impressed with Esther. In her only comment on the novel, after reading the first four chapters, Brontë writes to her publisher, George Smith, 'I like the Chancery part, but when it passes into the autobiographic form, and the young woman who announces that she is not "bright" begins her history, it seems to me too often weak and twaddling; an amiable nature is caricatured, not faithfully rendered, in Miss Esther Summerson' (11 March 1852. *SHB*, III, 322).

the way in which she enacts her own form of realism in her first-person narrative through architecturally-based strategies. As we will see, Lucy employs the architectural internalisation technique, similarly building sacred heart and mind spaces and striving for that access, intimacy, and belonging that Brontë describes in her letter. Writing years after the events she details, Lucy uses architecture confidently to depict the struggles of her past and her narrative voice gains authority through architecture. She constructs her own subjectivity and should be understood as a builder of creative architecture rather than merely a victim of confining and pre-existing architectural enclosures.

In the previous chapter I explored Esther's particular death-inflected vision and how that vision materialises in her first-person narrative through her description of the architecture she encounters in the built environment world of the novel. I also discussed Esther's use of architecturally-based strategies to express her narrative authority and give voice to her own psychological profile. In *Villette*, Brontë gives us a heroine who is similarly attuned to her architectural surroundings. In her first-person narrative, Lucy represents both real and imagined architectural interiors, describing the physical world of her built environment but also employing the architectural internalisation technique to construct intimate interior spaces invisible in the physical world of the novel. As we will see in this chapter, Lucy's creative architecture builds on the materiality of the body: she expands heart chambers and brain compartments, merging physiological descriptions with expansive, internalised architecture, while also having characters take up lodging in these imagined spaces. Through the conduit of architecture and by merging the visual registers of the organic with the built, Lucy employs material-based imagery to further the psychological and

emotional realism of her narrative. Architectural metaphor, then, is vital to the self-expression of both Brontë and her heroine.

Throughout the novel, Lucy Snowe recounts her painful past with recourse to various images of containment and enclosure. Architectural images such as the prison, tomb, and cell thus become intrinsic to Brontë's exploration of her heroine's subjectivity, as Lucy vocalises her world and her position in that world through architecture. Nevertheless, scholarship addressing the architectural metaphors of *Villette* tends to approach them as extremely limiting and either linked with Lucy's isolation, depression, and secrecy, or attributed to an unconscious result of Brontë's own psychological disturbance (Gilbert and Gubar, Lucasta Miller). These studies miss the opportunity to explore the idea of architecture as expansive and architectural internalisation as a technique for ordering the mind and for providing tangibility to thoughts and emotions. Additionally, Lucy's expansive brand of architectural internalisation affords the means by which a homeless heroine creates a tangible space to think of as home: throughout the novel Lucy constructs her own alternative and portable homespaces. This chapter proposes that a detailed examination of these powerful architectural metaphors serves to open up the way in which Brontë crafts a form of realist subjectivity that coheres around a particular kind of spatial economy. In *Villette*, we see architectural metaphors enable Brontë to indicate that her heroine's subjectivity in this realist novel is generated by creative manipulation of the architectural features encountered in the built environment.

Historically, there has been the critical consensus that Brontë's realism is quotidian, constraining, and based on her own isolated life. Certain scholarship pointedly distances Brontë from the artistic work of her novels, while this

chapter argues for a focus on the expansive, creative potential of the architectural internalisation technique purposely employed by Brontë to provide her readers with direct access to the internal lives of her characters. In his revealingly titled review, 'Charlotte Brontë as a "Freak Genius"' (1934), Cecil differentiates Brontë's work from that of Joyce and Proust, arguing that Brontë has neither the interest nor 'the detachment necessary' to examine 'the inner life' of her characters (167). Cecil suggests that Brontë's heroines 'do not try to disentangle the chaos of their consciousness, they do not analyse their emotions or motives' (167). He continues:

> Fundamentally, her principal characters are all the same person; and that is Charlotte Brontë. Her range is confined, not only to a direct expression of an individual's emotions and impressions, but to a direct expression of Charlotte Brontë's emotions and impressions. In this, her final limitation, we come indeed to the distinguishing fact of her character as a novelist. The world she creates is the world of her own inner life; she is her own subject. (167-168)

The review is dated, clearly, but it bears citing since it sets the stage for decades of scholarship that has gone on to claim likewise that Brontë's creative work is limited to self-replication. Forty years later, Charles Burkhart makes a similarly inaccurate statement when he writes of *Villette*: 'Though Charlotte *is* Lucy Snowe to a great extent, maturity has brought self-knowledge, to the extent that she can make fun of her new heroine in a way she never did of Jane Eyre' (97). These studies reveal a resistance to the idea that a female author could tell the story of a female character without either consciously or unconsciously transcribing her own thoughts and experiences onto that

character. Matthew Arnold, who famously disliked *Villette*, exemplifies this dismissive tendency. Arnold writes in a 14 April 1853 letter to Mrs Forster, 'Why is *Villette* disagreeable? Because the writer's mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage, and therefore that is all she can, in fact put into her book. No fine writing can hide this thoroughly, and it will be fatal to her in the long run' (Allott 201). While Arnold seriously underestimates Brontë and her abilities, he does hit on significant aspects of Lucy's character. Brontë does endow her heroine with 'hunger, rebellion, and rage' not, as has been so frequently claimed by scholars over the years, as an unconscious outpouring of her own psyche onto the page, but as a foundational aspect of her realist portrayal of one woman's subjectivity. Lucy does not need to be likeable for Brontë to be successful.

In *The Brontë Myth* (2003), Lucasta Miller endeavours to shed light on the mythification of the Brontë family and their literary work stemming largely from Elizabeth Gaskell's influential biography of Charlotte.[3] While attempting to free the Brontës from their mythic, otherworldly status, Miller nevertheless perpetuates the idea of Charlotte Brontë's work as a reflection of her psyche, rather than her own intentional creative art. In discussing Brontë's knowledge that *Villette* would be published without the cover of a pen name, Miller states: 'It says much for her courage that she resolutely followed her artistic instincts and returned to the intense autobiographical aesthetic that had animated *Jane Eyre*, digging into the painful depths of her own psyche for material' (52). Miller then reiterates: 'It is amazing that, despite the loss of her anonymity, she was

[3] Juliet Barker also addresses the subject of Brontë mythification in her essay, 'The Haworth Context', in which she argues: 'The problem with Gaskell's description of Haworth was that it was almost a hundred years out of date. Haworth was not a small rural village but a busy industrial township. Even though the Brontë's themselves pandered to the idea that they lived in rural and social isolation, this was simply not the case' (15).

still willing to use the darker recesses of her own interior life as the starting point for her creative visions' (55).

In *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality* (1984), John Maynard addresses and critiques similar psychologically-driven readings of Brontë's novels. He writes of many psychological studies of Brontë's work that 'they have regularly encouraged readers of Brontë to interpret her sexual and psychological insights not as a major aspect of her art but as the controlling drama of her own inner life spilling over into her writing' (31). Maynard makes a broader gendered critique through his analysis of the scholarly treatment of Brontë, arguing that

> The tendency to jump to simplistic and reductionist psychological *dicta* has also been abetted in the study of Brontë by prejudice as well: prejudice against writers, Victorians, and in a special way, against women. There has been the assumption, so often explicit or implicit in psychological studies of writers, that all artists are not so much privileged seers as psychological cripples, struggling in their work to escape their neuroses as a fly from amber. (33)

What gets lost by reading Brontë's work as that of a 'psychological cripple' instead of a 'privileged seer' is Brontë's own psychological explorations, masterfully accomplished in *Villette.* In fact, *Villette* is precisely about such a struggle. As Maynard writes, 'Brontë's method is ideally suited to her intention, to bring us as fully as possible within the mind, even the stream of consciousness, of the central narrator-character while at the same time allowing us to see that character's life and fate in an objective, realistic vision' (166). What becomes interesting is the extent to which architecture figures in Brontë's method: in *Villette*, Brontë creates a stunning psychological portrait of anxiety

and depression, yet also shows how her heroine triumphs through the creative act of writing a first-person narrative that relies on architectural imagery.

Like Maynard, Sally Shuttleworth also discusses the problematic psychological studies of Brontë, making the significant point that,

> The traditional critical image of Charlotte Brontë is that of an intuitive genius who seems to belong more to the Freudian than to the Victorian era. In this double displacement of history, both Brontë and Freud are placed in a vacuum: Brontë is given powers of prophecy, and Freud is endowed with supreme originating authority. (1)

Rather than suggesting that Brontë anticipates the work of Freud in her portrayal of the mind, Brontë's own accomplishment of crafting a realist psychological portrait of her heroine that relies on the architectural register should be examined. In differentiating Brontë's work from other Victorian novelists who display an interest in psychology, Shuttleworth writes that Brontë's fiction 'draws its imaginative energy from the ways in which it wrestles with cultural contradiction, operating always within the terms of Victorian thought, but giving rise, ultimately, to new ways of expressing and conceptualizing the embodied self' (6). This chapter argues that Brontë conceptualises the self through various structural touchstones that convey her heroine's realist subjectivity. Lucy herself then employs architectural metaphors to construct her narrative and craft creative spaces to house her recollection of her past thoughts and emotions.

While a great deal has changed in Brontë scholarship in the roughly thirty years since John Maynard's book has been published, the tendency to consider Lucy a helpless, repressed victim of circumstance is resilient. For example,

critics frequently describe Lucy's mind and emotions as labyrinthine, yet she herself uses familiar examples of easily navigable architectural metaphors to make herself understood. Mark Hennelly attributes 'the labyrinth of Lucy's own desires' with her 'uncanny womb-tomb fantasies' (428). Marilyn Faulkenburg describes the 'ambiguities that characterize the psychological labyrinth in which Lucy finds herself' (36). Nicholas Dames offers a phrenological reading of *Villette* in his article 'The Clinical Novel: Phrenology and *Villette*' (1996). He argues that 'Brontë's novel is continually frustrating our searches for the significances of depth, refusing to act as analysand to our analytic probings for interiority' (369). I would argue the complete opposite: images of depth and enclosure are of vital significance to the novel as Brontë gives shape to Lucy's emotional and psychological interior through architecture.

Lucy Snowe is often considered critically as a victim of society and patriarchy, a helpless social object confined and limited by patriarchal oppression. Such criticism is frequently founded on Lucy's relegation to small, constrictive architectural enclosures. But Lucy has been misread by scholarship that addresses architecture in *Villette* only in terms of architectural victimisation. This understanding of Lucy appears in some explicitly feminist criticism that views Brontë's heroine as a repressed and imprisoned victim of her own life. Yet this is not how Lucy understands herself. She expresses her awareness of the social possibilities and various occupations available to her. She knows that she is not a lady's companion, not a governess, and certainly not a push over.[4]

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[4] Lucy understands that her fate is in her own hands, telling her readers 'there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look' (32). Lucy knows her own limits and loathes the idea of becoming a private governess: 'To be either a private governess or a companion was unnatural to me. Rather than fill that former post in any great house I would deliberately have taken a housemaid's place, bought a strong pair of gloves, swept bedrooms and staircases, and cleaned stoves and locks, in peace and independence. Rather than be a companion, I would have made shirts, and starved' (286). She claims, 'I was no bright lady's shadow' (286). In a 15 April 1839 letter Brontë describes her similar preference for jobs relating to housework over companionship: 'By the way, I have lately discovered I have quite a talent for

While frequently depressed and isolated, Lucy nevertheless celebrates her own strength throughout the novel, simultaneously drawing attention to her creative power as an author and narrator via the architectural imagery through which she recounts her emotional past. In their landmark work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that in nineteenth-century literature, 'imagery of enclosure reflects the woman writer's own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear that she inhabits alien and incomprehensible places' (84). Consequently, 'Women authors […] reflect the literal reality of their own confinement in the constraints they depict, and so all at least begin with the same unconscious and conscious purpose in employing such spatial imagery' (87). But enclosure imagery in *Villette*, far from necessarily being symptomatic of Brontë's 'discomfort' or 'powerlessness' as Gilbert and Gubar suggest, in fact represents authorial assertiveness, as Brontë empowers her heroine to react creatively to the marginal spaces she experiences by internalising familiar architectural imagery while also providing limitless spatial extension.

Lucy has also been discussed critically as a Foucauldian subject, as both self-policing and restricted by architecture. Accordingly, a great deal has been written on the persistent motif of surveillance pervading *Villette* (Hennelly Jr., Palmer, Shaw), most famously Sally Shuttleworth in *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996), in a section titled '*Villette*: "the surveillance of a sleepless eye"'. Shuttleworth argues,

> The text of *Villette* is dominated by the practice of surveillance. The constant self-surveillance and concealment that marks Lucy's

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cleaning, sweeping up hearths, dusting rooms, making beds, &c.; so, if everything else fails, I can turn my hand to that, if anybody would give me good wages for little labour. I won't be a cook; I hate cooking. I won't be a nurserymaid, nor a lady's maid, far less a lady's companion […] I won't be anything but a housemaid' (Gaskell 135).

> own narrative account, is figured socially in the institutional practices of those who surround her. All characters spy on others, attempting, covertly, to read and interpret the external signs of faces, minds, and actions. (219-220)

Shuttleworth continues: '*Villette*, indeed, with its obsessional concern with surveillance, fits almost too perfectly into the paradigm of nineteenth-century social control outlined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*' (222). Yet far less has been written about the reaction of Brontë's narrator both to the surveillance and the marginal, confining, architectural spaces she experiences throughout the novel**.** For example, in his article, 'Depolicing *Villette*: Surveillance, Invisibility, and the Female Erotics of "Heretic Narrative"', Joseph A. Boone suggests that *Villette* 'foreshadows, more than a century in advance, Michel Foucault's theories of nineteenth-century social discipline' (20). Boone's essay notes 'the many forms that the Panopticon takes in *Villette*' (21) such as M.Paul's observation post (21), Madame Beck's invisible surveillance and even Lucy's view from the nursery (23).[5] He states, 'for if ever there was a novel filled with spying eyes, knowing gazes, and significant glances, it is *Villette*' (21-22). After mentioning Lucy's room at Miss Marchmont's house, the walled in pensionnat, and the image of solitary confinement, Boone states:

> complementing surveillance as a mode of social control is the everpresent threat of imprisonment or incarceration, which is manifest throughout *Villette* in the series of stifling enclosures that mark Lucy's precarious negotiation of the competing paths of desire and duty, of expression and repression. One might simply

[5] See Jeremy Bentham's 1791 text *Panopticon; or The Inspection House*. See pg. 200 for a description of the panopticon in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977).

> tally all the images of constriction or internment that characterize Lucy's various living abodes. (26)

While much has been made of Lucy's various modest living environments and the impact of surveillance on Lucy's psyche, the creation of a narrative technique, Lucy's impulse to imagine safe and protected architectural space in her writing, has largely gone unremarked. Lucy undoubtedly inhabits distinctly constrictive spaces throughout the novel – the guestroom, the closet, the cell, and the attic – yet significantly, her response is to create architectural expansion in her narrative.

While *Villette* is a popular novel for Foucauldian and panoptical readings interested in the idea of policing through architecture, this chapter will look at Lucy's own architectural eye instead of the eye of surveillance that has been the subject of much of the novel's criticism. By imaging Lucy as physically writing down the events recounted in her first person narration, Brontë empowers her heroine as a creator when Lucy appears to lack the materials to change or influence the world around her: Lucy is a creative surveyor herself in architectural terms and her conceptualisation of subjectivity is more about negotiating a creative form of architecture, both real and imagined. As mentioned in this project's introduction, Caroline Levine's recent work on forms examines social and aesthetic forms and explores the ways in which they interact. In *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015) she writes, 'While it is true that boundaries, such as those around nations and convents, do indeed confine and imprison, expel and exclude, they can also be put to use to disrupt the controlling power of other bounded shapes, the encounters themselves providing opportunities for new and emancipatory social formations' (45). Levine discusses the 1298 doctrine of *clausura*, instituted by Pope

Boniface the VIII, which decreed that religious women must be strictly cloistered. Her analysis has surprising bearing on *Villette*, as she reveals through the example of the convent that constraints can also indicate centrality:

> Since the Church favored restricted and inaccessible places, the forcibly enclosed nuns could make persuasive claims to unique spiritual power and a feminine religious superiority. To be precise, the boundaries of the convent afforded imprisonment *and* centrality. They enacted both affordances at once. If we have tended to assume that bounded shapes always contain in the same oppressive ways and must therefore always be shattered, here we see how two bounded shapes, so similar that they could share the same literal form, did not reinforce or consolidate each other, but rather overlapped in a way that yielded an unsettling political effect. (37-38)

Levine sheds light on the tendency to look at 'bounded shapes' as oppressive, limiting our understanding of their 'affordances' (6). This chapter examines Brontë's appreciation of architectural affordances in her novel, in particular architecture's inherent duality: it can simultaneously be constructive and confining, protecting and concealing, expressive and enclosing. This chapter will return to Levine's work in the final section for a discussion of the significance of the image of the shrine for *Villette* and the expansive potential of the 'bounded shapes' created by Brontë in her novel.

My argument that Lucy provides her reader with exceptional access to her thoughts and emotions is at odds with the bulk of scholarship that discusses Lucy as a guarded and withdrawn narrator. This scholarship emphasises Lucy's evasions and suggests that, much like Esther Summerson, she is a secretive

and even unreliable narrator. In her article, '"Faithful Narrator" or "Partial Eulogist": First-Person Narration in Brontë's *Villette*', Rabinowitz argues that 'While Jane is a trustworthy narrator of her own life, at crucial points Lucy deceives us' (244). She goes on to say that, on a few occasions, Lucy 'withholds information with the intention of misleading us' (245).[6] Mary Jacobus argues that Lucy's 'deliberate ruses, omissions, and falsifications break the unwritten contract of first-person narrative (the confidence between reader and "I") and unsettle our faith in the reliability of the text' (229). Shuttleworth describes Lucy's 'excessive commitment to concealment, from her self, her readers and the external world' (228). Gilbert and Gubar discuss 'Lucy's evasions as a narrator' (419). They also suggest that 'The very erratic way Lucy tells the story of becoming the author of her own life illustrates how Brontë produces not a literary object but a literature of consciousness' (439). They write,

> Conscious of the politics of poetics, Brontë is, in some ways, a phenomenologist – attacking the discrepancy between reason and imagination, insisting on the subjectivity of the objective work of art, choosing as the subject of her fiction the victims of objectification, inviting her readers to experience with her the interiority of the Other. (440)

Gilbert and Gubar's reading of the novel as a phenomenologically driven 'literature of consciousness' is compelling. Nevertheless, for the majority of their chapter on *Villette* they represent Lucy as a passive victim of her confining spatial circumstances. They write, 'Lucy Snowe […] is bound by the limits of her own mind – a dark and narrow cell. Living inside this tomb, she discovers that it

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[6] Rabinowitz also argues, 'I would suggest that Brontë is using Lucy Snowe's deceptions to escape the dictated conventions of the realist form' (245).

is anything but imageless; it is a chamber of terrible visions, not the least of which is that of being buried alive' (401). While Lucy is undoubtedly depressed and isolated, she is not as mentally restricted as Gilbert and Gubar suggest. Lucy confidently narrates her autobiographical story while simultaneously crafting elaborate architectural metaphors to provide three-dimensionality to the things that are unseen in the built environment – thoughts and emotions. Lucy is undoubtedly the author of her own life. As we have seen with Esther Summerson, the ability to tell your own story in your own words is powerful and Lucy's narrative takes distinct shape through architectural metaphor as she describes her past for her readers. Thus Lucy emerges in the novel as a spatial architect in her own right, through her creative manipulation of architecture in her narrative. She is not just confined, not just an inmate within the built environment of the novel, but is a creator as well.

In *Charlotte Brontë: Imagination in History* (2002)*,* Heather Glen describes Lucy Snowe taking in the material details of a room: 'The world is configured in *Villette* as one bounded by materiality, rather than opening into possibility' (234). She then argues that in *Jane Eyre*, 'Jane's is an artist's eye, transfiguring the world it sees […] But to Lucy, less shaping subject than helpless object, things loom large in quite a different way' (235). I disagree with the characterisation of Lucy as a 'helpless object'. Lucy's subjectivity determines the narrative structure of the novel and she most certainly is the 'shaping subject'. I would also argue that if Jane sees the world through the eye of an artist, Lucy certainly sees the world through the eye of an architect. Through her 'architect's eye' she becomes a creator of space rather than a passive inhabitant – she constructs spaces and barriers, both real and imagined. Consequently, the material and psychological realism of her narrative

takes shape through architecture. Like Esther Summerson, Lucy has a careful eye for her surroundings but she also sees architecture as expansive and as a powerful vehicle for self-expression. Both Esther and Lucy observe the architecture of the built environment world around them, digest what they see and then replicate with the additional feature of creative mutability.[7] By directing her architect's eye internally, Lucy capitalises on the technique of architectural internalisation as a creative and intimate narrative strategy.

Lucy recounts her numerous attempts to create an architectural homespace for herself within the body of another character, a place of intimacy and belonging. These spaces often materialise as a form of shrine. The shrine exists as a crucial metaphor in *Villette*, encapsulating Lucy's reverent desire for enclosure within a space that is both sacred and domestic. Existing apart from the physical architecture of the novel's built environment, these creative spaces are new and flexible, allowing Lucy to house her past thoughts and emotions in whatever structure seems the most fitting. These mental and bodily shrines are more than passing descriptive moments, instead linking directly with Brontë's aims of locating 'household altars in human hearts'. While Brontë hopes that her heroines will find a lasting home within her reader's heart and mind, Lucy builds her own spaces of belonging.

This chapter will begin with a look at Lucy's domestic isolation and the acute awareness of homelessness that removal engenders. I will then discuss Lucy's significant and underacknowledged dual roles as both author and literary

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[7] Citing the publication history, where *Bleak House* first began to be printed in March 1852 and *Villette* was published in January 1853, Newsome opens his article by stating, 'Like the more famous examples of *Vanity Fair* and *Dombey and Son*, *Villette* and *Bleak House* occupy the unusual position of having been able to influence one another' (54). Newsome draws together numerous points of similarity between the two novels (first person accounts by women who are well brought up but poor, love stories, heroines who fall in love with doctors, winning love is linked with a quest for identity, gothic features amidst the height of the realist tradition, legendary ghosts, and the theme of surveillance), yet does not mention the architectural penetration exhibited by both heroines in their first-person accounts.

architect. The third section of this chapter will focus on Lucy's use of the architectural internalisation technique to create intimate heart and mind shrines. Finally, I will examine how these architectural metaphors reveal and represent Brontë's contribution to realism via literary architecture.

1. A Homeless Heroine: Lucy Snowe's Domestic Isolation

Lucy opens her narrative, the story of her life, with a pleasant description of a home that does not belong to her: 'My godmother lived in a handsome house in the clean and ancient town of Bretton' (3). She continues:

> The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows, the balcony outside, looking down on a fine antique street, where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide – so quiet was its atmosphere, so clean its pavement – these things pleased me well. (3)

Lucy describes this comfortable home before revealing that she is merely a guest – the Bretton house does not indicate her own social status or prospects.[8] The reader quickly comes to understand that we must comprehend Lucy without the traditional association of a Victorian heroine with her home: her subjectivity is not generated from a permanent homespace. In *Villette*, Lucy forges her identity apart from a domestic setting and she never describes the architecture of her family home or details her familial relationships. After visiting her godmother, Lucy informs her reader 'I betook myself home' (31), continuing: 'It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be

[8] In this novel Brontë introduces numerous female characters outside of their domestic position at home such as Polly, dropped off at Lucy's godmother's house by a grieving father, and Ginevra, met in the liminal space of a sea voyage from England to Brussels.

safely left uncontradicted' (31). In this instance, Brontë forcibly destabilises the concept of 'home' and its typically pleasing associations, leaving the reader with uncomfortable questions about Lucy's family and her past. While numerous scholars have noted Lucy's isolation from a traditional domestic environment (Badowska, Basch), I am interested in her response to that isolation and the architectural metaphors it engenders.

Throughout the novel, Lucy repeatedly emphasises her lack of a domestic home as Brontë suggests that her heroine faces the difficult task of navigating the social construction of women as intrinsically linked to domesticity. As Gretchen Braun states, Lucy 'cannot even lay claim to the most basic requirement for security, namely, a stable habitation' (189). When Lucy decides to leave England, she corrects herself from referring, even generally, to a home: 'If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would suffer? If I died far away from – home, I was going to say, but I had no home – from England, then, who would weep?' (45). Once she has made the decision to travel and is settled on the ship to Belgium Lucy envisions her mental condition as mirroring her bodily homelessness, recalling, 'Some difficulties had been passed through; a sort of victory was won: my homeless, anchorless, unsupported mind had again leisure for a brief repose' (46). Later, in the midst of her life as a teacher, she wonders, 'is there nothing more for me in life – no true home – nothing to be dearer to me than myself' (346)?[9] When asked by fellow teacher Paul Emmanuel if she is homesick, she responds, 'To be home-sick, one must have a home; which I have not' (348). As Eva Badowska writes of Lucy: 'From the beginning of the narrative, home – the place of interiority in all its guises is an object of the narrator's unquiet idealization and longing'

[9] In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane links her conceptualisation of the concept of 'home' with a single person, Mr Rochester, telling him, 'I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home, – my only home' (Brontë 245).

(1519). Defensive, sensitive, and angry, Lucy never allows her reader to forget that she is homeless, as Brontë represents the psychological impact of living life outside of a typical domestic framework.

In *Villette*, Brontë explores an alternative lifestyle through Lucy's experience of various transitory habitations as well as her successful career as a teacher and, ultimately, as mistress of her own school. Lucy recounts taking a job as a nurse and companion to the aged and ailing Miss Marchmont and sleeps in a 'closet within [Miss Marchmont's] room' (38). As a result of her position, 'Two hot close rooms thus became my world' (34). Later, Lucy travels abroad and finds employment in a school that used to be a convent.[10] Her new employer, Madame Beck, leads Lucy 'Through a series of the queerest little dormitories – which, I heard afterwards, had once been nuns' cells' (62-63). Lucy embraces the convent aspect of the school, calling it 'our convent' (102) and referring to her schoolroom as 'my cell' (260), which becomes 'my sanctuary' (125) and a 'solitary sanctuary' (344) when empty of pupils.[11]

Lucy is certainly no stranger to restrictive living spaces yet Brontë gives us a heroine with the power to redirect these experiences of confining architecture into creative architectural expansion: Lucy adapts to her homeless position by relying on a language of creative architecture that she can control and manage exclusively. Thus a fascinating narrative technique is born from Lucy's isolation from a traditional domestic home as she creates metaphoric architectural shelters for her thoughts and emotions. Lucy frequently positions herself in contrast to a woman living a traditional domestic life. By doing so, she

[10] For an entirely different type of architecturally-driven project, see Eric Ruijssenaars' *Charlotte* Brontë's *Promised Land: The Pensionnat Heger and other Brontë Places in Brussels* (2000). Ruijssenaars attempts to map out an architectural blueprint of Madame Beck's pensionnat as described by Brontë in *Villette*.

[11] Jane Eyre describes her schoolroom similarly, stating with relief: 'I should not be called upon to quit my sanctum of the school-room; for a sanctum it was now become to me' (Brontë 169).

establishes her role as a narrator who is not bound by conventional space in her narrative – she can expand and contract, build and renovate her own creative architectural spaces. For example, Lucy learns of the demand for English governesses abroad and 'stored up this piece of casual information, as careful housewives store seemingly worthless shreds and fragments for which their prescient minds anticipate a possible use someday' (41). Instead of gathering physical material, Lucy gathers information. Later, Lucy employs another domestic metaphor in her essay portraying the personification of Human Justice:

> I saw her in her house, a den of confusion: servants called to her for orders or help which she did not give; beggars stood at her door waiting and starving unnoticed; a swarm of children, sick and quarrelsome, crawled around her feet and yelled in her ears appeals for notice, sympathy, cure, redress. The honest woman cared for none of these things. (386)

Lucy imagines the abstract concept of human justice as a woman remiss in her domestic duties, a woman whose domestic chaos is reminiscent of Dickens's Mrs Jellyby. Lucy writes satirically but simultaneously reminds her reader of her own domestic alienation.[12] She draws attention to her position as a single woman but also illustrates her ability to create vivid architectural metaphors, in a sense simulating domesticity. Instead of performing domestic duties within the

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[12] Brontë employs the convent setting and the ghost nun legend to further heighten the reader's awareness of Lucy's unmarried status. Lucy is also called 'grandmother' (455) and various other unflattering names by the thoughtless Ginevra. Lucy's nicknames recall Esther Summerson who proudly lists her own numerous nicknames: 'Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many other names of that sort, that my own name soon became quite lost along them' (111). Esther's nicknames reflect her dutiful and successful management of the domestic affairs of Bleak House, to the extent that she is practically renamed to convey her domestic role. Lucy, in contrast, is teased by Ginevra for her stern disposition and single status at Madame Beck's pensionnat.

home, then, Lucy uses the opportunity of her narrative account to create domestic metaphors for these activities.

While Lucy moves through the novel as a houseguest, caretaker, and teacher, she documents her history through architectural metaphors and uses her narrative to create alternative homespaces. Consequently, Lucy is in fact a ‘homemaker’ in the novel, just not the type of homemaker we might expect. Lucy directs her architect’s eye inwards and becomes a homemaker of metaphoric space, utilising the literary technique of architectural internalisation to imagine alternative domestic, homely spaces, thereby establishing the kinds of personalised, ‘sympathetic’ interiors she fails to find in the built environment of the novel. Lucy’s technique exemplifies Gaston Bachelard’s understanding that home imagery is foundational and literary architecture generates from an author’s remembrances of his or her first home. Bachelard writes that ‘it [is] reasonable to say we “read a house,” or “read a room,” since both room and house are psychological diagrams that guide writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy’ (38). While Lucy repeatedly, almost militantly, rejects any suggestion that she might be homesick or have an attachment to any home, her architecturalised representations of heart and mind habitually take the form of dwelling places.

Lucy ultimately creates her own sphere of influence, a business-home combination that is still not the traditional domestic home she has been ‘dwelling’ on throughout her narrative. Towards the end of the novel, M. Paul surprises Lucy by establishing her in a school of her own. They arrive at ‘a very neat abode’ and Lucy reports that ‘Silence reigned in this dwelling’ (464). From the vestibule, she observes the parlour, ‘very tiny, but I thought, very pretty’ (464). This room was clearly purpose-built to suit Lucy and she is captivated by

what she sees, remarking 'Pretty, pretty place!' (464). Lucy will become the director of a day school and will live and work in these pleasing rooms. Significantly, her realist aesthetic and narrative authority develops from this particular space where she is writing years later: she enacts a form of realism that walks the line between public and private, much like her living situation. As Kate Flint writes,

> For Lucy, as, indeed, for Charlotte Brontë, writing is the ultimate expression of selfhood. But this novel is unlike any other which Brontë wrote, for as well as celebrating the act of woman's writing, it ends, one might say, with an implicit affirmation of the strength which may be found in isolation. (19)

For Lucy, writing is indeed the 'ultimate expression of selfhood' and, as Flint notes, Lucy writes in isolation, unencumbered by domestic responsibilities. Lucy remains independent, forging her success apart from a conventional home and without a husband.[13]

While Brontë ultimately shatters her reader's expectations of domestic happiness for Lucy with the death of M. Paul at sea, she simultaneously ensures that her heroine alone will maintain control of her newfound personal and professional dwelling space. Brontë does not envision a traditional 'happy ending' for her heroine, but rather one that ensures Lucy the opportunity to continue making her own choices, as well as the opportunity to write the story of her life.[14]

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[13] Despite Brontë's pointed avoidance of marriage for her heroine, her early critics complained that love dominated the plot of *Villette*. Harriet Martineau published an unsigned review in the *Daily News* on 3 February 1853 in which she criticizes *Villette*: 'All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought – love' (Allott 172). Martineau calls the novel 'almost intolerably painful' and the writing 'over-wrought' (172). Finally, she states, 'Lucy may be thought a younger, feebler sister of Jane' (174). I disagree with Martineau, especially on this last point.

[14] Brontë herself was familiar with marital compromise and time-consuming domestic responsibility. Her letters reveal the process of adapting to her new life as a married woman:

2. An Architect's Eye: Lucy as Author and Literary Architect

Despite the fact that Lucy routinely draws attention to her authorial power and control over the story, she is rarely given credit for her narrative techniques. In *Charlotte Brontë's World of Death* (1979), Robert Keefe argues that the death of Brontë's mother and sisters exercised the most powerful influence on Brontë's future writing. Keefe suggests:

> If Lucy were, like Charlotte Brontë, to transform reality's dry bones into the shining life of the literary artifact – a letter to a loved one, or a novel perhaps – then the shackles of her mind would fall away and for a moment she could exult in her natural strength. Lucy will of course not become a novelist. She will settle for being a teacher. (170)

While Lucy does not become a novelist, she does become an author, 'writing this heretic narrative' (155) and documenting her own past in her own words. Each time Lucy addresses the reader she emphasises her narrative authority and authorial control over the novel.[15] Taking issue with Keefe, I would argue that Lucy does in fact create a 'literary artifact' and, in doing so, clearly 'exult[s] in her natural strength'. I believe that Brontë purposefully indicates that Lucy crafts a written record, rather than speaking her story out to an invisible audience, because for Brontë it is the act of writing that is significant. Lucy's engagement in the activity of writing elevates and complicates how we understand Brontë's heroine. We might think about why Lucy does write her story. Who will read her words and who is her intended audience? More

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'Not that I have been hurried or oppressed; but the fact is, my time is not my own now; somebody else wants a good portion of it, and says "We must do so and so." We *do* so and so accordingly; and it generally seems the right thing' (Gaskell 451). Brontë also writes, 'My own life is more occupied than it used to be: I have not so much time for thinking: I am obliged to be more practical, for my dear Arthur is a very practical, as well as a very punctual and methodical man' (Gaskell 452).

[15] Lucy repeatedly directs the reader to 'picture me' (31) and refers to 'Reader' (160, 472), 'the reader' (41, 188, 314, 334), 'my reader' (41), 'the sensible reader' (69) and the like.

broadly, what is Brontë hoping that Lucy will reveal to us? What does it mean to intentionally craft a heroine who writes with an architect's eye?

Lucy relies on architectural metaphors in her narrative, adapting and refining them to reconstruct her thoughts and emotions for the reader as she, like Esther Summerson, writes years after the events she describes. Through the technique of architectural internalisation, Lucy reveals her mental and emotional interior for the reader while simultaneously foregrounding architecture as the literary conduit for exposing her most intimate thoughts and emotions. As such, architecture exists as a potent vehicle for narration and memory in this novel. For example, Lucy narrates her own authorial process by conceptualising the act of writing and revising as a struggle between reason and emotion contained within an architectural framework: 'Feeling and I turned Reason out of doors, drew against her bar and bolt, and then we sat down, spread our paper, dipped in the ink an eager pen, and, with deep enjoyment, poured out our sincere heart' (243). The moment her task is completed, though, 'the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in, vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page. She did right' (243).[16] While Lucy architecturalises the competing domains of heart and mind, she also illustrates how confining space cannot ultimately contain. The congress between these structures is fluid and relational.

[16] In *Jane Eyre*, Jane describes her feelings after hearing Rochester's disembodied voice: 'it had opened up the door of the soul's cell, and loosed its bands – it had wakened it out of its sleep, whence it sprang trembling, listening aghast; then vibrated thrice a cry on my startled ear, and in my quaking heart, and through my spirit; which neither feared nor shook, but exulted as if in joy over the success of one effort it had been privileged to make, independent of the cumbrous body' (411). Brontë allows Jane to give herself over to her emotions completely, rather than struggling to restrain them like Lucy. Lydgate attributes his vocational awakening to his encounter with a drawing of the heart's valves, described in *Middlemarch* as the doors of the heart.

Brontë uses this scene to emphasise both Lucy's narrative authority and her artistic creativity, simultaneously making her readers aware of potential drafts written and unseen.[17] This admission causes the readers to wonder about what has not made the cut – what has been edited, excised, and discarded from Lucy's final narrative? This moment in the novel recalls *Bleak House's* Esther Summerson and her admission that she might later rub out compliments that she took pleasure in writing. Both narrators experience an emotional release through the act of writing and both reveal their own concealments. In her article '"This Heretic Narrative": The Strategy of the Split Narrative in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette'*, Patricia E. Johnson considers this scene as 'an emblem of Lucy's entire narrative, of her attempt to be the author of herself' (617). Johnston continues: 'Both letters are symbolically present for the reader. This is only one example of the split narrative that Lucy Snowe develops in *Villette* and that explains why she names her own narrative strategy "heretic"' (617). Johnson indicates 'heretic' is from the Greek, meaning 'to be able to choose'. It is this, 'above all else, that Lucy's narrative seeks to maintain. Neither letter can be discarded because both must be present in the text so that the heroine's ability to choose can be preserved' (618).[18]

As we have just seen, Lucy controls the way she documents and tells her story and her first-person narrative is not as dictated by neurosis as some scholarship might suggest. For example, in her article 'From Neurosis to Narrative: The Private Life of the Nerves in *Villette* and *Daniel Deronda*' (1990), Athena Vrettos writes of the heroines of *Villette* and *Daniel Deronda:*

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[17] Brontë later renovates this scene with another female writer when Paulina describes to Lucy her process of responding to Dr Bretton's declaration of love. She admits, 'I wrote it three times – chastening and subduing the phrases at every rescript' (360). Lucy responds approvingly, saying 'Excellent Paulina! Your instinct is fine; you understand Dr Bretton' (361).

[18] Mary Jacobus discusses this scene in terms of an unresolved conflict between Victorian realism and Romanticism. She suggests, 'The same doubleness informs the novel as a whole, making it secretive, unstable, and subversive. The narrative and representational conventions of Victorian realism are constantly threatened by an incompletely repressed Romanticism' (228).

> Lucy’s and Gwendolen’s use of spatial metaphors to express the terms of their neuroses is replicated by their use of narrative spaces. Like their locked boxes, Lucy’s and Gwendolen’s narratives serve as projections of their hysteria, symbolic transformations of the ‘formless vague’ into the narrative concrete. (565)

While Lucy’s descriptions of her thoughts and feelings are indeed frequently based on small built spaces, they are also a source of constructive creative power. She is the sole architect of the narrative spaces she creates to express her most intimate interior. Lucy’s mind does not simply mirror the interiors in which she is ‘confined’, she houses her thoughts and emotions in whatever architectural structure she finds fitting at the time, adapting what she sees in the world around her. In doing so, she finds architectural compatibility for her story that she never felt herself. Scholars have frequently noted Lucy’s confinement within the architecture of the convent-school, yet Lucy is also an architect, a creator of navigable, mental and emotional interior spaces. Through her creative narrative power, rigid and confining architecture becomes mutable, flexible, and adaptable to circumstance.

For example, Lucy’s experience of the material built environment world of the novel influences, but does not entirely determine, her architecturalised representation of her mind and its containing thoughts. Viewing the rest of a grand hotel in relation to the ‘closet’ in which she was assigned, Lucy thinks, ‘Much I marvelled at the sagacity evinced by waiters and chambermaids in proportioning the accommodation to the guest […] I saw quite well that they all, in a moment’s calculation, estimated me at about the same fractional value’

(54). Later in the novel, Lucy categorises her thoughts similarly, giving little mental space to valuing social position and status, writing of these qualities,

> they were my third-class lodgers – to whom could be assigned only the small sitting-room and the little back bedroom: even if the dining and drawing-rooms stood empty, I never confessed it to them, as thinking minor accommodations better suited to their circumstances. (297)

Her experience of the built environment of her world infiltrates her narrative and provides a structure for documenting her past, particularly her emotional past, difficult to represent but concretised through architecture. In this instance of architectural internalisation, Lucy is able to show precisely how her mind was working at that time, illustrating her value system for her readers by tucking certain thoughts away within marginal domestic architectural spaces. While hotel workers have the power to put Lucy in a suitable category of architectural enclosure, she has the power to prioritise, organise, and display her own values.

Villette contains countless revealing architectural moments and there are four standout instances in the novel where Lucy's distinctive use of architecture works powerfully to reveal her subjectivity. In these architecturally-driven instances, Lucy creates structural touchstones to convey her subjective experiences to her reader. In each of these instances, Brontë highlights Lucy's architect's eye and puts that particular way of seeing into practice to facilitate both the material and psychological realism of the novel. What I mean by an architect's eye in this context is that Lucy carefully observes her architectural surroundings and then applies her realist vision of the material world to her work of representing aspects of her emotional and psychological interior. She

refigures the material architecture of her world into structures with mutable and expansive potential. Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison examine material objects in *Villette* and claim that ‘not only do Lucy and the other characters think things through at length, but also frequently think through, via or by way of, things’ (189). While Shears and Harrison focus on material objects like personal letters and gallery paintings, their comment that Lucy exhibits the capacity of ‘rendering thought thing-like’ (189) applies to her architectural vision and use of architectural materiality as a psychological conduit. *Villette* constructs its own specific model of psychological realism through the relationship of the narrator to architecture and architectural imagery.

It is my intention to spend time on the following four instances that indicate Brontë’s particular method of crafting psychological realism through Lucy’s account of her contact with various architectural enclosures. Lucy experiences ‘solitary confinement’ when left practically alone at Madame Beck’s school during the long vacation. When the school environment jars with her emotions, she searches for comfort in a different architectural enclosure, one that offers the possibility of human connection and consolation within – the confessional booth of a Catholic church. After her aborted confession attempt Lucy faints and awakens in an environment both strange and oddly familiar. The reader is entirely dependent on Lucy to puzzle out her surroundings through careful architectural analysis and material touchstones. Late in the novel Lucy sneaks out of the pensionnat and finds herself in a park transformed into an Egyptian wonder. Collectively, these moments in the novel illustrate Brontë’s purpose in creating a heroine with an architect’s eye, as material and psychological realism merge in Lucy’s narrative.

The eight-week vacation in which Lucy remains nearly alone at the school can be read as Brontë's case study of solitary confinement. At the time this novel was written, solitary confinement was employed by both prisons and mental institutions as a curative and rehabilitating method. Brontë in fact visited two prisons (Pentonville and Newgate) in January 1853, the same month *Villette* was published. Obviously this was too late to directly inform her novel, but it is nonetheless indicative of her ongoing interest in the concept of restrictive living she had explored in *Villette*.[19] Significantly, Pentonville prison epitomised the practice of solitary confinement. Christopher Hibbert describes the Pentonville system:

> The occupants of the cells, in obedience to a system of prison discipline developed in America, were forbidden to talk to each other and when permitted to take exercise tramped along in silent rows, wearing masks of brown cloth over their faces. In chapel, which they had to attend every day, they sat in little cubicles, their heads visible to the warder on duty but hidden from each other. Men caught trying to talk to their neighbours were confined in refractory cells completely dark for as long as three weeks on end. (668)[20]

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[19] In a letter to Ellen Nussey dated 19 January 1853, Brontë writes, 'I still continue to get on very comfortably and quietly in London – in the way I like – seeing rather things than persons – Being allowed to have my own choice of sights this time – I selected rather the *real* than the *decorative* side of Life – I have been over two prisons ancient and modern – Newgate and Pentonville – also the Bank, the Exchange, the Foundling Hospital ,– and to-day if all be well – I go with Dr Forbes to see Bethlehem Hospital. Mrs. S[mith] and her daughter are – I believe – a little amazed at my gloomy tastes, but I take no notice' (Wise 35). Here we see Brontë link 'the real' with architecture, institutions, and confining living spaces.

[20] Michael Ignatieff provides further details about Pentonville in his book, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. Each prisoner was confined almost exclusively to his cell, which measured 13.5 feet long by 7.5 feet wide, with a 9-foot ceiling. Each cell contained a table, chair, workbench, hammock, broom, bucket, and a shelf with a mug, dish, soap, towel, and Bible and these items were expected to remain in a specific place. Imprisonment terms under the Separate System were lessoned from terms up to eighteen months, to twelve, and then nine. The prisoner was allowed one visit every six months, lasting fifteen minutes, and could write and receive one letter every six months.

This system of total isolation was called the Separate System and was heralded as a disciplinary measure that effected socially restorative results. Pentonville was designed by Joshua Jebb and opened in 1842 to accommodate 450 prisoners. In his published lecture, *Observations on the Separate System of Discipline* (1847), Jebb quotes at length from the second report of the Commissioners of Pentonville, 10 March 1844 which states that

> There exists abundant proof of the religious and moral improvement of the prisoners, among whom a cheerful spirit of industry prevails […] We are of the opinion that the adoption of Separate Confinement, as established at Pentonville Prison, promises to effect a most salutary change in the treatment of criminals, and that it is well calculated to deter, correct, and reclaim the offender. (Jebb 7)

Thus we have a process of individual alienation held to engender social integration. While the commissioners describe the inmates as 'cheerful', Michael Ignatieff notes that, 'Almost immediately, the Pentonville commissioners began to receive reports from the prison doctor about the psychological effects of solitude' (199).[21] Indeed, for the already depressed and miserable Lucy, the isolation she experiences during the long vacation is detrimental to her mental wellbeing and during this time she descends into a deep depression.[22]

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[21] Charles Dickens visited the Pennsylvania prison (1842) on which Pentonville prison was modelled and he was highly critical of the Separate system he observed. In *American Notes for General Circulation,* Dickens writes, 'I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain, to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body' (69). Dickens details his encounters with specific prisoners, making repeated use of the metaphor of premature burial. The prisoner 'is a man buried alive; to be dug out in the slow round of years; and in the mean time dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair' (69).

[22] Brontë describes her own life at school in Brussels: 'I try to read, I try to write; but in vain. I then wander about from room to room, but the silence and loneliness of all the house weights down one's spirits like lead' (Gaskell 208). She also writes of her life: 'There are privations and

In *Villette*, Brontë's case study of solitary confinement is more metaphorical than literal, as Lucy possesses the freedom to depart her 'cell'. Nevertheless, Brontë's realistically represents the psychological damage inherent in sustained solitary enclosure within architectural space. Lucy recalls, 'My heart almost died within me; miserable longings strained its chords. How long were the September days! How silent, how lifeless! How vast and void seemed the desolate premises!' (148). She writes, 'My spirits had been gradually sinking; now that the prop of employment was gone, they went down fast' (148). She is painfully aware of her own impending decline and recalls saying to herself, 'I really believe my nerves are getting overstretched: my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it – what shall I do? How shall I keep well?' (151). Lucy answers her own question in the very next sentence by stating: 'Indeed there was no way to keep well under the circumstances' (151). Brontë represents Lucy's psychological collapse as inevitable. Lucy feels crushed with 'paralysis' (149) and speaks of her 'mental pain' (150) and 'agonizing depression' (151). She recalls, 'my nervous system could hardly support what it had for so many days and nights to undergo in that huge, empty house' (149). By linking her psychological condition with the empty school, Lucy indicates that there is an architectural factor to her illness. The school feels oppressive and confining and she longs to escape the suffocation of her environment:

> the weight of my dreadful dream became alleviated – that insufferable thought of being no more loved, no more owned, half-yielded to hope of the contrary – I was sure this hope would shine

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humiliations to submit to; there is monotony and uniformity of life; and, above all, there is a constant sense of solitude in the midst of numbers' (Gaskell 200).

> clearer if I got out from under this house-roof, which was crushing as the slab of the tomb. (152)[23]

Brontë's representation of the house as a tomb recalls Dickens similar use of the metaphor as explored in the previous chapter. Both authors suggest that architecture has the capacity to encapsulate life and death at once as Lucy and Esther similarly express the weight of mortality through the house-tomb metaphor. Brontë's and Dickens's shared recourse to the metaphor indicates the apt connection of architecture with death and the utility of architecture to substantiate feelings of distress linked with the inevitability and inescapability of death and burial.[24] As Brontë writes darkly in her earlier novel *Shirley* (1849): 'every path trod by human feet terminates in one bourne – the grave: the little chink in the surface of this great globe – the furrow where the mighty husbandman with the scythe deposits the seed he has shaken from the ripe stem' (169).

Lucy's desire to leave the school with its metaphoric tomb associations and seek out the enclosed architectural space of the Catholic confessional booth, with its promise of human communion, indicates the way Brontë conceptualises Lucy's emotional and psychological impulses through tangible architectural structures. The confession scene, with its famous biographical parallels, has been discussed critically in terms of Brontë's critique of Catholicism, as a space of extreme surveillance, and as an outlet for vocalising

[23] Brontë similarly employs burial imagery in her letters: 'Meanwhile life wears away. I shall soon be thirty; and I have done nothing yet […] There was a time when Haworth was a very pleasant place to me; it is not so now. I feel as if we were all buried here' (Gaskell 289).

[24] Brontë uses similar house-tomb imagery in her earlier novel, *Shirley* (1849) when Rose Yorke questions Caroline's life at Briarfield Rectory: 'Might you not as well be tediously dying, as for ever shut up in that glebe-house – a place that, when I pass it, always reminds me of a windowed grave? I never see any movement about the door: I never hear a sound from the wall: I believe smoke never issues from the chimneys. What do you do there?' (377).

psychological distress.[25] My analysis will turn instead to the confessional as an architecturally-driven moment in the novel, exploring Lucy's impulse to seek architectural compatibility that aligns with her state of mind.

In this scene, Brontë illustrates the mind's powerful ability to make spatial connections. Lucy desires an escape from the isolation inherent in the nuns' cells of the former convent and moves instead towards the Catholic confessional for human contact. Bachelard writes that, 'whenever life seeks to shelter, protect, cover or hide itself, the imagination sympathises with the being that inhabits the protected space' (132). As we have seen, Lucy's movements within the built environment of the novel are highly revealing of her psychological condition. This is a rare moment in the novel when Lucy looks for something outside of her own creative power, abandoning both her immediate environment and her architectural metaphors in search of human contact.

Brontë faced contemporary criticism for her portrayal of the Catholic Church in *Villette* and some scholarship similarly considers Brontë's novel to be pointedly anti-Catholic. Brontë writes in a letter to her friend, Miss Wooler, 'There is a minority – small in number but influential in character – which views the work with no favourable eye. Currer Bell's remarks on Romanism have drawn down on him the condign displeasure of the High Church Party' (Fraser

[25] Charlotte Brontë famously visited a Catholic church and made her confession during the time she spent studying abroad in Brussels. In a letter to her sister Emily, Brontë explains what led her to the confessional. Sitting in St Gudule, 'An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the Cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong, and that it served to vary my life and yield a moment's interest. I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession to see what it was like. Knowing me as you do, you will think this odd, but when people are by themselves they have singular fancies' (Fraser 197). Brontë admits to the priest that she is not Catholic: 'at last he said he would allow me because it might be the first step towards returning to the true church. I actually did confess – a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the Rue du Parc – to his house – and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a protestant!!! I promised faithfully to go. Of course, however, the adventure stays here, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic' (Fraser 198).

436). Harriet Martineau writes in an unsigned review of *Villette* that Brontë 'goes out of her way to express a passionate hatred of Romanism' (Allott 174). Shuttleworth writes, 'The anti-Catholicism of Brontë's earlier texts is explicitly foregrounded in this novel which was written at the time of extreme anti-Catholic agitation' (225). In addition to examining Brontë's treatment of Catholicism, numerous scholars discuss the confession scene as another level of the surveillance paradigm operating in the novel (Shuttleworth, Glen, Gilbert and Gubar).

I agree with Diana Peschier and Jan Jedrzejewski, both of who seek to reframe the dialogue surrounding the perceived anti-Catholic sentiment represented in *Villette*. Peschier approaches Brontë's treatment of Catholicism as a potent literary motif, 'more stylistic and thematic than rhetorical' (138) and discusses her use of anti-Catholic discourse as 'being more literary than religious' (159). For example,

> Brontë makes the familiar association of the mental asylum with the convent, the hysterical or manic woman with the repressed nun. In this way she is able to use the confining walls of the convent/pensionnat and the presence of the nun, whether dead, walled-in, spectral or even the product of an overheated imagination, as a medium for her ideas on neurosis and the management of women's minds. (141)

Rather than utilising the convent setting to convey a religious critique, the setting provides Brontë with a register of images that she capitalises on to represent her heroine's subjectivity. Jedrzejewski argues that far from being in line with 'less-than-subtle religious propaganda […] Charlotte Brontë's perceptions and analyses are far more penetrating, and their results far more

ambivalent and revealing of attitudes far more complex' (122). Consequently, Brontë's incorporation of Lucy's drive to experience the architecture of the confessional booth should not be glossed over. As Jedrzejewski suggests, 'the motif of confession occupies the central place in the overall structure of the novel' (131). While Jedrzejewski explores the role of this scene in advancing the plot, it is also an architecturally-driven scene with metaphoric resonance: once again, Lucy finds herself in a marginal space with constructive potential.

When Lucy seeks out the confessional booth she is turning to an architectural space that guarantees human contact. Gilbert and Gubar write that Lucy feels smothered by school, 'But she can only escape one confining space for an even more limiting one, the confessional' (414). While the confessional both is undoubtedly a small and enclosed architectural space, Gilbert and Gubar seem to discount the fact that it guarantees contact with another person. The communicative aspect of the confessional has been noted by scholars who discuss the scene as a significant opportunity for Lucy to attempt to articulate her psychological interior. Gretchen Braum notes that 'Lucy's confession to the priest […] is the first attempt to speak the truth of her experience that she relates to the reader' (202). Peschier writes of Lucy, 'when she goes to make her own confession she is using the confessional more as a psychiatrist's couch than as a channel for the forgiveness of her sins' (158).

Brontë is emphatic that her heroine's emotional and psychological impulses are traceable in Lucy's treatment of tangible and metaphoric architecture in her narrative. Lucy describes entering the confessional: 'I rose and went. I knew what I was about; my mind had run over the intent with lightening-speed. To take this step could not make me more wretched than I was; it might soothe me' (153). Lucy goes to the confessional at a time when

her environment, the vacated school, jars with her state of mind. She later explains her surprising actions to Dr Bretton, employing the heart and its chambers to describe her movement within architecture at the height of her depression:

> I cannot put the case into words, but, my days and nights were grown intolerable; a cruel sense of desolation pained my mind: a feeling that would make its way, rush out, or kill me – like (and this you will understand Dr. John) the current which passes through the heart, and which, if aneurism or any other morbid cause obstructs its natural channels, seeks abnormal outlet. I wanted companionship, I wanted friendship, I wanted counsel. I could find none of these in closet, or chamber, so I went and sought them in church and confessional. (176)[26]

Lucy describes suffering from an emotional aneurism by merging architecture, physiology and emotion. Lucy looks for an outlet and moves through various architectural spaces seeking relief, her internal emotions driving her movement through the built environment of the novel. This is an important example of Lucy's narrative technique of translating the organic into the built. Here, Lucy links the functioning of the organic body with her quest for compatible space and psychological comfort.[27] Lucy seeks an architectural space suited to her frame of mind yet acknowledges the 'abnormal' nature of this impulse. Lucy's interest in discovering psychologically relevant architectural enclosures is significant because it mirrors her narrative technique of architectural

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[26] Gaskell might have been influenced by this passage when she writes of Brontë in Brussels, August 1843, 'In the dead of the night, lying awake at the end of the long, deserted dormitory, in the vast and silent house, every fear respecting those whom she loved, and who were far off in another country, became a terrible reality, oppressing her and choking up the very life blood in her heart' (Gaskell 271).

[27] Shuttleworth discusses this scene, writing, 'Her interpretation is founded on a metaphorical transposition of the medical explanation of insanity as a morbid obstruction of the channels of the mind' (234).

internalisation, when she locates her thoughts and emotions within fitting imaginative architectural enclosures in her narrative.

Brontë staunchly defends her realist aims in a letter to her publisher, Mr Williams. Addressing his concern that her heroine 'may be thought morbid or weak' she responds, 'I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times – the character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength – and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid' (Barker 706). Brontë intends to highlight Lucy's struggles and takes the confession scene as an example, explaining to Mr Williams, 'It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional for instance – it was the semi-delirium of solitary/ grief and/sickness. If, however, the book does not express all this – there must be a great fault somewhere' (Barker 706). Brontë expects her readers to allow Lucy to guide them through the subjective experiences she represents in her narrative. The confession scene is extremely significant because it represents a moment when, in the midst of her darkest depression, Lucy steps outside of herself (and outside of the pensionnat) and vocalises her unhappiness to a person other than the reader.

Lucy's careful architect's eye is a key feature of her mode of narration. Brontë represents the extent of the reader's dependence on Lucy's particular way of seeing when Lucy recalls grasping for the solidity of architecture even in the midst of fainting: 'I tried to reach the porch of a great building near, but the mass of frontage and the giant-spire turned black and vanished before my eyes. Instead of sinking on the steps as I intended, I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss' (155-156). Brontë concludes Volume 1 of the novel with Lucy's statement: 'I remember no more' (155-156). Lucy faints and Brontë suspends her readers along with her heroine in an architecture-less void. Lucy's

consciousness lapses and the reader must wait for her to return to sensibility in order to re-enter any form of architectural or narrative enclosure. The story cannot progress in any way while Lucy is unconscious as Brontë emphasises her heroine's narrative authority. This unusual technique of suspension has to do with the particular form of realism that Brontë is developing in the novel, a form of realism that depends entirely on one woman's subjective life experience. When Lucy's mind closes, so does the reader's sense of where she exists within material space.

Brontë resumes her emphasis on Lucy's architect's eye when Lucy regains consciousness and opens Volume 2 of the novel by stating,

> Where my soul went during that swoon I cannot tell. Whatever she saw, or wherever she travelled in her trance on that strange night, she kept her own secret; never whispering a word to Memory, and baffling Imagination by an indissoluble silence. (157)

Lucy is uncomfortably aware that she has been placeless: her soul, memory, and imagination cut adrift. Lucy thinks architecturally and so this experience of placelessness gives her even more anxiety than usual. She even questions whether she might have had a brush with death and 'come in sight of her eternal home' only to be 'warned away from heaven's threshold' (157). Here Lucy makes the unseen and unknown realm of the dead tangible through architectural images of home and threshold. She then describes her soul regaining awareness: 'she re-entered her prison with pain, with reluctance, with a moan and a long shiver' (157). Keefe responds to this scene by writing, 'In Lucy's formula – a formula which almost certainly echoes Brontë's own – life is a form of exile; the pain of individual consciousness resolves finally into the ache of the soul's homesickness for death' (169). Keefe continues, 'If she could

only die, the walls of her repression would become windows and her spirit would soar out into the afterlife' (169). Keefe goes as far as to suggest that '*Villette* is at bottom the mirror of a wish to die' (149) and writes of Brontë that 'The need to die had come from deep inside her. The time and the manner of her dying were an organic outgrowth of the life she had lived' (189). John Maynard offers an attack on such claims:

> By such closed logic, we are led back to that patent simplification: the charge that Brontë dies because she couldn't face the reality of marriage and childbirth. Such a romantic idea of the neurotic or psychotic woman turning her face to the wall when her life proves too vital is attractive: only too attractive to the biographer who would rather run his theory into the ground than ease up in face of life's complexities. (37)

What Keefe describes as Lucy's 'homesickness for death', I would argue is a mindful and self-aware concern with her place in the material world. Lucy does not need to die for the 'walls of her repression' to 'become windows', her creative use of architectural metaphor in her narrative allows for her to renovate spaces of confinement into spaces of liberating constructive power.

Brontë forces her readers to contend exclusively with Lucy's perspective and follow her train of thought as her heroine attempts to solve the mystery of her current location. Both heroine and reader are accordingly disoriented as Lucy struggles to make sense of her new environment: 'I knew not where I was; only in time I saw that I had been removed from the spot where I fell: I lay on no portico-step; night and tempest were excluded by walls, windows, and ceilings. Into some house I had been carried, - but what house?' (157). Lucy relies on her architect's eye to digest her surroundings and analyse the architectural

layout of the room, writing, 'It was obvious, not only from the furniture but from the position of windows, doors, and fireplace, that this was an unknown room in an unknown house' (158). While much has been made of the revealing decorative ornaments of the room (Badowska, Feinberg), it is the architectural features and their position that telegraph to Lucy conclusively that she is somewhere new and outside of her experience. Brontë enforces the primacy of Lucy's subjectivity and allows her to dwell on architecture, to examine shapes and textures. She does not provide a greater overview or any relief from Lucy's perspective, forcing her reader to wait until Lucy reveals information in her own good time. While Lucy herself could recount these events in a straightforward manner and tell her reader precisely where she was taken when she fainted, she chooses to replicate her past confusion by recreating it in her narrative.

Lucy eventually unravels the mystery of her whereabouts and learns that she is with her godmother and her godmother's son, Dr John Graham Bretton.[28] For the first time in years, she feels comfortable, safe, and secure: 'My calm little room seemed somehow like a cave in the sea' (173). Lucy makes this unusual association at a time when she is unable to navigate architecture in its usual way. Lucy's bizarre position within this new Bretton is noted by Monica Feinberg in her article 'The Domestic Interiors of *Villette*' (1993): 'there is something suspect about a home that Lucy enters only by waking out of a solitude-induced delirium, that she finds not by crossing the front door's threshold, but by descending from the bedroom' (175). Thus Lucy steps outside

[28] Numerous scholars have suggested that Brontë named the doctor in her novel after Thomas John Graham, the author of *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1826). Shuttleworth suggests, 'In naming Dr John Graham Bretton after her father's treasured medical tome, Brontë was giving embodiment to the system of medical surveillance which had governed her own life' (222). This book was the Brontë family's medical touchstone and the Reverend Patrick Brontë made thorough notations of his families' symptoms within Graham's margins. It does not seem unlikely that Brontë would mine Graham's book for the psychological symptoms with which she endows Lucy.

of her architectural vocabulary and turns to the organic structure of the ocean cave to describe the room currently enclosing her as an extra-architectural space. Mrs Bretton assures Lucy that she has found ‘a very safe asylum’ (163), yet it does not take Lucy long to become restless and dissatisfied with her situation. The room that originally felt enchanted now begins to suffocate her: ‘I felt it confining; I longed for a change. The increasing chill and gathering gloom, too, depressed me’ (164). Lucy’s arrival and departure are equally uncomfortable, as her expulsion from this place of ‘perfect domestic comfort’ (Brontë 165) leads to a dark depression. As Piper Murray writes in her article, ‘Brontë’s Lunatic Ball: Constituting “A Very Safe Asylum” in *Villette*’ (2000), ‘there are signs that Dr. John’s domestic cure works too well, promising an ideal that it cannot actually deliver’ (35). Lucy cannot stay with the Brettons forever and must eventually return to her teaching position at the school. There she discovers that, in her case, architecturally enclosed can equal socially ignored.

Lucy shifts from describing her generally pleasing immediate surroundings at her godmother’s new house to using devastating architectural metaphors to convey her social isolation and depression back at the pensionnat. After being rediscovered and again forgotten by the Brettons, Lucy explains that this is only natural:

> Those who live in retirement, whose lives have fallen amid the seclusion of schools or of other walled-in and guarded dwellings, are liable to be suddenly and for long while dropped out of the memory of their friends, the denizens of a freer world. (254)

In contrast to those enjoying the ‘freer world’, Lucy likens herself to a hermit, who ‘will know that Destiny designed him to imitate, on occasion, the dormouse, and he will be comfortable: make a tidy ball of himself, creep into a hole of life’s

wall' (255). Living within the 'walled-in' school, Lucy imagines herself as metaphorically becoming a part of the physical structure of her enclosure. Instead of actively engaging in life, Lucy envisions crawling into the most humble crevice to merely observe the happy and full lives of the more fortunate. Lucy narrates her own depression, using architectural metaphors to convey the extent of her unhappiness. The moment Lucy receives a letter from Mrs Bretton she feels reinvigorated, like a 'long-buried prisoner disinterred' (262). Lucy adopts the language of Dr Bretton's pronouncement when he attributes her collapse to the sustained 'solitary confinement' (176) she experienced during the long vacation, explaining to her readers, 'The world can understand well enough the process of perishing from want of food: perhaps few persons can enter into or follow out that of going mad from solitary confinement' (262).[29] The implication is that Lucy does understand 'going mad from solitary confinement', both as a result of the time she spent alone at the school and her perpetual position as a woman with no home and few friends.

Brontë repeatedly illustrates the utility of the architectural metaphor: Lucy employs her versatile architect's eye first to unravel an architectural mystery and then to represent her own psychological state through creative architectural metaphors. So while Lucy does inhabit confining spaces, a fact noted by scholars like Gilbert and Gubar, what becomes more interesting is how, when writing an account of her life, she turns to architectural metaphor to represent her feelings in creative, but also concrete, architectural terms. Brontë indicates that Lucy transcends these confining interiors through the act of writing and creating imaginative literary architecture over which she maintains ownership.

[29] Robert Keefe mistakenly claims that Brontë consumed only 'the prisoner's fare of bread and water during the composition of *Villette*' (Keefe 44). In a letter to her publisher, Mr Smith, Brontë writes: 'I don't deserve to go to London: nobody merits a change or a treat less. I secretly think, on the contrary, I ought to be put in prison, and kept on bread and water in solitary confinement – without even a letter from Cornhill – till I had written a book' (Gaskell 374).

Brontë capitalises on Lucy's architectural sensitivity to advance the material and psychological realism of her novel, a fact exemplified in a scene when Lucy, enlivened by a drug administered by Madame Beck, becomes restless and sneaks out of the pensionnat. Lucy describes each phase of her movements through the school, writing with a breathless sense of immediacy to her observations. While she has previously presented the architecture in realistic detail, she now describes the school as it appears in her agitated and heightened state of awareness: 'The classes seem to my thought, great dreary jails, buried far back beyond thoroughfares, and for me, filled with spectral and intolerable memories, laid miserable amongst their straw and their manacles' (432-433). This prison imagery resonates with Lucy's earlier metaphors describing her own position within the school in terms of solitary confinement. Now it is Lucy's memories that are confined within the architecture of the school and she is anxious to leave them behind. After exiting the building she does not even wish to remain nearby: 'But here I cannot stay; I am still too near old haunts; so close under the dungeon, I can hear the prisoners moan' (433).[30] The prisoners here are Lucy's 'intolerable memories' inextricably linked to the architecture of the classrooms.

Brontë conceptualises Lucy's escape from the school as an adventure defined by architectural manipulation and mutability. Lucy silently observes her Bretton friends and follows them to the park only to discover 'new and unanticipated splendours' (434). She questions 'where were they, and where was I?' (434). The park has been transformed into 'a land of enchantment' (434)

[30] Lucy's eagerness to get away from the school and her use of prison metaphors recalls Jane's reluctance to return to Thornfield after her adventure on the road in *Jane Eyre*: 'I lingered at the gates; I lingered on the lawn; I paced backwards and forwards on the pavement: the shutters of the glass door were closed; I could not see into the interior; and both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from the gloomy house – from the gray hollow filled with rayless cells, as it appeared to me – to that sky expanded before me' (123).

and Lucy describes ‘a region, not of trees and shadows, but of strangest architectural wealth – of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphinx; incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette’ (434). Similarly to the scene where the reader must patiently wait for Lucy to determine her current location after she regains consciousness in the new Bretton household, the reader now depends on Lucy to puzzle out her current bewildering environment. While some of these Egyptian structures are iconic, such as the pyramid and the sphinx, Lucy also experiences the intimate enclosures of altar and temple. Brontë shows her reader something new and exciting with Lucy’s drug-induced architectural observations. She explores how we see and process information. How do we react when our built environment suddenly shifts to a completely different register? Taking known architectural structures like a pyramid out of context, what is the result? In Lucy’s case, she finds joy in the architectural disorientation she experiences in the park and her architect’s eye rejoices in the unexpected intersection of the organic with the built, the startling architectural outgrowth in the park setting.

Despite the fact that Lucy comes to realise that these constructions are mere props made of humble materials, this new reality cannot quite destroy her initial sense of wonder: ‘no matter that I quickly recognized the material of these solemn fragments – the timber, the paint, and the pasteboard – these inevitable discoveries failed to quite destroy the charm, or undermine the marvel of that night’ (434). This is a strange scene of architectural mutability and one that highlights Lucy’s refusal to adhere strictly to realism in her narrative, a fact noted by Mary Jacobus and others who have discussed the tension between realism and romance in this novel. Significantly, Lucy is also driven to illustrate her imagination, building and renovating what she sees for the reader and

merging materiality and imagination as she conveys her experience of that unusual night. In addition to narrating the events of her life, Lucy reveals how illusions are created. She exposes the behind-the-scenes building materials as Brontë encourages her reader to think about the work they are being presented with, to look at its joints and fasteners, its structural bones and paintwork. By showing us the joints and fasteners in this manner, Brontë likens her literary production to a kind of stagecraft – the constructive work of her hands and her imagination.

Lucy is an author and a creative literary architect who develops a narrative strategy that capitalises on an architectural register of imagery. As such, her narrative is punctuated by descriptions of her various, deeply personal contacts with architectural enclosures. From the convent-school to the confessional, the Bretton's home and the fantastical appearance of Egyptian architecture in the park, Lucy finds truth in architecture. She is guided by her architect's eye, be it as a vehicle to narrate her loneliness and depression, a way to determine the location of her body within material space, or a vehicle to convey joy and wonder. Through Lucy and her narrative strategy Brontë reveals her vision of a narrator who can capture the reality of her built environment but also the subjective truth of her experience within architectural enclosures via the language of creative literary architecture that her experience generates.

3. Material and Metaphoric: The Heart-Shrines of *Villette*

As we have seen in the previous section, Lucy is acutely aware of her architectural surroundings and this awareness infiltrates her narrative in the form of detailed descriptions of her built environment as well as architectural metaphors that emphasise her subjectivity. In *Villette*, the confluence of the imagery of the shrine, heart, core, and temple provides a powerful example of

Lucy's deft and fluid adaption of architectural imagery, as Brontë takes what is typically thought of as rigid, solid, and unbending and allows it mutability through her heroine's imagination. Brontë exhibits numerous shrines in her novel that take shape from Lucy's account of material shrines, her metaphoric descriptions, and her creation of original structures of literary architecture through the technique of architectural internalisation. Shrines are places of religious devotion honouring a saint, reliquary, or hallowed site. In the Catholic Church, shrines are positioned in a side-chapel within the larger church structure. Like the confessional booth, they are private and doubly enclosed, providing a place to be alone with your thoughts, emotions, and most intimate prayers. As with the confessional scene, this section will discuss the shrine, with its obvious Catholic associations, as more architectural than religious and linked with Lucy's aims of creating a space of intimacy and connection, safety and belonging. Thus, Brontë employs the shrine metaphor in *Villette* due to the shrine's resonant associations with writing and architecture, worship and mourning, making the heart-shrine an ideal vehicle through which Lucy expresses a realist portrayal of her subjectivity.

While the majority of criticism on architecture in *Villette* tends to focus on the restrictive enclosures Lucy experiences throughout the novel and the negative impact these spaces have on her psychological condition (Gilbert and Gubar), it is also crucial to look at the literary architecture Brontë creates to celebrate her heroine's creative manipulation of an entire register of architectural images. Brontë repeatedly exhibits Lucy's powerful ability to adapt and control these metaphors. Returning to Caroline Levine and her discussion of the 1298 doctrine of *clausura* that required the cloistering of religious women, Levine writes,

> But the cloister was not the only bounded spatial container that organized the lives of European nuns. The sacred space of the church or chapel was also a walled, containing shape. Its innermost and restricted places were often considered its holiest, such as 'a chapel with an inner cloister' or 'an altar behind a rood screen.' A hierarchy of spaces within the church privileged the sites that were most enclosed and protected. The result, according to June Mecham's work on the convent at Wienhausen in Lower Saxony, was that cloistered women could cast themselves as especially holy – indeed, as more capable than their male counterparts of gaining access to miraculous experience. (37)

Levine here suggests that where there are constraints there can also be centrality. Layers of architectural enclosures can indicate the containment of a powerful idea within and also presumably serve as protection. This chapter has been at pains to illustrate that Lucy is not merely a victim of her confining architectural surroundings. She is also a creator of metaphoric space that can be constructive and empowering.

In *Villette*, the shrine assumes its most traditional form when Lucy encounters the shrine erected to the memory of Madame Walraven's granddaughter, Justine Marie. Lucy cautiously follows her would-be confessor, Père Silas, into a small room where she observes 'a very solemn little chamber, looking as if it were a place rather dedicated to relics and remembrance, than designed for present use and comfort' (374-375). To Lucy, this room seems 'more like an oratory than a boudoir' (374) and she observes a cross, rosary, and painting of Justine Marie. The priest tells Lucy that M. Paul 'comes

occasionally to worship his beloved saint' (379). As Deborah Lutz writes, 'The basic functioning of both the shrine and the elegy is to keep memories astir' (111). The shrine's role here is to encapsulate and prolong an emotional connection and extend a deceased person's influence via powerful symbolism: romance and worship intertwine in the shrine to Justine Marie. Père Silas represents M. Paul as an active worshipper, leading Lucy to believe that his feelings for the young girl have survived the passage of time. The shrine provides an architectural touchstone for the influence Lucy already believes Justine Marie wields over M. Paul.

In *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), Deborah Lutz explores the materiality of the dead body and its potential to originate relics and narratives in Victorian death culture. Lutz suggests that 'The Victorians expressed a desire to touch the death that surrounds life, to feel its presence as material, vital. Such a culture sees death, and the body itself, as a starting place for stories rather than their annihilation' (127). Lutz connects the materiality of Victorian death culture with the relics of Catholic saints (4). Her book traces the trajectory of the shrine from the worship of Catholic saints to the cultural worship of famous figures and finally to the domestic worship of a lost loved one.[31] Brontë compels her heroine to confront the relics Madame Walravens gathers into a power centre for her granddaughter, the woman Lucy believes still holds sway over M. Paul.

Lucy has conflicted feelings around person worship. After Père Silas makes these disclosures, Lucy is duly impressed by M. Paul's loyalty but admits, 'I own I did not reckon amongst the proofs of his greatness, either the

[31] Shrines dedicated to Christian saints can be traces back to 400 AD (Lutz 104). Secular shrines became widespread in England after the 16th century, when shrines to the saints disappeared (Lutz 107).

act of confession or the saintworship' (379). Lucy has previously employed the shrine image to critique the idea of worshiping another person. When Dr Bretton asks Lucy about his romantic prospects with Ginevra, Lucy responds:

> In some cases, you are a lavish, generous man: you are a worshipper ever ready with the votive offering; should Père Silas ever convert *you*, you will give him abundance of alms for his poor, you will supply his altar with tapers, and the shrine of your favourite saint you will do your best to enrich. (184)

Lucy is biting in her representation of Bretton and mocks his attachment, equating his love with the worship of a saint while knowing that Ginevra is far from one. But Lucy, as we will see, is also susceptible to the tendency to worship.

Brontë re-imagines the Victorian concept of death relics by having her heroine create her own relics from a hopeless romance. These sacred items are, significantly, letters. The historic association of shrines with writing allows Brontë to encapsulate memory, intimacy, death, and worship in Lucy's narrative. Lutz explains this: 'From the Latin *scrinium*, "shrine" originally meant a chest, case, cabinet, coffer, or coffin that held something dear or sacred' (104). These scrinium 'often contained venerated writing, books, or papers. Thus shrines had, from the very start, a close relationship to inscription, epigraphs, and language' (104). Lucy despairs after Madame Beck borrows and then returns Dr Bretton's letters: 'What should I do to prevent this? In what corner of this strange house was it possible to find security or secrecy? Where could a key be a safe-guard or a padlock a barrier?' (283). Lucy wants the locks and keys that Lady Audley possesses, although as we will see, the promise of a lock is undercut in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Lucy eventually reaches the conclusion

that there is no viable private place for her letters and, additionally, there is no real chance of an actual romance with the doctor. First, she describes the death of her hopes as a painful death after prolonged suffering: 'the Hope I am bemoaning suffered and made me suffer much: it did not die till it was full time: following an agony so lingering, death ought to be welcome' (282). She then describes her dead romantic hopes like a dead body she must lay out for burial: 'In the end I closed the eyes of my dead, covered its face, and composed its limbs with great calm' (282). Brontë provides a brutal image of a living, suffering love that faces a material, painful death and must ultimately be committed for burial. Lucy explicitly connects her prized letters with death relics: 'The letters, however, must be put away, out of sight: people who have undergone bereavement always jealously gather together and lock away mementos' (282). Dr Bretton's letters are her mementos and the closest she will come to a material relic from Dr Bretton's own body. Lucy admits that 'it is not supportable to be stabbed to the heart each moment by sharp revival of regret' (282). As a matter of self-preservation, Lucy decides she must limit her access to the relics of her romance.

Brontë takes this extended death metaphor to its limits when, after much internal debate, Lucy purchases a jar, seals up the letters, and buries them in the garden, saying 'I was not only going to hide a treasure – I meant also to bury a grief. The grief over which I had lately been weeping, as I wrapped it in its winding-sheet, must be interred' (284). What begins as a metaphorical burial assumes physical form, as Lucy enacts a funeral for an emotional death. The letters are her relics and the burial place is her shrine to words and romance, an invisible shrine in the sense that she places her relics out of sight, hoping that the burial will facilitate an emotional recovery. She recalls that, once the letters

were buried, 'I rested, leaning against the tree; lingering, like any other mourner, beside a newly-sodded grave' (284).[32] Later, passing the 'tomb' of her buried love, Lucy 'recalled the passage of feelings therein buried' and admits, 'Sometimes I thought the tomb unquiet, and dreamed strangely of disturbed earth, and of hair, still golden and living, obtruded though coffin-chinks' (347). In this disturbing image, Dr Bretton's letters are represented through his own physical traits, as if he himself continues to dwell in his grave. The image of disturbed earth and protruding hair brings to mind the exposed graves of the *Bleak House* burying ground. The continued visibility of Dr Bretton's body also suggests the bodily relics housed in a shrine. The shrine maintains significant connections with architecture, as Lutz explains:

> a shrine not only housed the corporeal parts of the saint, but also he or she was thought to be present, even to lodge in a ghostly sort of way, at the site. This is why many reliquary chests, boxes, and coffers were fashioned to look like miniature cathedrals, houses, or other types of habitations. (105)[33]

These house-shaped shrines suggest a promise of continuing the familiar experience of habitation after death. Similarly to the mausolea discussed in the previous chapter, these shrines illustrate that architectural enclosure is foundational to the way we conceptualise our inevitable trajectory from life to death.[34]

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[32] M. Paul also uses burial image to describe the death of any passion in his life. He tells Lucy, 'It died in the past – in the present is lies buried – its grave is deep-dug, well-heaped, and many winters old: in the future there will be a resurrection, as I believe to my soul's consolation; but all will then be changed – form and feeling: the mortal will have put on immortality – it will rise, not for earth, but heaven' (331).

[33] Ultimately, as relics became secularised, they were brought directly into the home instead of being placed in a house-shaped container (Lutz 111).

[34] In her own letters, Brontë connects death and burial with dwelling. After the deaths of all of her siblings she writes: 'I felt that the house was all silent – the rooms were all empty. I remembered where the three were laid – in what narrow dark dwellings – never more to reappear on earth' (Gaskell 312).

Lucy explores the psychological origin of this unusual funeral, writing, ‘The impulse under which I acted, the mood controlling me, were similar to the impulse and the mood which had induced me to visit the confessional’ (283-284). It is noteworthy that Lucy herself brings together these two significant moments when she knows that she has behaved unusually. The impulse she describes was the urge to seek out compatible architectural space that suits her emotional state of mind, and a tomb seems a fitting place to house the relics of her dead-end romance with the doctor. Taken together, Lucy’s buried letters and Justine Marie’s shrine provide a compelling contrast. Lucy buries her letters in an attempt to stifle her emotions. Justine Marie, whose body has been physically buried, continues to exert influence through the relics and shrine that ‘keep memories astir’ (Lutz 111).

Lucy dwells on the idea of the shrine throughout her narrative and turns to the shrine metaphor to describe the emotions contained within her own heart as well as the intellectual and emotional centres of other characters. For Lucy, the idea of the shrine can encapsulate a person’s fundamental nature and deepest held values. As mentioned in the second section of this chapter, Lucy writes two letters to Dr Bretton, one dictated by emotion and the other by reason, knowing that only one of these letters will be sent. She describes her method of composition:

> To speak truth, I compromised matters; I served two masters; I bowed down in the house of Rimmon, and lifted the heart at another shrine. I wrote to these letters two answers – one for my own relief, the other for Graham’s perusal. (243)

Here, Lucy alludes to a biblical passage where a servant apologises to God for having to bow down while his master worships a Syrian deity.[35] Lucy uses this metaphor to illustrate the difference between outward action and inward belief. She knows that she must send the letter that conforms to social expectation, but she wants her readers to know that her heart nevertheless exists as a powerful force and worships 'at another shrine'. Lucy encloses her true thoughts and feelings within this heart-shrine, a safe and sacred space where she can worship freely.

In Brontë's conceptualisation the heart shrine is a sacred space worthy of protection and we see Lucy accordingly attempt to protect her own heart shrine and those she envisions for Dr Bretton and M. Paul. While Lucy creates and probes imaginative emotional and intellectual architectural interiors throughout her narrative, she is uncomfortable with the idea of other people having similar access to these intimate spaces. When Lucy meets Père Silas face to face, after her earlier experience in the confessional, he reminds her that she has exposed herself to him:

> I, daughter, am Père Silas; that unworthy son of Holy Church whom you once honoured with a noble and touching confidence, showing me the core of a heart, and the inner shrine of a mind whereof, in solemn truth, I coveted the direction, in behalf of the only true faith. (378)[36]

Here we see access to the heart and mind paired together as equally significant and intimate realms. Lucy is discomfited by this thought and fears that, similarly,

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[35] 'In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing' (2 Kings 5:18).

[36] Eliot also uses the image of a mental shrine in *Middlemarch* (1872). Lydgate is amazed that his wife, Rosamund, does not seek his opinion: 'His superior knowledge and mental force, instead of being, as he imagined, a shrine to consult on all occasions, was simply set aside on every practical question' (Eliot 549).

when M. Paul goes to confession, ‘no corner of his heart is sacred’ (397). Lucy has earlier used the exact same phrase to express her distaste for the lack of privacy at the school: ‘no corner was sacred from intrusion’ (222). Lucy envisions M. Paul’s heart as equipped with corners, sacred enclaves of intimacy, yet these corners are liable to be exposed in the confessional. Critics have discussed Lucy’s discomfort with this level of penetration (Shuttleworth). Leila S. May considers Lucy’s soul to be her most secret place and writes, ‘A major source of Lucy’s vitriol against Catholicism appears to be her belief that its system of churchly interventions conspires against the cultivation of this secret, private space’ (47). I would argue that, in fact, Lucy configures her own heart as her most protected and sacred place. Regardless, Lucy clearly prizes an impenetrable, sacred corner. The idea of accessing the ‘core’ or ‘shrine’ recurs throughout the novel, as Lucy controls her readers’ access, at times inviting them into her own imaginative interior spaces or else depicting her memory of another character’s sacred interior.

Brontë presents a heroine with the ability to modify architectural imagery to suit her narrative purposes. Lucy’s imagery continues to shift when she describes M. Paul’s emotional interior with her architect’s eye. Lucy believes that M. Paul’s romantic history reveals the sacred centre of his heart: ‘it was not an ossified organ: in its core was a place, tender beyond a man’s tenderness’ (324). Significantly, for Lucy his heart is a distinct location, a destination to be visited, to appeal to for entry and hope for access. Lutz suggests that an elegy is the closest literary form to a shrine, writing that, ‘The Victorian love of the elegiac and of shrines were both part of the same movement toward a need to locate the dead in *place*’ (103). The idea of locating a person ‘in place’ is highly significant in *Villette*, as Lucy builds creative architectural spaces over which

she maintains exclusive control. Lucy mediates her reader's access to the imaginative architectural structures she creates in her narrative and uses these structures to convey her most significant mental and emotional experiences. May discusses Lucy's soul, writing that despite being intangible it 'is nevertheless treated spatially by Brontë's narrator: it is a secret *place*' (46). While May looks primarily at the way Lucy's secrets are associated with architectural spaces of the built environment, it is also important to understand that Lucy creates 'places' that cannot be seen in the world of the novel, as Brontë endows Lucy with the narrative authority to create spatial extension for a character's thoughts and emotions. May also writes that,

> The soul is the deepest secret, and it has its own secrets even from the agent, as well as its own secret places. There is a place that offers absolute privacy – so secret and private that even she, Lucy Snowe, does not have full cognizance of it even in those rare moments when she occupies it. And yet, for Lucy, this secret place is somehow her most real place – the site of her being, where she comes closest to touching God. (47)

Throughout the novel, Lucy employs architectural metaphor pointedly, regulating her readers' access to her most private interior spaces. It does not seem likely, then, that Lucy does not have 'full cognizance' of her own creative architecture 'even in those rare moments when she occupies it'. Instead, Brontë endows Lucy with an architect's eye to create these very significant interior spaces and further the psychological realism of her novel.

Brontë displays Lucy's talent of architectural mutability when Lucy describes M. Paul's heart after she discovers his history with Justine Marie,

shifting her imagery (adapting it in her imagination) from the corners and core of the heart to the adytum, the innermost sanctuary of an ancient Greek temple:

> And they, Père Silas and Modeste Maria Beck […] opened up the adytum of his heart – showed me one grand love, the child of this southern nature's youth, born so strong and perfect, that it had laughed at death himself, despised his mean rape of matter, clung to immortal spirit, and, in victory and faith, had watched beside a tomb twenty years. (381)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'adytum' as 'The innermost or most sacred part of a temple or other place of worship; a small sanctuary in the cella reserved for oracles, priests, or priestesses'. The adytum is central to the temple and is architecturally protected. Despite M. Paul's devout Catholic faith, Lucy employs the Greek adytum to highlight the teacher's association with academics. At his very centre M. Paul possesses an adytum, a sacred and intimate interior space that is nevertheless linked with his intellectual pursuits.[37] Additionally, by using this image, Lucy suggests that there is an accessible space within the heart where a person's true character dwells. Père Silas and Madame Beck have inadvertently revealed to Lucy who M. Paul is at his core and she is attracted to what she sees.

In his article 'Material Interiority in Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor*', William A. Cohen uses the term 'material interiority' to describe such moments of envisioning the bodily interior through a material conduit. As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, while Cohen's article did not inform my use of the phrase 'architectural internalisation' it was encouraging to discover Cohen's

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[37] Patricia H. Wheat titles her book, *The Adytum of the Heart: The Literary Criticism of Charlotte Brontë* (1992), after Brontë's reference to 'the adytum of [M.Paul's] heart' (381). Wheat claims that 'the story which revealed to Brontë the "adytum of the heart," the innermost room of the artist's soul, was the novel' (35).

similar interest in looking at materially-mediated bodily interiors. Cohen does not mention *Villette* in his article, but the technique he traces in *The Professor* is similar to what I have explored in Brontë's later novel. Cohen argues that in *The Professor* Brontë 'makes peculiarly vivid the taken-for-granted situation of human interiority – the idea that human subjects dwell in their bodies, and that bodies serve as vehicles or containers for invisible spiritual, psychological, or mental contents' (445). Cohen continues, 'By portraying in palpable terms the human body's enclosure of intangible subjectivity, she exploits the paradox of an immaterial soul, heart, or mind inhabiting the flesh' (445). For Cohen, the use of the 'material interiority' term designates 'this literary depiction of ethereal inner qualities in a language of tangible objects, a practice that collapses dualistic conceptions of mind and body (or body and soul) by making subjective inwardness and bodily innards stand for each other' (445). Cohen is interested in the organic body itself as a material container, whereas I am talking primarily about the internalisation of specifically architectural features. While Brontë was clearly interested in experimenting with the technique of architectural internalisation in her earlier novel, she goes even further in *Villette* by allowing her heroine to imagine a space of architectural internalisation for herself within the body of another person. Lucy's vision of one person belonging inside of another is certainly unusual but it is through this conceptualisation that Brontë explores Lucy's overwhelming desire for intellectual and emotional communion, her longing for a safe place to rest and a for a portable metaphorical homespace – desires materialised in the novel through Lucy's creation of alternative domestic dwelling places. Through such acts of creation, Brontë merges architectural materiality with organic processes, and provides texture and tangibility to her heroine's unseen thoughts and longings.

Lucy erects her own structures of creative literary architecture, applying her architectural sensibility to her most private thoughts and emotions and creating original structures that similarly reflect and enclose her reverence. Brontë envisions a heroine who is interested in the idea of constructing a sacred space within another person, crafting imaginative mind and heart-spaces that she likens explicitly to deeply private and thoroughly enclosed religious shrines. Lucy longs to be ‘at home’ within the heart of another person, searching out that missing domestic home within the architecturalised interior of someone she loves and creating her own lodging spaces where she can belong and possibly even disperse a subtle influence. Francoise Basch describes the resilient association of the home with a kind of sacred space, a ‘temple’ and ‘haven’ held apart from the trials of the outside world (7). In *Villette*, the home becomes something that Lucy can carry with her through the concept of the heart-shrine: Lucy expresses the desire to be carried within another and to carry within herself. Lucy envisions habitable space within the architecturalised heart and mind and her subjective experiences thus become navigable when represented via tangible architecture. Brontë represents the heretofore unseen flexible potential of architectural imagery as Lucy’s creative architecture builds on the materiality of the body as she expands heart chambers and brain compartments, merging physiological descriptions with expansive, internalised architecture. Through the technique of architectural internalisation, Brontë accomplishes her aims of laying bare the emotional life of her heroine while simultaneously creating unconventional dwelling places. While Lucy is homeless in the conventional sense, she responds to this situation by constructing a series of metaphoric homes where she can safely reside.

Brontë foregrounds Lucy's creative power by endowing her heroine with an architect's eye that can create as well as narrate. In a striking extended architectural metaphor, Lucy likens Dr Bretton's heart to a mansion. She takes the pre-existing physiological idea of the heart's chambers and adapts it to better suit the doctor's expansive character, merging the organic with the built. She explains that instead of four chambers, Dr Bretton's heart extends to grander architectural proportions:

> Graham's thoughts of me were not entirely those of a frozen indifference, after all. I believe in that goodly mansion, his heart, he kept one little place under the skylights where Lucy might have entertainment, if she chose to call. It was not so handsome as the chambers where he lodged his male friends; it was not like the hall where he accommodated his philanthropy, or the library where he treasured his science, still less did it resemble the pavilion where his marriage feast was splendidly spread; yet gradually, by long and equal kindness, he proved to me that he kept one little closet, over the door of which was written, 'Lucy's Room.' (439)

To Lucy, Dr Bretton's heart is a mansion, grand and expansive, housing the people in his life based on their importance to him. This organisational method of person to room is similar to the categorisation she experienced at the hotel, but now Lucy and her imagination are in control. Dr Bretton's heart-space encapsulates his entire life: his friends are entertained in fine 'chambers', his philanthropy resides in a grand 'hall', his scientific interests inhabit the 'library', and his marriage is celebrated in the 'pavilion'. By constructing the extended metaphor of heart as mansion, Lucy experiments with architecturally controlling the doctor himself. Lucy claims an intimate knowledge of the doctor's character

and priorities, saying what is important and where it belongs. She is organising the doctor for a sense of control, writing about his essential nature even as she admits to being marginalised.

After her experience of multiple 'closet' spaces throughout the course of the novel, such as in Miss Marchmont's sick-room, at the hotel, and in her school room-cell, Lucy predictably assigns herself to a closet room in the doctor's heart. Unexpectedly, though, this most modest architectural enclosure possesses a skylight and Lucy maintains ownership of this small but illuminated space.[38] Lucy is looking for architectural compatibility that she cannot find in the built environment of her physical world, so she intuitively creates her own interior spaces either within herself or by imagining an architecturalised enclosure for herself within the physical body of another person. In this instance, Lucy re-imagines her experience of closet spaces and, through the creative manipulation of architectural materials, constructs a space for herself that is small but filled with natural light. Despite her many disappointments, Lucy's inclusion of the skylight suggests accessibility and her hope for continued communion with the doctor.

Brontë expands the traditional concept of home by creating a heroine who constructs a sequence of metaphorical homes within the living body of another person like M. Paul and Dr Bretton as well as within herself. Marilyn Faulkenburg writes of this scene that Lucy 'can satisfy her longing to "taste life" by mentally enclosing herself within his extroverted personality' (43-44). But Lucy is not merely 'enclosing herself', she is creating this idea of the heart-

[38] The image of the skylight appears in Brontë's written reaction to the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850. In a letter to her publisher, George Smith, Brontë writes, 'I cannot help anticipating the time when 65 Cornhill shall be honoured by the daily domiciliary visits of 'a friar of orders grey,' and when that small back room […] lit by a skylight, shall be fitted up as an oratory, with a saint in the niche, two candles always burning, a *prie-dieu*, and a handsomely bound Missal; also a confessional chair – very comfortable – for the priest, and a square of carpet, or better the bare boards, for the penitent' (Jedrzejewski 133).

shrine that allows the home to become a flexible concept. Through this extended metaphor, Lucy builds a space of belonging and acceptance, inserting herself within the doctor's heart in a way that ensures that she will travel with him, not to voyeuristically experience the world through the doctor's 'extroverted personality' but to ensure that she will have a permanent home within him. In addition, through her creative architecture, Lucy breaks down the barriers of conventional domestic architecture, calling into question the reality of female confinement. In doing so, she illustrates a more complicated representation of gendered space, as gendered spheres become plastic with her representation of metaphoric architecture.

While Lucy imagines an architectural enclosure for herself within the doctor's heart, she also admits: 'I kept a place for him, too – a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass' (439). While Lucy imagines a solid, practical, architectural place for herself inside of Dr Bretton (a closet), she is careful to keep him metaphorically external to her own body, never granting him a permanent architectural home within herself: 'I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my life long I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand – yet released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host' (439). While the tent is certainly a habitation of sorts, it is typically understood as temporary and migratory. Despite the fact that a tent suggests impermanence, Lucy keeps hold of it. Through this image, Brontë suggests the capacity for the human mind to create psychological annexes, self-preserving enclaves where difficult thoughts can be safely contained. Brontë here alludes to the story 'Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Peri-Banou' in *The Thousand and One Nights*, where the fairy gives the prince a tent that can change its size to suit his needs,

expanding from tiny to enormous. For Lucy, the doctor's place exists as a flexible structure with expansive potential.[39] She attempts to protect herself from her feelings for Dr Bretton, fearing that without rigid self-control he might become an object of worship. Through this image, Lucy merges the organic with the built, imagining a structure with the potential to expand and contract like the heart's systole and diastole. Systole is the part of the cardiac cycle when the heart's ventricles contract, forcing the blood to move onwards. Diastole is when the heart muscle relaxes and allows the chambers to fill up with blood. Here we see Brontë exploring the idea of expansion and contraction through habitation, combining organic physiology with built architecture. As we have seen, Lucy endeavours to similarly regulate her emotions via an architectural system of enclosure and control. But her impulse also reflects her desire for protection and exclusivity. If we think back to Levine's discussion of the cloistered nuns, it becomes clear that Lucy's technique of architecturally enclosing her thoughts and emotions heightens the significance of what is being contained. Lucy compartmentalises and regulates her reader's access to these intimate spaces and she becomes the arbiter of who can enter.

Throughout her narrative Lucy foregrounds her desire to contain and enclose and turns to architectural metaphor to illustrate for her reader precisely where her thoughts and emotions were dwelling during the events of her past she documents. At the same time, she self-consciously contrasts her work and the materials at her disposal with Dr Bretton's movement through material architecture. Lucy is aware that he can breach any enclosure and will not be denied or restricted. She recalls,

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[39] Katherine J. Kim provides a very brief acknowledgment of Lucy as an architect with creative power. Kim writes of Lucy that 'She yet again creates an enclosure for Graham over which she asserts authority, this time one that is disturbingly poised for a potential future reception' (423-424).

> I often felt amazed at his perfect knowledge of Villette; a knowledge not merely confined to its open streets, but penetrating to all its galleries, salles, and cabinets: of every door which shut in an object worth seeing, of every museum, of every hall, sacred to art or science, he seemed to possess the 'Open! Sesame!' (189)

So while Dr Bretton has a boundless relationship to architecture and the opportunities manifest within, Lucy repeatedly turns to the metaphor of the heart-shrine to express her longing for a permanent place of acceptance and belonging. Doubting the possibility of finding such a homespace materialised in the architectural built environment, Lucy constructs creative and intimate architectural enclosures unseen in the world of the novel but powerfully realised for Lucy and her reader.

Conclusion

Lucy leaves her readers with an image of architectural growth that she herself facilitates in the material built environment world of the novel. After receiving an unexpected bequest Lucy decides to expand her business:

> With this hundred pounds I ventured to take the house adjoining mine. I would not leave that which M. Paul had chosen, in which he had left, and where he expected again to find me. My externat became a pensionnat; that also prospered. (472)

Lucy is aware that business expansion goes hand in hand with architectural expansion and understands that, in order to grow her business, she must take over more architectural space. At the same time, she wants a visual representation of her success to offer M. Paul on his return. Her day school becomes a successful boarding school. Gretchen Braun writes that Lucy's story is different from that of other Victorian heroines in that she remains 'friendless

and obscure at the novel's close' (189). Braun continues, '*Villette* provides no validating closure to the attention it has lavished on Lucy Snowe for nearly six hundred pages […] no wedding, no substantial inheritance, no significant public achievement' (189). While Lucy's fate might not be what her readers expect, that does not mean the ending has no value for the author. Instead, what Brontë represents is success on Lucy's terms. As Flint writes, 'the most subtle, yet most triumphant portrayal of a woman's growth into self-sufficiency in all Charlotte Brontë's fiction can be found in *Villette*' (17).

Lucy, like Esther Summerson, is emphatic in her emphasis on her architectural location at the conclusion of her narrative account: Esther writes her narrative from the new Bleak House and Lucy writes from her home-business. The novel ends abruptly as Lucy, again like Esther, cuts off her life story when she is still a young woman. Lucy exercises her authorial prerogative by choosing to keep her middle and later years private from the reader. After meticulously constructing spaces of architectural communion and intimacy, Lucy abruptly severs the reader from her consciousness. She has revealed all that she is willing to and leaves her reader with practical details over emotional truths and, consequently, a final architectural image (the school) that is material rather than metaphorical.

While many scholars have discussed Lucy's confinement within various manifestations of restrictive architecture throughout the novel, I have illustrated her reaction to these restrictive enclosures – the creation of imaginative architectural expansion by which she details her past thoughts and emotions. In *Villette*, Lucy's narrative authority generates from architecture. Her architect's eye enables her to provide realist descriptions of her built environment but also to enact creative architectural expansion through metaphor. Consequently,

Lucy's architectural sensitivity advances both the material and psychological realism of her narrative as she merges the visual registers of the organic with the built. Brontë's realist aims for *Villette* are powerfully represented by Brontë's first-person narrator, a heroine who is both an author and a creative literary architect.

While Brontë sets out to write her novel thinking of the 'household altars' of her readers' hearts and how to insert her heroines favourably in that space, she despatches a heroine who similarly strives for access to this sacred, domestic space within another person. These household altars are re-imagined as shrines by Lucy as she constructs metaphoric architectural spaces that are both sacred and domestic. Thus Lucy enacts Brontë's goal of insertion and preservation, adopting the technique of architectural internalisation and creating an architecturalised space for herself within the minds and hearts of certain male characters and, by extension, her readers. Brontë hopes that, if her heroines can become domesticated within the hearts of her readers, they will have a continued life outside of the novel. It is left to us, then, to ask whether Brontë has achieved her aim, and I feel that she has. We do not leave Lucy behind when we close the final pages of *Villette*.

3. ‘In such a house, there were secret chambers’: Building Material and Psychological Realism in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*

Introduction

In her essay ‘At the Shrine of *Jane Eyre*’ (1906), Mary Elizabeth Braddon recalls her first reading of Charlotte Brontë’s novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847), and her later pilgrimage to the Brontë family parsonage at Haworth. After praising Brontë’s descriptive power as ‘the kind of descriptive writing that lifts prose almost to poetry’ (174), Braddon turns to Elizabeth Gaskell’s biography of Brontë, an ‘admirable memoir’ (174) and ‘a book to which I have gone back again and again’ (175).[1] Braddon remains captivated by Gaskell’s portrait of the parsonage and, after much anticipation, decides to realise her ‘day-dream’ (175) of seeing it for herself. She has a vivid expectation for Haworth:

> A lonely stone house on a wind-swept moor, high above the common life of man. A stern old church, a treeless churchyard on two sides of the grim parsonage, a village street […] a low-roofed homestead showing here and there in the distance, and for the rest solitude, the grandeur of the wide moorland, the darkness of far-off hills. This was the Haworth of my fancy. (175)

Her mental picture is moody and atmospheric, with its ‘lonely stone house’, ‘stern old church’, and ‘grim parsonage’. Significantly, it is these anticipated architectural features that Braddon believes provide an appropriate setting for the cultivation of Brontë’s literary genius. Braddon considers this vision: ‘A sad environment this lonely parish of my dream, a melancholy atmosphere, yet still a fitting place for the growth of a strong concentrative mind, a poetic fancy,

[1] Elizabeth Gaskell. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857.

original ideas, deep reaching thoughts' (175). In Braddon's understanding, the parsonage housed and facilitated the 'the growth' of Brontë's mind and so the architectural structure itself becomes relevant to an understanding of Brontë's literary achievement.[2] In fact, the extent to which Braddon associates Brontë's creative output with her home is immediately indicated in the title of her essay: 'At the Shrine of *Jane Eyre*'. The shrine to Brontë's most famous novel becomes the parsonage, a tangible manifestation of Brontë's creative accomplishments. As explored in the previous chapter, Brontë herself employs the image of the shrine and the technique of architectural internalisation to describe her realist aims and hope that her characters will assume residence in the minds and hearts of her readers. If for Brontë the shrine is a space of intimacy and communion, then it would appear that Braddon has similar expectations for her visit to 'the Shrine of *Jane Eyre*'.

The impulse to visit an author's home to achieve a greater understanding of their life and work is resilient and continues to this day.[3] Kate Marsh suggests that 'We extend our knowledge of a person when we look at his home. We draw conclusions about his taste, aspirations, money, and preoccupations. It is one of the ways in which he expresses himself' (xiv). She continues, 'We walk in our writers' footsteps and see through their eyes when we enter these spaces' (xv). While this is certainly the hope, Braddon is ultimately disappointed with what she finds at Haworth, for in reality at the time of her visit to the parsonage, 'There is nothing wind-swept or melancholy about it' (175-176). The graveyard is blocked from view and 'A wing has been added, an essentially modern,

[2] Nicola J. Watson explores literary tourism in the nineteenth century in her book, *The Literary Tourist* (2008) and her edited collection, *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (2009).
[3] To name just a few of many, the Brontë Parsonage at Haworth is currently a museum and library, Dickens's London house is open to visitors, and Elizabeth Gaskell's own house in Manchester is now a museum.

comfortable wing, and plate-glass windows have made an end of the old-world aspect of the house we know in the modest engraving on Mrs. Gaskell's title-page' (176). By placing her own sketch of the parsonage and churchyard on the frontispiece of volume two of her biography, Gaskell highlights the significance of the parsonage to her own conception of Brontë's identity and cements the connection of house and author in the minds of her readers. Gaskell was able to see the parsonage as it appeared when Brontë lived and wrote there, but with the renovations observed and detailed by Braddon, it is as if a portal has been closed. The architecture of the parsonage has been irrevocably changed and, consequently, Braddon feels cut off from the access to Brontë and her work that Gaskell was able to experience on her own memorable visit to Haworth.[4] With the addition of the 'comfortable wing', the parsonage is no longer entirely representative of the architectural enclosure that housed the 'growth of [Brontë's] strong concentrative mind' (175). Unfortunately for Braddon, her visit is not the transportive experience she had anticipated.

In her novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Braddon fully embraces the intimate connection between house and inhabitant, architecture and author that she hoped to discover at the Brontë parsonage. Braddon presents a distinctly architectural focus in her novel, an emphasis on building, constructing, the act of creation, and a clear belief in the power of architecture as a literary vehicle. In this novel she capitalises on what we expect from domestic architecture – how a sheltering structure can become representative of our thoughts, desires,

[4] Gaskell describes the parsonage in the first chapter of her biography: 'The house is of grey stone, two stories high, heavily roofed with flags, in order to resist the winds that might strip off a lighter covering. It appears to have been built about a hundred years ago, and to consist of four rooms on each story; the two windows on the right (as the visitor stands with his back to the church, ready to enter in at the front door) belonging to Mr Brontë's study, the two on the left to the family sitting-room. Everything about the place tells of the most dainty order, the most exquisite cleanliness. The door-steps are spotless; the small old-fashioned window panes glitter like looking-glass. Inside and outside of that house cleanliness goes up into its essence, purity' (12).

abilities and accomplishments. She thinks about what we anticipate from a house and what a house is capable of saying. What can a well-constructed house express? What can a home reveal and what can it conceal? She also, quite self-consciously, thinks about well-constructed architecture in a novelist's terms and her narrator's architectural commentary is simultaneously a meditation on the author as architect: the architect of the novel, the built environment, the mystery, and her heroine's psychological condition. The idea of the author as a metaphoric architect constructing their novel is certainly a cliché that could potentially be applied to every novelist. In this case, I am not suggesting an intricate but ultimately meaningless metaphor, but I am highlighting a connection made by Braddon herself. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon uses architecture to think through her authorship of the novel: what it means to build, to create a structure from nothing, a new architectural (or literary) entity or to renovate, add, and adapt an existing building (or genre). Architecture is intrinsic to Braddon's interests and aims in this novel and her particular form of literary architecture allows her to enhance the material realism of the novel's built environment while also creating a form of psychological realism that is materially-mediated and manifest in the architecture she describes.

Lady Audley's Secret sits squarely in the sensation fiction category and is perhaps the most recognisable novel of the genre. Nevertheless, there have been recent efforts to loosen Braddon's novel from the rigid category of sensation fiction, exemplified in the essay collections *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context* (2000) and *New Perspectives on Mary Elizabeth Braddon* (2012). In the introduction to *New Perspectives* Jessica Cox indicates that, despite her later literary attempts focused on realism, Braddon was

'pigeonholed' as a sensation writer due to the massive popularity of her first two books, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* (1863). The editors of *Beyond Sensation* suggest that this early 'typecasting' was injurious to Braddon as the genre was thought to be 'a diseased, feminine genre, relying more on plot complications than on artistry' (xviii). In her essay in *Beyond Sensation*, Pamela K. Gilbert explores Braddon's relationship to realism, writing that, 'Braddon, who produced largely in both genres [sensation and realism], is now remembered only as a sensationalist' (184). Gilbert's essay, focusing on *Joshua Haggard's Daughter* (1876), 'aims to recuperate her work in the realist mode' (184). Gilbert writes that while 'Sensation novels at first glance might seem to repudiate [the] realistic mode of narration and offer a return to the gothic […] On second look, however, sensation novels are deeply indebted to the realist tradition' (183).[5] Winifred Hughes argues that 'What the sensation novel adds to melodrama, as a kind of counterweight, is the same solidity of physical detail characteristic of nineteenth-century realism' (27). Hughes goes on to say that some sensation authors 'ought to be considered as pioneers in new territories of the imagination, territories that even the realists of the 1860s could no longer pretend to ignore' (29). While Braddon's contribution to realism has been largely eclipsed by her role as sensation novelist, this chapter will look at her novel in the context of a progression of novels that evince an interest in architecturally-inflected material and psychological realism.

When thinking about the work that literary architecture is capable of doing in a sensation novel, it seems natural to turn to the Gothic. A great deal of work has been done on the way sensation novelists, and Braddon specifically,

[5] Gilbert suggests, 'Sensation characters might best be said to experience realist challenges at an accelerated rate: whereas the realist protagonist has a detailed response to one or two […] conflict themes, sensation characters struggle with all of them in rapid succession. Their lives or case histories seem to be intensified and "speeded up"'(184).

incorporate and re-envision Gothic tropes in their novels (Saverio Tomaiuolo, Eva Badowska, Carol Margaret Davison).[6] In terms of architecture specifically, numerous scholars have written to suggest that sensation fiction moves away from the accustomed architectural sites of haunting and imprisonment typically found in Gothic novels. Instead, Gothic terror becomes mobile and capable of infecting any architectural space or mental interior (Robert Mighall, Julian Wolfreys, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas). This work is compelling and provides a way to think through how sensation authors were grappling with Victorian modernity. Far less, though, has been written about architectural sites as they do appear in sensation novels, and even less on the important role of architecture in advancing an author's realist agenda. I am interested in putting a little distance between architecture and its almost reflexive categorisation as Gothic. While acknowledging Gothic tropes when they appear in *Lady Audley's Secret*, this chapter focuses on various manifestations of architecture and the work it allows Braddon to accomplish in advancing her novel's realism. My intervention will be to examine material and metaphoric architecture as it appears in *Lady Audley's Secret*, tracking Braddon's construction of a materially realistic built environment, a psychological portrait achieved through architecture, and a treatise on a well-constructed novel.

Braddon crafts a novel that dwells on architecture, construction, the creation of living spaces and the possibilities or limitations they afford or inflict. To this end, Braddon gives her readers a narrator who possesses a marked interest in architecture and distinct enjoyment detailing and, significantly, critiquing the various architectural structures represented in the novel. In

[6] Davison attributes the second 'major metamorphosis' of the Gothic to the appearance of Sensation fiction in the 1860s (132). She writes, 'Notably, it homed its lens in on the middle-class family – the class which possessed, unlike the working classes, the luxury of privacy. In doing so, like early Victorian Gothic but with different implications, sensation fiction capitalised on the disjunction between public and private/secret selves' (132).

addition to describing the built environment surrounding her characters, Braddon's narrator creates an architectural sympathy between the leading house of the novel, Audley Court, and its famed inhabitant, Lady Audley. Scholarship on *Lady Audley's Secret* has thoroughly explored the idea of Lady Audley as an invasive force, a blight on Audley Court and all of the nobility, patriarchy, and well-regulated domesticity it represents.[7] Less explored has been Braddon's choice of vehicle, that very architectural structure and all it signifies, to build her heroine's psychological landscape. Merging the registers of organic and built imagery, the narrator compels the architecture of Audley Court to reflect Lady Audley's mental interior and psychological profile. Consequently, Audley Court becomes a tangible psychological diagram, a navigable architectural and psychological interior. Accordingly, Braddon foregrounds her imaginative representation of architecture's ability to reveal deep truths about a character.

In the previous chapter I explored Lucy Snowe's creative architectural metaphors in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, arguing that Lucy's architect's eye enabled her to create her own imaginative architectural enclosures apart from the architecture of the built environment surrounding her in the world of the novel. These creative architectural spaces, especially heart-shrines, simultaneously allowed Lucy to convey her subjectivity and emphasise her own narrative authority as literary architect and fictional author of the novel. Consequently, Lucy's architect's eye provides a way of seeing that guides the reader while simultaneously highlighting Brontë's realist aims for her novel. In

[7] Winifred Hughes writes in *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation novels of the 1860s* (1980): 'It is axiomatic in the sensation novel that crime, evil, and violent or illicit passion have already found their way into ordinary middle-class surroundings. The result is perceived as nothing less than a direct, full-scale invasion of the middle-class domestic paradise' (43-44). With crime and madness invading the home, Hughes writes that 'The implications of this are devastating: the outward semblance of the domestic ideal may prove worse than empty; the angel of the hearth may turn out to be an incubus' (45).

Lady Audley's Secret, it is the third-person narrator, rather than the heroine, who possesses an architect's eye. In a second departure, while my previous two chapters focus primarily on architectural metaphor, used by authors to provide greater insight into their heroines' minds, emotions, and narrative agenda, in this chapter I will explore what happens when a narrator's architect's eye is trained towards material architecture. Instead of the architectural internalisation technique I have been tracking in this thesis, in *Lady Audley's Secret* we are held on the periphery of Braddon's heroine's mind and must instead look at the way Braddon manipulates material architecture to suggest Lady Audley's mental condition and psychological motives. So, while we rarely see Lady Audley employ an architectural metaphor directly in her speech or thought, the architectural details of Audley Court described by the narrator are revealing of Lady Audley herself. In 'Madwomen and Attics', Laurence Talairach-Vielmas writes that in the second half of the nineteenth century 'neuro-physiology gradually placed the mind as the heart of emotions' (36), continuing, '[w]ith the development of neuro-physiology, therefore, emotions were more and more linked to brain mechanisms. The replacement of the heart by the brain as the organ linked with emotions is manifest in several portraits of Victorian Ophelia-like madwomen' (36-37). This is useful to note when turning from *Villette* and the creative architecture of heart-shrines to *Lady Audley*'s Secret and a focus on an architecturalised mindscape. The material architecture of Audley Court is written into being by Braddon to reflect aspects of Lady Audley's emotional health, purpose-built by Braddon as a stand-in for Lady Audley's secrecy, dark impulses and dual identity, with the result that she is more intrinsic to the estate then the stretching lineage of male owners.

The first section of this chapter will examine the various architectural structures Braddon incorporates into her novel. In this section I argue that architecture provides a crucial vehicle for Braddon's realist aims. She deploys a narrator with an architect's eye who describes the architecture of the built environment of the novel in realist detail. At the same time, her narrator's commentary on sound versus faulty architecture is revealing of Braddon's own self-conscious ruminations on her authorial process and narrative authority. The second section of this chapter explores Braddon's technique of merging the visual registers of the organic with the built and crafting a portrait of a house that doubles as a psychological diagram of its most famous inhabitant. Focusing on Braddon's technique of sending various characters on guided tours of Audley Court, I will highlight the extent to which Braddon employs architecture to enhance her narrative authority and explore different ways of seeing. Braddon clearly represents the human impulse to shelter within architecture, an impulse and expectation that applies to the living and the dead. Accordingly, the third and final section of the chapter looks at the novel's preoccupation with an unhoused body, arguing that Robert's discomfort concerning his friend's missing body reveals the extent to which the human experience is deeply bound to the expectation of architectural enclosure.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon pointedly deploys architectural structures typically categorised as Gothic such as the estate, asylum, convent, tomb, and labyrinth to explore intimacy, interiority, authorship, and the house/self connection expressed in her writings about Haworth and explored by philosophers like Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard writes that the house is 'one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind' (6). In a passage that could be about

Braddon's own expectations for Haworth, Bachelard writes, 'All great, simple images reveal a psychic state. The house, even more than the landscape, is a "psychic state," and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy' (72). The architecture represented in *Lady Audley's Secret* exposes Braddon's aims of expressing the intimacy of meeting within literary architecture and the communion between author, character, and reader.

1. A Narrator with an Architect's Eye: Critiquing Architecture in *Lady Audley's Secret*

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, literary architecture provides the backbone of the novel and Braddon makes it clear that she intends to mine architecture – both material and metaphorical – for all of its narrative potential and diverse possibilities. A key component of this architectural focus is Braddon's decision to employ a narrator with a distinct architect's eye – a narrator interested in providing realist descriptions of the material architecture of the novel's built environment. She is attuned to the textures and materials surrounding her characters and eager to link her characters' present movements within architecture with the intents and physical efforts of past architects and builders. Her architect's eye also ensures that she will ruthlessly critique flawed architectural structures when she encounters them. Braddon's narrator is merciless when she observes the misuse of materials and the resulting defective structure. The distinct author-as-architect subtext carried in the narrator's architectural critiques indicates the desire for things to be well constructed and the scorn doled out when they are not. Braddon is thinking and writing about her own work in these architectural terms and to better reflect this connection I chose to refer to Braddon's narrator with female pronouns. This feminine gender assumption enriches an architectural reading of the novel by

streamlining the connection between the act of narrating and the novelist's act of construction.

Braddon titles her first chapter 'Lucy' and the character name Lucy Graham as well as the former convent setting immediately links the novel with Brontë's *Villette*. The name Lucy Graham combines two names from *Villette*: Lucy Snowe and Graham Bretton.[8] Similarly to Lucy Snowe, Lucy Graham was once a teacher and governess, although she later rejects the profession around which Lucy Snowe constructs her independence. In addition, both women make their way to Belgium. These connections and intersections anticipate the fact that, like Brontë's *Villette*, Braddon's novel might very well include certain Gothic tropes, but that, more significantly, architecture will have an important realist role in her work. In Braddon's Gothic renovation, her narrator's emphasis on architecture becomes a way to enhance the novel's material realism and provide a framework for an exploration of female psychological interiority. While Brontë's narrator used creative architectural metaphors to express herself and encapsulate her past memories and emotions, Braddon's narrator uses architectural description and critique to construct material and psychological realism.

Braddon signals her architectural focus at the very opening of the novel with the extended description of Audley Court. This is the first of many instances where Braddon compels her narrator to lead with an architect's eye. The narrator describes the Court in a breathless, unsystematic manner, like a person encountering a building for the first time, glancing around and taking in a barrage of architectural features. Her architect's eye drifts across the building, picking up details, passing and returning. In fact, Braddon's architectural

[8] In another instance of name sharing, Braddon's schoolmaster, Mr Marchmont (177), shares a name with Lucy Snowe's former employer, Miss Marchmont, in *Villette*.

descriptions nearly always incorporate the act of seeing: each structural detail is described alongside some form of human response. From the start of the novel, Braddon signals an interest in the intersection between the built and the organic, the structure and the response. For example, she notes ‘Great piles of chimneys’ that appear so decrepit ‘that they must have fallen but for the straggling ivy which, crawling up the walls and trailing even over the roof, wound itself about them and supported them’ (2). The narrator draws attention to the disrepair but also encourages the reader to consider this beneficial merger of nature and structure. The door of the house is obscured in a corner, ‘as if it was in hiding from dangerous visitors, and wished to keep itself a secret’ (2). The narrator suggests that the house offers its own architectural response that generates from an impulse towards self-preservation. Braddon anticipated a visceral reaction to the Haworth Parsonage and we can think here about the response she hoped to cultivate in her readers with her construction of Audley Court, a one-of-a-kind architectural entity.

One such response is the reader’s understanding that Audley Court embodies the intersection of architecture and writing. The narrator describes Audley Court as ‘very old, and very irregular and rambling’ (2). The word ‘rambling’ connotes meandering writing or speech and establishes the connection between the art forms of architecture and literature. The fact that the house is ‘irregular’ suggests a visual interest associated with singularity. This description brings to mind the architecture of Bleak House in Dickens’s selfsame titled novel, described by Esther as ‘delightfully irregular’ (Dickens 78). Also recalling the act of writing, the narrator describes the rooms of the Court with

> every chamber running off at a tangent into an inner chamber, and through that down some narrow staircase leading to a door which, in its turn, led back into that very part of the house from which you thought yourself the farthest. (2)

The narrator suggests that, as you move through the architecture of Audley Court (and the novel itself) you will discover unexpected rooms (and secrets). The idea that a visitor to the Court or reader of the novel will open doors that lead to unexpected places also relates to writing, as the narrator here alludes to her dual role as the reader's guide though the architecture of the Court as well as through the mystery of the novel. The narrator suggests an architectural claustrophobia and disorientation, with layers of rooms, staircases, and doors leading you to unexpected places. Again, this passage has distinct parallels with *Bleak House* and recalls Esther's attempts to make Bleak House navigable for the reader via lengthy descriptions of its interior and step-by-step instructions on how best to move about within. Chris Brooks writes that the 'enterprise of realism is an attempt to capture what the *being* of the real world is like' (3) and that novels of Victorian realist authors illustrate 'a concern to give to the interpretive structures by means of which we understand reality a phenomenal existence within the fabric of that reality: in other words, to give to the semantic connotations of the real a tangibility like that of physical reality itself' (3). Both Dickens and Braddon have an interest in narrating three-dimensionality and using architectural realism to support the literary realism of their novels. Clearly, Audley Court is dynamic and infused with narrative potential.

Much like the novel itself, the narrator makes it clear that you cannot go about this house alone, you need a guide. The house is 'A noble place; inside

as well as out, a noble place – a house in which you incontinently lost yourself if ever you were so rash as to go about it alone' (2). There is a warning carried here not to be reckless or impulsive when it comes to your encounter with the Court. Braddon indicates her interest in creating literary architecture that is both revealing and disorienting, a structure that by its very essence necessitates a guide: an architecturally-savvy narrator to be relied upon. While the reader's eye can roam over the discordant architectural features of Audley Court presented by the narrator as brief visual snapshots, he or she must be led through the architectural interior. Each room is unique and 'no one room had any sympathy with another' (2). By highlighting the fact that the rooms don't cohere to a greater architectural or aesthetic vision but should be taken individually, Braddon invites her readers to inspect each interior space represented by the narrator for various significance.

Audley Court is distinctly a work in progress and is constantly evolving. Its 'windows were uneven; some small and some large, some with heavy stone mullions and rich stained glass; others with frail lattices that rattled in every breeze; others so modern that they might have been added only yesterday' (2). With small and large, old and new windows, Audley Court is a building where tradition and modernity meet and struggle to cohere. The narrator's description of the windows brings to mind Esther's documentation of Bleak House's differently sized windows: 'various-shaped windows, some so large, some so small, and all so pretty' (Dickens 106). The addition of modern windows to Audley Court also recalls Braddon's encounter with the Brontë parsonage and her disappointment that the new plate-glass windows have 'made an end of the old-world aspect of the house' (176). By indicating that the windows could have been added as recently as yesterday, Braddon suggests a setting in flux and

multiple hands at work. In this sense, architecture becomes a process rather than an object in space, much like writing.

Audley Court reflects Braddon's architectural imagination and interest in erecting creative literary architecture. It is dynamic – actively being built as well as actively decaying: 'a house that could never have been planned by any mortal architect, but must have been the handiwork of that good old builder – Time' (2). Instead of being constructed by a single architect and representing the vision of one man, the house has been worked on over time, reflecting the changing taste of the Audley owners and the various styles that were en vogue. 'Time' has created an architectural progression encapsulated in a single building by

> adding a room one year, and knocking down a room another year, toppling over now a chimney coeval with the Plantagenets, and setting up one in the style of the Tudors; shaking down a bit of Saxon wall there, and allowing a Norman arch to stand here; throwing in a row of high narrow windows in the reign of Queen Anne, and joining on a dining-room after the fashion of the time of Hanoverian George I. to a refractory that had been standing since the conquest. (2-3)

The narrator enhances the reader's architectural disorientation by saying that the architectural style of the house is impossible to categorise: the Court has stood the test of time and become an embodiment of various architectural styles throughout the ages, as architecture is adaptable and can be many things at once. Rooms have been added and destroyed, styles have come to coexist, and the result is a mansion entirely attributable to Braddon's architectural creativity. After eleven centuries the result is 'such a mansion as was not

elsewhere to be met with throughout the county of Essex' (3). John Ruskin was famously against restoration for the reason that the original workmen could not be involved in the work and writes in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), 'it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture' (179). But Audley Court pushes forward instead of circling back and stays true to the architecture of each age as it comes.

Braddon's creation is unique, unreplicable, and actively defies categorisation: it is an architectural amalgam. Thus Braddon houses her mystery in an architecturally revealing, but certainly not exclusively Gothic, setting. Talairach-Vielmas writes, 'Yet, for all its hints at gothicism, Audley Court is a monstrous collage made up of a series of rooms of various architectural styles added through the centuries' (28 *Cambridge Companion*). By using the word 'monstrous', Talairach-Vielmas hints at a building-as-body metaphor, an architectural Frankenstein-like creation. In contrast to the startling description of the house as monstrous, Eva Badowska considers it 'mundanely dilapidated' (162). In her article 'On the Track of Things: Sensation and Modernity in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*', Badowska writes, 'The house seems never to have been modern but it is also not wholly antiquated […] it succeeds in portraying a simpler, if not less poignant, anxiety: here modernity inevitably crumbles to dust, with no aesthetic or moral justification whatsoever' (162). While I certainly agree that Audley Court is neither fully ancient nor fully modern, I cannot agree that it is either monstrous or mundane. Braddon's creative architectural concoction is too full of interest to be considered mundane and its aesthetic justification is the idea of changing architectural styles and historical priorities. It is a manifestation of history, time, and fashion.

Through her representation of Audley Court as the embodiment of time and change, Braddon illustrates the power of architecture to be more than one thing at one time, to express many things at once and to reflect different tastes, styles, and architectural priorities. Braddon's representation of Audley Court as architecturally layered recalls Sigmund Freud's use of an extended architectural metaphor to describe human consciousness. Discussing the historical architectural strata of Rome in *Civilization and its Discontents*, he writes,

> Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. (18)

Like Freud talking about human consciousness as layers of Roman architecture, piled up over time, Braddon shows these changes in a single structure while also signalling a psychological component built into that architectural space.[9] Braddon's narrator confides of Audley Court, 'Of course, in such a house, there were secret chambers' (3), suggesting that secret spaces are undoubtedly built into the house and by extension, the heroine and the novel. Alexandra Warwick writes that Freud's work is 'persistently concerned

[9] The intimate connection between architecture, psychology, and creative output is similarly explored in the *Household Words* essay 'Left Behind' (1854). The author writes, 'I am also an observer (in an amateur way) of the domestic architecture which has been left behind; and am fond of tracing the different styles of building which have prevailed in different eras – the successive strata of metropolitan geology' (545). The term 'metropolitan geology' is useful both for discussing Braddon's technique of writing architecture and for thinking about Freud's idea of excavating human consciousness. The author similarly connects psychology with architecture, writing, 'If all people were Ruskins, they might gather a great deal of what may be called domestic history from the forms of the houses in which they dwell, and a great deal of psychology too' (545). He then goes on to connect an author's literary output with his or her own architectural environment. By connecting each architectural example with a moment in literary history, the author suggests architecture as literary time capsule.

with the question of what is dead, what survives and how things are revived' (36) and I would argue that the same holds true for Braddon. In the context of writing, her fantastical architectural creation seems to encapsulate an argument for complexity, an understanding of the novel's trajectory and the fact that a novel can express many things simultaneously. It can be in part Realist, Gothic, Sensational, Romantic, and Braddon suggests that the inability to categorise should not make us so uncomfortable.

Representing an architectural continuum in a single structure, Braddon compels her reader to think about the human experience within architecture and how the conditions of our enclosure within material space change over time. She also wants her reader to think about how architecture materialises, how human hands create material dwelling space and authors create three-dimensional enclosures for their characters and readers to navigate. Braddon's narrator states that no 'mortal architect' could have planned such a building and, while this seems like a passing comment, it is significant because the narrator mentions the actual architect in almost every case when a new house is introduced into the novel. As we will see, the narrator also has a lot to say about the architect of Castle Inn, Brigsome's Terrace, the Talboys's mansion, and Crescent Villas. In each case, Braddon comments on the architect's intention, ability, and results. Returning to a claim made in the Introduction to this chapter, while it is certainly a cliché to refer to the author as the architect of the novel, in this particular case Braddon invites the comparison by clearly representing various case studies on imaginative, faulty, and successful architectural construction that double as self-conscious ruminations on successful and flawed literary construction. These repeated references to the building's architect serve to remind her reader that these enclosed spaces do

not simply exist – they are brought into material being in the world of the novel by the architect and are then given metaphoric significance by the author. The author 'builds' these houses for the reader, using architectural description to enhance the material and psychological realism of the novel.

It is useful here to return to Peter Brooks and his idea that 'the realist novel provides a sense of play very similar to that given by the scale model' (2-3). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Brooks suggests: 'Playing with the world seriously – in a form of play governed by rules of modelling, one might say – is a bold new enterprise for these novelists' (5). He also describes certain authors as 'Removing housetops in order to see the private lives played out beneath them' (3). We can see how Braddon unites architectural strategies in her novel by using architecture as a highly revealing vehicle through which to construct the realism of her novel's built environment landscape but also to convey a form of psychological realism that takes shape through an architectural intermediary.

While Audley Court receives nearly all of the critical attention in any discussion concerning architecture in *Lady Audley's Secret*, there are other important architectural structures erected across the novel, structures that provide a vehicle for Braddon's material realism as well as a way for the narrator to emphasise her narrative authority. She possesses an incisive architect's eye and delights in lengthy architectural description and critique. While Audley Court, an amalgam of various architectural styles, is 'a house that could never have been planned by any mortal architect' (2), the narrator mercilessly ridicules the specific architect of Luke Marks' Castle Inn. With this shift we move from architecture as a process, developing over time, to architecture as an object with specific intentions. Braddon writes sarcastically

that the ‘wise architect’ and ‘hand of genius’ chose only the ‘frailest and most flimsy’ (130) materials. By making these regrettable choices, the architect of the Castle Inn has failed in every aspect of the building’s construction and design. The narrator mockingly describes the results of the architect’s work as ‘pitiful’, ‘rickety’, and ‘fragile’ (130). The architect of the Castle Inn is further criticised by the narrator for creating structures unable to fulfil their intended use: the roof does not protect, the doors do not shut, the windows variously let in drafts and prevent air from circulating.[10] The narrator examines the architectural minutiae of the building’s construction and comes to the conclusion that every ‘inch of woodwork’ and ‘trowelful of plaster’ had ‘its own particular weak point’ (130). The narrator moves from detailing the creative and fanciful architecture of Audley Court to a structure that is fundamentally flawed. So, while Audley Court provided Braddon with scope to express the narrative potential of creative architecture, the Castle Inn allows Braddon to poke fun at the mismanagement and inept use of materials while suggesting that she herself does not struggle to make good use of her own materials. Her novel will be well constructed, and she will enforce this point directly through her narrator’s architectural commentary.

Unlike Audley Court where ivy supports the chimneys, when organic elements meet the built structure of Castle Inn, they are in constant conflict. The architectural structure of the Castle Inn is ill-equipped to combat organic elements like wind and rain and, after an extended description of the wind’s negative impact on the window shutters, pigeon-house and weathervane, the

[10] Dickens also mocks the architect of a tavern in his novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844). He describes the tavern: ‘It was one of those unaccountable little rooms which are never seen anywhere but in a tavern, and are supposed to have got into taverns by reason of the faculties afforded to the architect for getting drunk while engaged in their construction. It had more corners in it than the brain of an obstinate man; was full of mad closets […] had mysterious shelvings and bulk-heads, and indications of staircases in the ceiling; and was elaborately provided with a bell that rung in the room itself, about two feet from the handle, and had no connection whatever with any other part of the establishment’ (472).

narrator summarises by saying ‘it was the wind, in short, that shattered, and ruined, and rent, and trampled upon the tottering pile of buildings, and then flew shrieking off, to riot and glory in its destroying strength’ (111). Nature here is working as a combatant, in conflict rather than harmony with the built structure. Interestingly, in the latter part of the novel the narrator repeats her earlier description of the wind’s impact on the same exact three structures: the window-panes, pigeon-house and weathervane (318).[11] This repetition is one of many instances in the novel where Braddon circles back and describes the same things again in the same way, recovering the same ground seemingly in an attempt to support her visual realist agenda by confirming that things are still as she earlier claimed them to appear. In one of the few critical discussions of architecture in the novel apart from Audley Court, Andrew Mangham describes the architecture of the inn as a reflection of Luke’s ‘warped manhood’ (92), writing that Luke, ‘once the penetrator of Lady Audley’s suggestive chambers, now has his own “frail” spaces invaded’ (92) by wind and rain. While I would argue that the faulty architecture suggests a character flaw rather than a sexual failing, the architecture of Castle Inn is certainly represented as a failure that has implications for its owner.

Braddon’s narrator includes Luke Marks in her blistering architectural critique, indicating that despite the fact that ‘the Castle Inn fell slowly into decay’ (111), these conditions do not seem to bother the Inn’s new owner. In fact, ‘Luke Marks, who was by no means troubled with an eye for the beautiful,

[11] ‘The wind, boisterous everywhere, was shriller and more pitiless in the neighborhood of that bleak hill-top upon which the Castle Inn reared its rickety walls. The cruel blasts dancing wildly round that frail erection. They disported themselves with the shattered pigeon-house, the broken weathercock, the loose tiles, and unshapely chimneys; they rattled at the window-panes, and whistled in the crevices; they mocked the feeble building from foundation to roof, and battered and banged and tormented it in their fierce gambols, until it trembled and rocked with the force of their rough play’ (318).

thought himself very fortunate in becoming the landlord of the Castle Inn, Mount Stanning' (111-112). The narrator, who has just spent a great deal of time describing the flaws of the inn, flaws that expose the built structure to the ravages of organic elements and the architect to biting criticism of his abilities, is quick to indicate that Luke does not have 'an eye for the beautiful'. In contrast, she sees all of the building's inadequacies and clearly emphasises her superior architect's eye. This failing on Luke's part is taken very seriously by the narrator and ultimately results in Luke's death – it is literally a fatal flaw. Luke does not construct a sound plan to blackmail Lady Audley and instead underestimates her like most men do. His wife, Phoebe, understands the danger inherent in the inn, calling it 'a queer old place […] all tumble-down woodwork, and rotten rafters, and such like' (304). Her description causes Lady Audley to imagine and later recreate a deadly fire: 'The picture of that frail wooden tenement, the Castle Inn, reduced to a roofless chaos of lath and plaster, vomiting flames from its black mouth and spitting sparks of fire upward towards the cold night sky' (305). This is a frightening image of destruction and the chaos of rooflessness.[12] Luke's fate carries a warning about the possible danger inherent in a lack of architectural vision.

The narrator's architectural commentary frequently accompanies the movements of Robert Audley, Lady Audley's nephew by marriage, as he enters various domestic interiors in an attempt to solve the mystery of his friend's disappearance. Through these visits, Braddon allows her narrator to critique an array of buildings and living situations. As with the other architectural structures described by the narrator, the home of Mr Maldon (Lady Audley's father) is first introduced with reference to the architects and builders developing the area, as

[12] Alison Milbank describes detection as a process of unroofing and cites examples primarily from Dickens's novels (18).

the narrator again highlights her critical architect's eye: 'Mr Maldon had established his slovenly household gods in one of those dreary thoroughfares which speculative builders love to raise upon some miserable fragment of waste ground hanging to the skirts of a prosperous town' (162).[13] Built on 'waste ground', the houses are unwholesome and depressing and recall the houses surrounding the burying ground in Dickens's *Bleak House*. In fact, the narrator states: 'Brigsome's Terrace was perhaps the most dismal blocks of building that was ever composed of brick and mortar since the first mason plied his trowel and the first architect drew his plan' (162). By referring to the 'first mason' and 'first architect', the narrator contextualises the structures by referring to a greater architectural continuum. There is something almost Biblical sounding about this passage, as the narrator suggests an awareness of architectural trends reaching back to the very first built structures. She also connects the builder with the designer, linking action and thought. Ultimately, it sounds as if each person involved – the speculator, mason, and architect have all struggled with their role in raising Brigsome's Terrace.

While the narrator's tone was critical yet almost playful when exposing the flaws of Castle Inn, this is no longer the case. The narrator refers to these houses as 'dreary eight-roomed prison-houses' (162), conjuring an image of its inhabitants as restricted and confined. She also suggests a resilient connection between building and builder when she reveals that 'The builder […] had hung himself behind the parlour door of an adjacent tavern while the carcases were yet unfinished' (162). The narrator maintains Braddon's house-as-body metaphor, merging the organic with the built, when she continues relating the ill-

[13] Ruskin writes in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 'Our God is a household God, as well as a heavenly one; He has an altar in every man's dwelling; let men look to it when they rend it lightly and pour out its ashes' (150).

fated history of the houses, saying ‘The man who had bought the brick and mortar skeletons had gone through Bankruptcy Court while the paper-hangers were still busy in Brigsome’s Terrace, and had whitewashed his ceilings and himself simultaneously’ (162). The shift from describing the buildings as carcases to skeletons suggests that further wasting has occurred to the buildings in the intervening time, a likely result of the use of poor materials. This description of skeletal houses waiting to be fleshed out is visceral. Here we see Gothic imagery applied to architecture but in a new way: these buildings are not ancient ruins or haunted mansions but are new, modern buildings languishing in a prolonged construction process. The first speculating builder’s failure seems to attach itself to the buildings themselves and signal the inescapable financial failure of their inhabitants: ‘Ill-luck and insolvency clung to the wretched habitations’ (162). The narrator connects the fate of the building’s inhabitants with the builder, suggesting that the architecture surrounding us is not merely a passive receptacle but exerts a determining influence. Through the house-as-body metaphor and the connection between house and inhabitant, Braddon indicates her interest in using architecture give texture and tangibility to the human experience as contained and reflected in various domestic habitations. The house-as-body and body-as-house metaphors are recurrent across the novels of this thesis, as authors think about the house and the body’s ability to enclose and contain.

While Audley Court has stood for centuries, rooted to the landscape, merging with nature, growing and decaying, Braddon also represents the singular discomfort inherent in ‘new and unfinished neighborhood[s]’ (227). In the course of his investigation, Robert seeks out Lady Audley’s former employer and Braddon uses this opportunity to discuss the psychological and emotional

impact of new buildings materialising on the landscape. The narrator describes the houses of Crescent Villas as ‘large, but they lay half embedded amongst the chaos of brick and mortar rising around them. New terraces, new streets, new squares led away into hopeless masses of stone and plaster on every side’ (227). The narrator finds the new architecture emerging from the ‘chaos’ of ongoing construction unsettling. These materials surround the completed buildings as the formless intersects with the formed. This is yet another example of Braddon’s narrator drawing the reader’s attention to fundamental building materials, the basic stone and plaster required to build a foundation. Braddon is interested in how these fundamental materials take shape. The narrator notes, ‘The desolation of desolations – that awful incompleteness and discomfort which pervades a new and unfinished neighbourhood – had set its dismal seal upon the surrounding streets which had arisen about and entrenched Crescent Villas’ (225). The narrator finds it strange to encounter a new neighborhood rising up from nowhere and Victorian architectural theorists similarly express discomfort with the seemingly careless erection of these modern buildings (Ruskin, Garbett, Fergusson).

Braddon does not just represent various types of houses and households, but different kinds of neighborhoods and people on the move. In doing so, she represents the reality of modern life in the city. Andrea Kaston Tange explores this subject in *Architectural Identities,* where she argues, ‘British middle-class identity from the 1830s through the 1870s was clearly architectural’ (6). Victoria Rosner’s compelling book *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (2005) addresses this topic in a slightly later time period. The nascent architectural structures Braddon represents are not tied together by any community and are linked only by discoverable clues to the

mystery of Lady Audley's secret. Will architecture continue to tell in these circumstances? Is modern architecture capable of speaking to the material and psychological condition of its inhabitants? Will modern man experience an architectural estrangement? Robert learns that Mrs Vincent has moved on from Crescent Villas, and finds her instead at Acacia Cottage. It 'bore small token of the fitness of its nomenclature, and faced the road with its stuccoed walls, sheltered only by a couple of tall attenuated poplars' (231). This place is 'much lower on the social scale' than Crescent Villas and this fact is made clear by Mrs Vincent's parlour: 'The square parlour into which Robert was ushered bore in every scrap of ornament, on every article of furniture, the unmistakable stamp of that species of poverty which is most comfortless, because it is never stationary' (232). The narrator connects new architecture with transience and poverty, reminding the reader that some people do not have the opportunity to settle fully into their surroundings like the inhabitants of Audley Court.

Braddon is up front about the ability of architecture to reflect a person's character. As Edward N. Kaufman writes, 'It was accepted wisdom, as a casual glance through almost any Victorian novel will reveal, that a man's character could be read in his face. Substitute façade for face, and we have the germ of an architectural theory' (32). When Robert goes to visit George's father, the narrator introduces Harcourt Talboys by describing him in relation to his 'prim, square, red-bricked mansion' (181). In the following passage, the narrator employs a technique we have seen used repeatedly by Dickens in *Bleak House*, when the domestic home assumes the qualities of its inhabitant and vice versa. Harcourt Talboys 'was like his own square-built, northern-fronted, shelterless house. There were no shady nooks in his character into which one could creep for shelter from his hard daylight. He was all daylight' (181). Here

we see character described through form, the form of the architectural structure taking shape in the built environment of the novel. But this is a strange description of a house. The primary function of any house is to provide shelter and Talboys's house is described through its inability to provide shelter from sunlight and there is something distinctly uncomfortable about a house that is so relentlessly exposed. The house is 'square-built' and Talboys has 'no curves in his character' (181). There are also no curves in his mind, which 'ran in straight lines' (181) with 'pitiless angles' (182). Talboys' house, character, and mind are all sharp, angular, and unbending. A few pages later, Robert seems to respond to the narrator's description, thinking, 'If the man is anything like his house […] I don't wonder that poor George and he parted' (185). The narrator uses Talboys' house to convey his nature, creating an architectural representation of his unbending character. While this connection is unmistakable for the reader, it is noteworthy that Robert later makes the same observation. Having Robert validate the narrator's statements is another example of Braddon's technique of repetition, reinforcing what she has earlier said to be true.

In addition to the many domestic architectural enclosures represented by Braddon, she also incorporates an institution and, when Lady Audley's position within Audley Court becomes untenable, Robert meets with a doctor who suggests that she be sent to a 'maison de santé' in Belgium.[14] Thus, Braddon chooses an architectural, rather than judicial punishment for Lady Audley's crimes: Lady Audley is forced to leave behind the luxury and refinement of her boudoir and take up residence at a Belgian madhouse. Once Lady Audley confesses her madness, it is clear to the reader that she will not be allowed to

[14] Braddon was involved with the publisher John Maxwell while his wife was living in an insane asylum in Ireland. Although Braddon and Maxwell ultimately married, 'Braddon suffered from a taint of disreputability that took years to dispel' (*Beyond Sensation* xxii).

remain at Audley Court. In their anthology, *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-1890*, Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth include an anonymous essay published in *Household Words* (1859). The author states: 'There are few household calamities so utterly deplorable as loss of reason in a husband, wife, or child' (238). While madness may be a 'household calamity,' treatment within the home was not encouraged.[15] This is conventional wisdom dating as far back as the 1820s. In Thomas John Graham's *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1826) (the Brontë family's medical touchstone referenced in the previous chapter), under the heading *of insanity, or mental derangement* Graham states: 'One of the first things to be done in all cases of insanity, under whatever form it may appear, is to separate the patient from his friends and home, as this separation is invariably conducive to recovery' (397). Under the heading *melancholy*, Graham states of treatment that 'The place of retreat and security should be light, airy, pleasant, and cheerful' (400). Although Graham's book was written much earlier than Braddon's novel, it illustrates the early but sustained opinion that mentally unstable patients should be removed from the home and deposited in a 'pleasant and cheerful' asylum. James E. Moran and Leslie Topp write in the Introduction to *Madness, Architecture, and the Built Environment* (2007),

> What is interesting (and ironic) about psychiatric narratives that strategically sought to discredit domestic and community spatial alternatives is that they relied heavily on the symbols of domesticity and home care to justify the superiority of asylum spaces. (5-6)

[15] Hilary Marland writes that 'The family home was seen as key to the patient's misfortune and disorder in many ways. While the household was defined as the place where women should want to be, for many the household was too dreadful a place to be and its members too dreadful to be with' (158).

This point is reiterated by Tabitha Sparks, who writes,

> Ironically, Victorian psychiatry used the country domestic ideal to enforce what seems to be a counter-productive cure for female hysteria or madness: it took the woman out of her own home and confined her to a simulated model of it, thereby expecting what could very well have contributed to her (perceived or alleged) disfunction [sic] to rehabilitate her. (32)

Significantly, the reader understands that Lady Audley is being sent away for treatment not because of the 'superiority' of care in that specific Belgian asylum but to protect the reputation of the Audley family name.

Instead of emphasising any aspect of the treatment that Lady Audley will receive during her committal, Braddon describes her removal as leaving the Court and entering a liminal state of living death. Dr Mosgrave assures Robert,

> From the moment in which Lady Audley enters the house […] her life, so far as life is made up of action and variety, will be finished. Whatever secrets she may have will be secrets for ever! Whatever crimes she may have committed she will be able to commit no more. If you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations. (381)

This is, indeed, a death sentence (delivered by the harbinger of death Mos*grave*) for someone like Lady Audley who thrives on pleasure and admiration. Beyond that, Dr Mosgrave indicates a complete disinterest in clinical progress as relates to Lady Audley's psychological condition.[16] Instead, he

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[16] Andrew T. Scull details the professionalisation of asylum owners and superintendents and their possible economic motives in his book, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (1979). He writes, 'The emerging profession was not above implying that any mad-man, even an apparently placid and harmless case of dementia,

assures Robert exuberantly that her depths will not be sounded and her secrets 'will be secrets for ever!' Lady Audley and her secrets will be interred in tandem. Braddon undercuts the impact of the doctor's pronouncement by the fact that Lady Audley has already confidently diagnosed herself.[17] Already possessing knowledge of her mother's mental illness and committal to an asylum, Lady Audley does not need a doctor's pronouncement to understand her own mental condition. Her own psychology is not a mystery to her. In fact, we get far more psychological insight from Lady Audley herself then from the doctor who seems primarily interested in providing the Audley family with cover. She has already revealed her ability to discuss psychological features when attempting to paint Robert as a monomaniacal madman. She tells her husband,

> People are insane for years and years before their insanity is found out. *They* know that they are mad, but they know how to keep their secret; and, perhaps, they may sometimes keep it till they die. Sometimes a paroxysm seizes them, and in an evil hour they betray themselves. They commit a crime, perhaps. (287)

This is a highly revealing argument based on her personal circumstances: Lady Audley describes her own understanding of how to behave appropriately in order to avoid detection. She continues,

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was capable of sudden and unprovoked acts of violence, which were peculiarly liable to be directed against members of his immediate family' (93). We see this in Braddon's novel when Dr Mosgrave tells Robert his opinion of Lady Audley: 'She is dangerous!' (379) and 'If she could have sprung at my throat and strangled me with her little hands, as I sat talking to her just now, she would have done it' (381).

[17] The narrator suggests that Lady Audley has puerperal mania (like her mother before her) as a result of childbirth. In her book, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (2004), Hilary Marland writes that the term 'puerperal insanity' was developed early in the nineteenth century to indicate mental illness associated with childbirth (3).Marland writes, 'It encompassed relatively brief attacks, nervous upsets, violence or delusions, as well as long-term manifestations of mania or deep and protracted melancholia, which could put at risk the life of the mother and child' (3). Puerperal insanity was 'Conceptualized as a menacing and prevalent condition, women suffering from puerperal insanity challenged notions of domesticity and femininity and flouted ideas of maternal conduct and feeling' (5). See Showalter pg. 71-72 for more on puerperal mania in *Lady Audley's Secret*, including similarities between Lady Audley and one of Conolly's case studies.

> What is one of the strongest diagnostics of madness – what is the first appalling sign of mental aberration? The mind becomes stationary; the brain stagnates; the even current of the mind is interrupted; the thinking power of the brain resolves itself into a monotone. As the waters of a tideless pool putrefy by reason of their stagnation, the mind becomes turbid and corrupt through a lack of action; and perpetual reflection upon one subject resolves itself into monomania. (287)

Lady Audley here reveals an understanding of the human mind and it's functioning that correlates with contemporary psychological theory. For example, G.H. Lewes will later employ the metaphor of stationary waves to represent human consciousness.[18]

Dr Mosgrave's disturbing description of the kind of life a patient can anticipate in a madhouse likely mirrors the expectations of Braddon's readers. In her chapter '"This coy and secluded dwelling": Broadmoor Asylum for the Criminally Insane', Deborah E.B. Weiner writes,

> If Broadmoor's planners were imitating asylums in their creation of an isolated, self-contained and self-sufficient physical environment, their efforts were interpreted in the press as creating a place that, as pleasant as it was, amounted to the ultimate prison, a place of death-in-life for the inmates. (145)

[18] G.H. Lewes, 'Consciousness and Unconsciousness'. *Mind* (1877): 'To repeat an illustration used in my first volume, we may compare Consciousness to a mass of stationary waves, If the surface of the lake be set in motion each wave diffuses itself over the whole surface, and finally reaches the shores, whence it is reflected back towards the centre of the lake. This reflected wave is met by the fresh incoming waves, and their product is a pattern on the surface. This pattern of stationary waves is a fluctuating pattern, because of the incessant arrival of fresh waves, incoming and reflected. Whenever a fresh stream enters the lake (*i.e.*, a new sensation is excited from without), its waves will at first pass over the pattern, neither disturbing it nor being disturbed by it; but after reaching the shore the waves will be reflected back towards the centre, and there will more or less modify the pattern' (166-167).

Aware of Lady Audley's violent history, this is exactly the fate Dr Mosgrave promises. Mosgrave, Robert, and Lady Audley herself all understand the punishment being doled out to her, and her death sentence is fulfilled in actuality when she dies at the madhouse a few years after arriving. In a report published in *The Times* on 13 January 1865 titled 'A Visit to the Criminal Lunatic Asylum' and cited by Weiner, the author states that

> [the patients can] do anything but pass the boundaries which shut them in forever from the world beyond. Within these they live and die, and within these they are buried in the little cemetery attached to the asylum […] A committal to Broadmoor for murderous madness is as final as regards the chance of return to the world as death. (145)

Death does not even bring a return to the outer world, as inmates are buried on asylum grounds and the living and dead cohabitate there.

When Robert and Lady Audley arrive in Belgium, the narrator telegraphs her change in circumstance via the city's bleak architecture: 'The remote Belgian city was a forgotten, old world place, and bore the dreary evidence of decay upon every façade in the narrow streets, on every dilapidated roof, and feeble pile of chimneys' (384). They arrive at a 'great mansion of grey stone' (386) and Lady Audley is shown immediately to her 'stately suite of apartments'. These include a lobby, paved with a diamond pattern of black and white marble 'but of a dismal and cellarlike darkness'. She has a saloon 'furnished with gloomy velvet draperies' and 'with a certain funereal splendour which is not peculiarly conducive to the elevation of the spirits' (388). Finally, she has a bedroom with a bed that seemed to have 'no opening whatever in its coverings' (388-389). Lady Audley quickly takes in the scene – she is adept at reading a

room and well-practiced in the art of curating a luxurious private interior space. Although the rooms contain certain trappings of finery such as the marble lobby and velvet curtains, they are distinctly dreary and what Sparks calls a 'defective replica of the elegant interiors from which Lucy has just been expelled' (33). Now with a full understanding of her situation and what her committal will entail, Lady Audley lashes out at Robert, saying, 'You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley […] you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave' (391). Significantly, Lady Audley employs the same burial-alive metaphor used by Dr Mosgrave, immediately confirming his opinion of the effect of her committal.

Braddon refigures the asylum, an institution with Gothic associations, in terms of realism. Her asylum is mundane and won't be the setting for any of the novel's major action. It is a dumping ground for Lady Audley, shown and then forgotten. Consequently, Braddon undercuts the Gothic associations of an asylum setting, using instead the contemporary idea of an asylum infused with domestic features. Further playing on contemporary concerns, Braddon introduces a domestic residence turned madhouse that does not live up to the ideal of a cheerful domestic interior. Jane Hamlett writes in *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England* (2015),

> The idea of domesticity was central to the construction of the material world of asylums in the second half of the nineteenth century. After 1850, an interior fashioned along the lines of the middle-class home replete with carpeting, wallpaper, furniture and ornaments – as well as amusements and pets – was seen as an essential part of treatment. (36)

But the Belgian madhouse is dark and dreary, replicating John Conolly's distaste for the gloom he finds intrinsic to private asylums. In his 1847 text, *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane*, Conolly states that security does not necessitate gloom (8) and suggests that the buildings' exterior should be more cheerful than imposing (14). For these reasons, he speaks out strongly against private asylums:

> Gloom and confinement seem to be inseparable from an ordinary private dwelling when made into an asylum; and the cheerless aspect, the faded furniture, the want of fresh air, and of proper warmth and light, and of free egress to the courts or gardens, and even, too often, of proper attention to cleanliness, are oppressively conspicuous. (44)

Braddon represents this unsuccessful repurposing of domestic space in the Belgian madhouse and the following section of this chapter will further explore the anticipated correlation between asylum architecture, interior design, and domestic-inspired ornament with a patient's chances of making a successful recovery.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon complicates and destabilises our understanding of a traditional domestic home. In fact, Lady Audley's confinement in a madhouse replete with recognisable domestic architectural and ornamental features is one of many alternatives to traditional domestic life that she experiences throughout the novel. She is a daughter living unhappily with her father, a wife and mother abandoned by her husband, a governess ensconced in the home of another family, and a woman with two living husbands. Tabitha Sparks writes, 'Lucy's is an unstable history of temporary and impoverished houses, in which she learns to view her beauty as her only

key to a better future' (23). Sparks goes on to suggest that Lucy's lack of a respectable home 'seems to forecast her corruption' (23) and argues that, ultimately, 'The home […] is her objective; her marriages are only means to that end' (24).[19] Grace Wetzel indicates that the novel ends with a return to homelessness for Lady Audley and, while this is true, it is important to note that it is a homelessness infused with faux domesticities as Braddon keeps her readers attuned to the idea of domestic alternatives and variations.

Collectively, these examples of architectural description and critique highlight Braddon's interest in writing architecture. Her architectural descriptions of the built environment surrounding her characters are materially rich and precise. At the same time, her architectural critiques reflect an awareness of the need for both built structures and the novel to be well constructed. Audley Court is remarkable both as an amalgam of different architectural styles and a creative exercise in architectural imagination. Castle Inn is a comical representation of a complete architectural failure, simultaneously indicating the lack of vision of its owner and its deadly consequences. Braddon's representation of Brigsome's Terrace gives the narrator an opportunity to reflect on the lasting impact of failed building schemes while connecting home to inhabitant via the visceral imagery of house-as-corpse. With Crescent Villas and Acacia Cottage, Braddon's narrator explores the disorientation inherent in new constructions and the impact of transitory habitation. Finally, with the inclusion of the Belgian madhouse, Braddon explores architecture as live burial and replicates the contemporary concern that private asylums were too gloomy to advance an inmate's psychological progress. In each case Braddon

[19] Sparks indicates that 'between the time when Austen's heroines sought architecturally triumphant marriages and Braddon considered the same conquest in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the morality of marrying into a fine house underwent an ideological remodelling' (21). Thus, marrying for a house is not socially acceptable as a motive for marriage in the 1860s.

foregrounds her narrator's architect's eye to express a delight in the scale models of our world (Brooks 1) and, as Brooks states, 'a form of play governed by rules of modelling' (5).

2. Touring the Architectural Interior: Braddon's Architectural Mindscapes

The mystery of the novel is to untangle one woman's psychological motives and Braddon encourages her reader to probe the architectural structure of her heroine's home for clues. Braddon builds up a psychological profile of her heroine, a three-dimensional mental blueprint that contains Lady Audley's body while reflecting her mental and emotional interior. She creates the architectural artifact of Audley Court and suggests that her readers excavate that structure for a better understanding of her heroine. Braddon offers a mindscape materialised in tangible architecture: the architecturally-inflected psychological realism of *Lady Audley's Secret* manifests in Braddon's representation of a country estate that contains unmistakable parallels with a mental institution. Consequently, scholars have noted the connection between country house and asylum in broader terms and in this novel specifically. By substituting asylum allusions for an asylum setting, Braddon indicates her interest in creating a psychologically-revealing piece of domestic architecture. Instead of imprisoning her heroine in a Gothically suggestive prison, tower, or asylum for the majority of the novel, Braddon experiments with restriction within what is, on the surface, a pleasant domestic setting. Readers of the sensation genre are similarly familiar with themes of imprisonment and committal but Braddon merges them into a domestic scenario that reads as an asylum complex.

Scholarship addressing the connection between country house and asylum in *Lady Audley's Secret* offers arguments centring on Panopticon-like surveillance (Langland, Tomaiuolo), a departure from Gothic sites of imprisonment (O'Malley, Mighall, Talairach-Vielmas), and a platform for a

masculine medical gaze to penetrate a feminine domestic environment (Gilbert, Davison). While these arguments are compelling, I find that there is one aspect of the country house-asylum relationship that has received less critical attention: the way that asylum designers and theorists were thinking specifically about how architecture contained their subjects and subsequently how to adapt that architecture for specific clinical purposes. This section of the chapter will thus examine the way Braddon manipulates her reader's impressions in a manner similar to contemporary asylum architects and theorists who believed that architectural arrangement and interior design could substantially impact a patient's chances of recovery. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon gives us a narrator with an architect's eye who recounts various guided tours of Audley Court, controlling and regulating her reader's impressions of an architectural structure that encapsulates both the construction of Braddon's mystery and reflects her heroine's obfuscation, secrecy and hidden identity. Braddon deploys material architecture and decorative objects like an asylum designer wanting to make a specific, controlled impression on their patients. This section of the chapter will accordingly focus on Braddon's guided tour technique and the way that asylum architectural theory opens up the way Braddon conveys psychological progress via architecture.

The years leading up to and following the publication of Braddon's novel were full of debate concerning the course of treatment for the mentally ill and the appropriate reforms needed for public and private asylums. Asylum theorists of the late 1840s through the 1870s advocated for a home-like asylum, an environment comfortable and pleasing to the eye that reflects and encourages appropriate behaviour modelled on domestic cues. Like Victorian novelists, Victorian asylum superintendents were sensitive to the environments of their

subjects. An interesting merging of architecture and psychology takes place in Victorian writings on the construction and design of mental institutions. In *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter claims that 'The most significant innovation of psychiatric Victorianism […] was the domestication of insanity' (28). Later in her book she describes a key aspect of Victorian psychiatric theory, 'moral architecture'. She explains: '"Moral architecture" constructed asylums planned as therapeutic environments in which lunatics could be controlled without the use of force, and in which they could be exposed to benevolent influences' (29). Consequently, 'The concept of moral architecture shaped the vast new enterprise of asylum construction. Victorian psychiatrists gave endless thought to asylum location, interior design, and décor' (33). Moran and Topp write that 'asylum designers manipulated visual impressions – the look of a room or a whole building, the view through a window – with the intention of having a particular influence on a patient's mental experience' (9). In *Managing the Mind: A Study of Medical Psychology in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Michael Donnelly notes, 'In aesthetic terms certain architects claimed, perhaps fancifully, to produce buildings and interior spaces fitting to the "moods" and various psychological states of the mind' (40). Whether or not such claims were 'fanciful', asylum theorists were quite in earnest about the link between psychological progress and the patient's direct environment. As Donnelly writes,

> If properly designed and exploited, the interior space of the asylum could be a therapeutic tool; properly manipulated it could yield the alienist an ever greater control over the inmate, and over all the 'impressions' which reached his mind. It was this therapeutic potential of confinement which initiated a close

> collaboration between architecture and psychological medicine. (48)[20]

Indeed, asylum superintendents and theorists wrote at great length on the importance of sound architectural planning, as well as the significance of interior details such as art, wallpaper, and birdcages, repeatedly emphasising the power of such details to influence the psychological progress of the asylums' patients.

Two significant texts, written thirty years apart, show the trajectory of the ever-increasing focus on domestic-inspired architectural and interior design. John Conolly's 1847 text, *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane*, was published fifteen years prior to *Lady Audley's Secret*, and Mortimer J. Granville's 1877 report, *The Care and Cure of the Insane v.1: Being the Reports of the Lancet Commission on Lunatic Asylums*, was published fifteen years after *Lady Audley's Secret*. Conolly describes the flawed architecture of many older asylums, pointedly drawing attention to the architects' mistaken priorities:

> In most of the old asylums the architects appear to have had regard solely to the safe keeping of the inmates, and the buildings resemble prisons rather than hospitals for the cure of insanity. Even now, high and gloomy walls, narrow or inaccessible windows, heavy and immovable tables and benches, and prison

[20] Donnelly continues: 'a great fund of energy was devoted to ingenious and ambitious architectural schemes. The universal end was, by one or other "simple idea in architecture", to enable a special atmosphere in the model asylum; to enhance through the design itself the individual inmate's relation to the physician; to render the physician's surveillance over the inmate more general and constant. The architectural schemes, of which among a profusion of plans Bentham's Panopticon was the most extreme and best known, thus served as means of enabling or facilitating the *moral* management of the insane, and of relaxing mechanical restraints. (48) Donnelly is quoting Bentham (*Works* IV 1843: 39): 'Morals reformed – health preserved – industry invigorated – instruction diffused – public burthen lightened – economy seated as it were upon a rock – the Gordonian knot of the Poor Laws not cut but untied – all by a simple idea in Architecture!'

> regulations applied to the officers and attendants, attest to the prevalence of mistaken and limited views. (7)

He suggests that architects should consult with psychiatrists if the building is to be a success, as 'The building of a wall, the raising of a roof, the alteration of a door or window, or window-shutter, may materially affect the daily comfort of numerous patients, and the safety of others' (7). Similarly to Conolly, Mortimer Granville emphasises the importance of a cheerful environment for the recovery of patients: 'The surroundings should be cheerful, because the ever-present consciousness of the disordered mental intelligence is clouded with sorrow and fraught with gloom' (20).[21] Granville suggests that an appropriately cheerful environment should be cultivated through domestic-inspired décor:

> It is by domestic control, by surroundings of daily life, by such details as the colouring of walls, the patterns on floorcloth, the furniture and decoration of rooms, by the influence of pictures, birds, and draperies, [...] the psychologist hopes to reach, capture, and re-educate the truant mind, and perhaps reseat the dethroned intelligent will of his patient. (77)[22]

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon experiments with deploying various architectural and decorative features, controlling her reader's 'impressions' about her heroine and the mystery she has constructed. Braddon deploys a

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[21] While Granville gives Conolly credit for his anti-restraint reforms, he finds the current state of Hanwell far from satisfactory. In his opinion, 'It is a vast straggling building, in which the characteristics of a prison, a self-advertising charitable institution, and some ambitious piece of Poor-law architecture struggle for prominence' (75). In addition, 'Long cold corridors, huge wards, and a general aspect of cheerlessness, and the unavoidable characteristics of a building like Hanwell Asylum – an ungainly multiplication of regulation day-rooms, dormitories, and single rooms, which might be useful as barracks, but should long ago have been discarded as a residence for the insane' (78).

[22] Jane Hamlett picks up on the idea of 'domestic control' and writes, 'The increasing use of domestic furnishing within the asylum can be interpreted as a means of control through the material world. Elsewhere in Victorian society, domestic interiors were also expected to inspire correct behaviour' (20).

narrator with an architect's eye to make a point about how narratives are constructed and to suggest numerous parallels between architecture and writing's ability to reveal and conceal. As a result, Braddon indicates that her architectural descriptions are indicative of far more than the built environment surrounding her characters: in this novel architecture is psychologically revealing.

Unlike what we saw in *Villette* and will see in *Middlemarch*, the reader does not have direct visual access to a heroine's mind in Braddon's novel. Instead of deploying creative architectural metaphors to make mental space tangible and navigable via the architectural internalisation technique, Braddon presents an architectural structure highly revealing of the heroine it contains – architecture manifest in the built environment world of the novel that can be probed for metaphoric significance. The material house becomes a metaphor for Lady Audley's mind and Braddon offers a variation on the established Victorian understanding that, as Kaufman writes, 'buildings not only embodied meanings, but also communicated them with precision' (30). Through Lady Audley and the Court, Braddon explores the intimate connection between the organic and the built – material architecture and mental space. Through this connection, Braddon experiments with pushing architecture to the limits of its narrative potential, asking: Can a house hide a secret and then reveal it? Can a house communicate the truth about a person's mental and emotional interior? Can a house express a psychological condition? Can a house provide a psychological blueprint?

As we have seen from the narrator's opening description of Audley Court, the house is dynamic. Because it does not have a single identifiable architect (unlike the other structures the narrator critiques) Braddon transfers

the import of an architect's intentions to her own narrative objectives and her heroine's psychological motives. Braddon encourages us to think about Audley Court in this way and her original architectural creation makes this connection uniquely possible. What becomes clear is that Braddon uses this highly controlled, highly stylized architectural space to further the psychological realism of her novel. While Audley Court is centuries old and built up over time in the world of the novel, it is also purpose-built by Braddon to reflect Lady Audley's secrecy, self-preservation, motivation and ego. Accordingly, Lady Audley's mental condition is manifest in Audley Court's secret passageways, hidden rooms, endless hallways, and locked doors existing simultaneously with the surface impression of domestic harmony.

The architectural arrangement of Audley Court suggests a mystery built into the very foundation of the house and the narrator herself states in a matter of fact tone that 'Of course, in such a house, there were secret chambers' (3). From the very opening of the novel, the narrator admits that Audley Court contains rooms that were purpose-built to be concealed, a comment that applies to the construction of the house as well as the novel itself. Without any elaboration from the narrator, the reader gains the impression that the house creates its own recesses and is dynamically involved in revealing and concealing. In this way, Braddon extends a certain amount of agency to the house. Like Lady Audley, there is nothing straightforward about Audley Court. Apart from the impossible to classify exterior, the interior layout is completely disorienting and to reach a certain room you must first travel through many others: one room opens into another and another. The house, with its chaos of rooms, hallways, and staircases piled together reflects the functioning human mind with its trains of thoughts, streams of consciousness, sublimated longings

and repressions, but is in this case materialised through built rather than organic imagery.

While the narrator herself first provides the overview of Audley Court, a look at the house's interior and exterior presented for the reader alone, Braddon later uses the captivating technique of sending characters unfamiliar with the estate inside on a guided tour. These tours are led by various guides over the course of the novel and each tour reveals a different material clue towards the discovery of Lady Audley's secret while simultaneously representing different ways of seeing through characters' various contact with the architectural interior of Audley Court. As Sparks suggests, Braddon dismantles 'the false front of her two most decorative subjects, Lady Audley and manor house Audley Court' (19). I suggest that this is accomplished largely through the guided tour technique and the reader's encounter with an architectural structure clearly endowed with heightened significance and metaphoric potential. As we will see, both Lady Audley and Audley Court require repeated viewing to discover the secrets they enclose. The multiple tours are yet another instance of Braddon's technique of repetition, recovering the same ground but doing so with a different inflection, as each guided tour reveals clues about Lady Audley, as well as information about the Audley Court 'tourists'. The effect of this technique is that the reader comes to view Audley Court as an endlessly revealing structure – a house that warrants repeated viewing.

It is important to Braddon and her narrator that the reader follows along each step on the path to uncovering Lady Audley's secret and the characters' movements within architecture accordingly hold particular significance. Tomaiuolo notes Braddon's use of 'various realistically oriented strategies' (140) like the incorporation of letters and paintings into her novel and argues, 'The

fact that this novel privileges an evidently realistic approach to narration […] is indicative of Braddon's desire to experiment with stylistic narrative strategies that differed from those which granted her enormous success' (152). I would suggest that architecture functions similarly as a 'realistically oriented' strategy. There is a heavy solidity to the house that becomes almost claustrophobic as the narrator pushes the reader through room after room, enclosure within enclosure. Through these twisting tours through architecture Braddon offers hints of the metaphoric potential of the labyrinth that will be explored at length in the following chapter. In *Lady Audley's Secret* we have the labyrinthine mind made manifest in the labyrinthine house. As characters wander through hallways linked metaphorically to Lady Audley's mental corridors, Lady Audley herself is at times unable to navigate her own thoughts, trapped in 'a labyrinth of guilt and treachery' (296). The narrator indicates 'Her thoughts wandered away into a weary maze of confusion' (298). Lady Audley is thoroughly enclosed within the architecture of her house but also the architecture of her mind. The labyrinth image connotes confusion and disorientation and by figuring Lady Audley's mental space as an enclosed labyrinth, Braddon suggests that her heroine can see no way out of her difficulties. With its layers of walls jealously guarding a protected centre, the labyrinth also conveys the extent to which Lady Audley desires to enclosure her secrets in an impenetrable structure.

Braddon uses the first guided tour to foreground the distinction between external impressions and internal truths. This tour is led by Phoebe Marks, Lady Audley's personal maid, who brings in her cousin and future husband, Luke Marks. With her privileged access, Phoebe understands that the exterior of the house does not match certain interior rooms, telling Luke, 'it's a tumble down looking place enough outside; but you should see my lady's rooms' (27), going

on to describe the expensive art, mirrors, and painted ceiling. Carried here is Braddon's warning not to judge from the outside, a mistake repeatedly made by men in relation to Lady Audley. The couple first speak outside in an atmosphere laden with death imagery: 'The very repose of the place grew painful from its intensity, and you felt as if a corpse must be lying somewhere within that grey and ivy-covered pile of building – so deathlike was the tranquility of all around' (24). This passage recalls Esther's description of the 'undisturbed repose' (Dickens 265) of Chesney Wold. The house has a similarly funereal aspect, only wanting a dead body to complete the scene. As with many of the domestic habitations in *Bleak House*, Braddon here represents her leading house as an anticipating tomb – a container waiting patiently to be filled. Braddon later reinforces the funereal aspect of the setting when George visits the lime walk and remarks: 'It ought to be an avenue in a churchyard […] How peacefully the dead might sleep under this sombre shade! I wish the churchyard at Ventnor was like this' (66). The irony is that George wants his wife to have these peaceful surroundings in death and unbeknownst to him she has them in life: while George believes his wife to be dead and buried, she is in fact a resident of this house that bespeaks a mausoleum. An additional layer of irony is that George himself is nearly prematurely interred on the grounds of Audley Court.

If Braddon imagines Audley Court as dynamic and somehow actively participatory in its own concealments, we should consider this parallel representation of the house as tomb, an image with typically static connotations. While it might be possible to argue that Lady Audley's two murder attempts generate from the interior of Audley Court, actions that indicate her deep-seated desire for self preservation at all costs and establish the house as a sort of symbolic instrument of death, it also seems probable that Braddon's narrator

expresses a death-inflected vision similar to that of Esther Summerson. Thinking back to the previous section of this chapter, the narrator does in fact describe the majority of the architectural structures she critiques via tomb or burial imagery: the rot of Castle Inn, the carcases and skeletons of Brigsome's Terrace, dismal Crescent Villas and the gloomy 'living grave' (391) of the maison de santé in Belgium to name a few. Considering these examples along with what we have seen in *Bleak House* and *Villette* reveals the universality of the connection between architecture and death. The mausoleum – a literal house for the dead – provides the ideal vehicle for encapsulating this connection and expressing various psychological fears such as the desire for continuing the familiar experience of habitation after death. In the case of Audley Court, the narrator is likely also using the house as tomb metaphor to draw attention to Lady Audley as a figure of living death with a previously interred identity.

Braddon is emphatic that a knowledgeable guide is essential to reach the nexus of Audley Court, Lady Audley's boudoir. Phoebe brings Luke inside: 'The long, black oak corridors were dim in the ghostly twilight – the light carried by Phoebe looking only a poor speck of flame in the broad passages through which the girl led her cousin' (28). Like Eliot's Casaubon carrying a candle through his own mental hallways, Phoebe and Luke traverse Lady Audley's architectural mindscape. The narrator meticulously tracks their movements within three-dimensional space as Phoebe leads Luke through a drawing room, a morning room, an antechamber and then the boudoir:

> She lifted a heavy green cloth curtain which hung across a doorway, and led the astonished countryman into a fairy-like boudoir, and thence to a dressing-room, in which the open doors

> of a wardrobe and a heap of dresses flung about a sofa showed that it still remained exactly as its occupant had left it. (29)

A curtain obscures the doorway to the boudoir and you would need to know what you are looking for in order to locate the door. Braddon's inclusion of the sheltering curtain immediately brings to mind Conolly's writings on surveillance and the asylum practice of seclusion. Conolly writes that it is 'absolutely necessary' to keep violent patients under surveillance, especially when they are 'secluded' in their room (26). By 'seclusion', Conolly is referring to the practice of enforcing solitary confinement. Asylums employed seclusion as a means by which to transition away from the use of mechanical restraints and to quiet agitated patients.[23] Conolly cautions that 'Some patients are particularly sensitive concerning being watched, and contrive to hang up clothes so as to obstruct inspection' (27). What they are obscuring is the 'inspection-plate' that makes their room and its contents visible to anyone passing by their door. Conolly provides a detailed description of the inspection plates used for patient surveillance at Hanwell and many other institutions:

> The plate is made of iron, and towards the gallery merely presents a flat surface and a small circular opening, over which there is a cover, which moves without noise, and may be fastened when desirable; the inside of the plate is broad and concave towards the patient's room, all parts of which thus become visible by looking through the opening from the outside. (26)

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[23] Conolly was a key figure behind the abolition of physical restraints in British asylums. His observations are based largely on his own institution, Hanwell, and its purported success. He was the resident physician at Hanwell (Middlesex County Asylum) from 1839-1844 and was afterwards a visiting physician until 1852. Conolly writes, 'When the use of restraints was first forbidden, the safety of the attendants, and of the patients themselves, required that those in charge of the wards should have authority to place violent or unruly patients in their bedrooms for a time, locking the door' (26). Conolly further describes seclusion as when patients are 'most securely placed in rooms in which there is a very low bedstead, and no other furniture, or in rooms of which the whole floor is covered with bedding' (28). Conolly emphasises that seclusion is employed primarily to ensure that patients cannot do any harm to themselves.

These patients were clearly uncomfortable with the knowledge that they could be observed at any moment of any day and here we see them fighting back against the surveillance in their own way. Lady Audley's curtain similarly indicates a desire to protect her own private space, a longing for a respite from visibility and performance. The inspection plate is like a giant eye suddenly snapping open its lid, the same impression given by Luke's abrupt and bewildering entrance into Lady Audley's boudoir. Luke moves from the more public, shared rooms of the house directly into Lady Audley's most private space and is greeted with a vision of rich and careless excess. If Luke and Phoebe are granted an interior look at Lady Audley's mind via her room – a physical, tangible, instantiation of her desires and values – that space seems to indicate priorities based solely on pleasure and comfort.

Lady Audley's rooms are intimately connected to her secrets. Once her rooms are breached, the discovery of a material clue quickly follows. As Anthony Vidler writes in *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays on the Modern Unhomely* (1992), 'space is assumed to hide, in its darkest recesses and forgotten margins, all the objects of fear and phobia that have returned with such insistency to haunt the imagination of those who have tried to stake out spaces to protect their health and happiness' (167). While admiring her jewellery, Luke discovers a secret drawer that contains a baby shoe and lock of hair. These are the first clues towards a discovery of Lady Audley's prior life with her lawful husband and baby boy. Bachelard writes that 'Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life' (78). Mundane pieces of domestic ornament become suffused with psychological significance when they are locked or tucked away and we understand that the shoe and hair are

important based on the very fact that they were hidden from plain sight. Lady Audley's memories of her past life are repressed and sublimated in these hidden objects. Yet Braddon enforces the idea that Lady Audley's rooms hold more than tokens that might reveal the secrets of her past: her rooms are also a repository for her most revealing thoughts. While we do not have direct access to Lady Audley's mental interior, we do have access to her room, the place where she ritually works through her thoughts and plans her next move, a tendency that accelerates as the novel progresses and she feels her lies closing in on her. Through the insistent linking of room and inhabitant, Braddon highlights the utility of material architecture as a psychological intermediary.

Elizabeth Langland details the extent to which Lady Audley is vulnerable within the architecture of her own home and she writes that, despite the secluded setting, 'Lady Audley's private spaces are curiously vulnerable to penetration' (9). Audley Court 'both limits her range of motion and opens to visibility all of her activities, much like a Panopticon' (9). Saverio Tomaiuolo also notes the panoptical gaze directed at Lady Audley (27) and writes, 'the house (as a material place and a social institution) becomes a retreat and a potential prison, a shelter and a site of confinement' (27). Aeron Haynie focuses on the role of the reader as voyeur and writes, 'Like Luke Marks, the reader can creep into Lady Audley's boudoir and fondle her clothes and jewels' (65). This is an uncomfortable description for the reader to consider, as we are simultaneously invited in and trespassing, led by the narrator into rooms that Lady Audley attempts, and fails, to protect and is consequently complicit in the violation of her privacy. The reader's discomfort is compounded by their understanding that they have breached more than an architectural barrier and are now treading on Audley's own interiority, made manifest in her room.

Braddon uses the next guided tour to undercut the promise of a locked door. This is the reader's second tour of the same space, led by a different guide, and the retreading of the same ground gives the reader another opportunity to look and probe, to discover something revealing that their eye might have missed when they were initially granted access. Braddon, then, is equally interested in her reader's perception of the represented architectural space as she is in her character's experience within it. Alicia meets Robert and George outside before taking them through the house to see Lady Audley's boudoir and portrait and 'told them some old legend connected with the spot – some gloomy story, such as those always attached to an old house, as if the past were one dark page of sorrow and crime' (66). This could possibly be a repetition and confirmation of the story that Luke refers to on his tour, telling Phoebe, 'I've heard tell of a murder that was done here in old times' to which Phoebe responds, 'There are murders enough in these times, as to that, Luke' (28). As Braddon proves, crime and violence do not stay in the past, but rather are destined to intrude on the present. Why, though, are there always gloomy stories attached to old houses? Why do we equate old architecture with fear, crime, haunting, or murder? Braddon here illustrates the resilience of these Gothic tropes cohering around ancient houses. The idea of a gloomy story attached to an old house recalls *Bleak House's* Ghosts Walk and the legend of an avenging ancestor.[24] Similarly, in *Villette* Lucy Snowe recounts the legend of a nun that could be seen some nights walking in the gardens of the pensionnat housed in a former convent. Braddon seems to be consciously referencing *Bleak House*, as she does with *Villette*, signalling her interest in similarly mining

[24] Also reminiscent of *Bleak House* is Braddon's first description of Alicia, who 'had reigned supreme in her father's house since her earliest childhood, and had carried the keys, and jingled them in the pockets of her silk aprons' (4). While the narrator describes Alicia as an indifferent housekeeper, the jingling of keys recalls Esther Summerson and her habit of shaking her housekeeping keys whenever she needs a boost of self-confidence.

Gothic tropes and redirecting them towards realist ends.[25] By such references Braddon appears intent on showing that houses can reveal more than Gothic undertones and serve a multitude of purposes, particularly in terms of the connections I have been drawing between a narrator with an architect's eye, a psychological profile expressed through architecture, and a well-constructed novel.

To this end, the narrator makes an attempt similar to that made by Esther in *Bleak House* to diagram a house already described as disorienting and unfathomable. While Alicia leads the tour, the narrator describes their movements within the house's architecture in a deliberate manner, never letting the reader forget her architect's eye and interest in replicating three-dimensionality. Alicia leads the group into the house through a window, into the library, into a hallway, and upstairs (66). Unbeknown to the would-be voyeurs, Lady Audley has previously locked her door:

> Her suite of rooms, as I have said, opened one out of another, and terminated in an octagon ante-chamber hung with oil paintings. Even in her haste she paused deliberately at the door of this room, double locked it, and dropped the key in her pocket. This door, once locked, cut off all access to my lady's apartments. (60)

Lady Audley does not just lock the door, she double locks, an act of additional security that seems out of place in a happy domestic setting. Bachelard suggests that 'A lock is a psychological threshold' (81). He refers to doors as 'primal images […] the temptation to open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings' (222). Like Dickens's Death's Doors, Braddon's doors indicate an architectural threshold between two realms, Lady

[25] Carol Margaret Davison refers to novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* as Gothic closets in the house of Victorian fiction (127).

Audley's social self and her emotional and psychological interior. As with her hidden baby items, Lady Audley's locked door all but guarantees that there is a secret being protected within. The group is frustrated to find themselves locked out. Robert asks Alicia: 'is there any door, leading through some of the other rooms, by which we can contrive to get into hers?' (67). On its face, this is a strange question, but as an intimate of the house Robert's query illustrates how frequently rooms in Audley Court tended to lead into one another. At the same time, Robert reveals his total lack of compunction transgressing a barrier that Lady Audley clearly put in place as an attempt at self-preservation.

Despite the fact that the narrator has just stated of the door leading to Lady Audley's boudoir: 'This door, once locked, cut off all access to my lady's apartments (60), we now learn that this is not accurate. Alicia proceeds to tell Robert about the secret passage leading into the boudoir and says that Lady Audley herself is unaware of its existence (68). The reader immediately understands that this unknown secret passage is a chink in Lady Audley's armour, a breach of her defences. Langland notes 'the seamless interpenetration of the house and its lady' and writes, 'Ironically, the locks and keys, secret passages and drawers that should secure her secrets from penetration, prove no defence against the social expectation of continual and invited visibility' (9). Braddon pointedly illustrates the impossibility of keeping these rooms safe from prying eyes. The reader follows George and Robert 'from the dressing-room to the boudoir, and through the boudoir into the ante-chamber' (69) and, once the reader is this deep within Audley Court, he or she understands that something important will be revealed. Lady Audley's portrait provides the major clue of Alicia's guided tour, revealing to George that his wife

and Lady Audley are one and the same.[26] The portrait of Lady Audley's is shrouded within her inner sanctum, and to find this truth the reader must travel progressively inwards, similarly to a labyrinth journey.

For the third tour, Braddon turns to architecture to convey her illusive heroine's decision-making process. Lady Audley sneaks out of her own house like Lucy Snowe escaping the pensionnat and her escape is similarly detailed by meticulously documenting her movement within architecture. While this would not strictly be considered a guided tour since the narrator alone is describing Lady Audley's movements, the architectural precision by which her movements are related is very similar to the other guided tour accounts. Lady Audley 'did not pause until she reached the vestibule upon the ground floor. Several doors opened out of this vestibule, which was an octagon, like my lady's antechamber. One of these doors led into the library, and it was this door which Lady Audley opened softly and cautiously' (314). This is a bewildering description of multiple doors and architectural thresholds. It is also the second reference to the shape of Lady Audley's antechamber as octagonal, reminding the reader of her multi-sided character. Continuing to yoke the organic with the built, Braddon associates her heroine's choice of exit with her mental clarity: 'To have attempted to leave the house secretly by any of the principal outlets would have been simple madness, for the housekeeper herself superintended the barricading of the great doors, back and front' (314-315). While the main doors of the 'citadel' are highly fortified, 'a wooden shutter and a slender iron bar, light enough to be lifted by a child, were considered sufficient safeguard for the half-

[26] The portrait is in the centre of the room and depicts Lady Audley standing in that same room. Robert and George take turns viewing the portrait: 'It was so like and yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange-coloured fires before my lady's face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before. The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring, were there; but I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend' (71).

glass door which opened out of the breakfast room into the gravelled pathway and smooth turf in the courtyard' (314-315). After describing this door the narrator reiterates that it is by 'this outlet' that Lady Audley plans 'to make her escape', and then details her doing exactly that: she 'crossed the library, and opened the door of the breakfast room which communicated with it' (315) and then exits the building. Braddon seems to be building and rebuilding, preparing readers for movement and then representing that movement within architecture. We must first hear about all of these detailed movements through rooms before we have any idea where exactly Lady Audley is heading. This technique enables Braddon to heighten the suspense of the moment, delay the reader's gratification, and emphasise her own narrative authority.

Finally, by the end of the novel Audley Court has transitioned from a home to an attraction:

> Audley Court is shut up, and a grim old housekeeper reigns paramount in the mansion which my lady's ringing laughter once made musical […] The house is often shown to inquisitive visitors, though the baronet is not informed of that fact, and people admire my lady's rooms, and ask many questions about the pretty, fair-haired woman, who died abroad. (446)

The house is again put on display, as it was to the reader, and visitors take tours with the housekeeper as the guide. Even after her death, Lady Audley's rooms are exposed to prying eyes, yet these new visitors will not learn all of the secrets that the reader has been privy to. The housekeeper will lead visitors through by rote and does not have the remit to expose the family's secrets. She will keep her charges on track and prevent unsanctioned exploration. Sir Michael is unaware of these tours, much as Lady Audley was unaware of the

repeated violations of her privacy when she was in possession of her boudoir. The house was animated by the connection with Lady Audley and she is no longer there to make it a dynamic participant in her psychological portrayal. Lady Audley's secrets have been exposed, the revealing connection between house and inhabitant has been severed, and now the architecture of Audley Court reverts to an inanimate setting. It remains an interesting house, but the narrator leaves no question that Audley Court has revealed all that it can.

Through her guided-tour technique, Braddon indicates the necessity of a well-informed guide to open up the potential secrets within an architectural structure (and a novel). By retreading the same ground with a different guide, Braddon highlights the three-dimensionality of her setting while also suggesting that we can learn different things from different guides. For example, Phoebe knows a lot about Audley Court but Alicia knows more; the housekeeper knows how to lead but Lady Audley knows how to escape. Through these tours Braddon suggests that architecture can be endlessly revealing and, for this exact reason, architecture provides Braddon with a vibrant model for the human mind: architecture can be labyrinthine, layered, secretive, penetrable, navigable and disorienting. The novel begins and ends with Audley Court and in between Braddon accomplishes her dual aims of constructing a materially realistic built environment and a compelling psychological profile of her heroine through architectural description and architectural metaphor in her novel.

3. Architecture and Identity: the Discomfort of an Unhoused Body

As we have seen, Lady Audley is nothing if not enclosed. Braddon pairs the repeated framing of her heroine within material architecture with the formless idea of George Talboys' missing body. After the focus on housing both the living and dead characters in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and the

intimate homsespaces constructed through the technique of architectural internalisation in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Braddon's novel asks the question: what happens when a body is missing? What is the impact of a human body suspended in space and held apart from any known architectural enclosure? With so much riding on architecture in this novel, the idea of an uncontained body, a body loose in space, a body without defined architectural borders, is so disturbing to Robert that it spurs on practically all of the action of the novel. In this final section I argue that Braddon foregrounds the anxiety surrounding a body's appropriate containment to illustrate the extent to which the mind conceptualises bodily existence through architectural enclosures.

Braddon offers a marked contrast between Robert's practice of tracking Lady Audley through architecture and his distress over his inability to locate George. As the novel progresses, the idea of a missing body lacking any enclosed boundaries becomes psychologically revealing of Robert: Braddon infuses her novel with Robert's anxiety to locate and enclose the physical remains of his friend and her reader accordingly becomes invested in this mission. When George disappears unexpectedly, Robert is immediately uneasy: 'He felt as if there was some mystery involved in the disappearance of his friend – some treachery towards himself, or towards George' (97). As time passes, Robert fears the worst and becomes increasingly fixated on the unknown location of his friend's body, thinking, 'If he is alive he is still in England, and if he is dead his body is hidden in some corner of England' (99). As we will see, Robert cannot rest until he can contain George's body within some form of tangible structure. The hidden body – a body out of place and unconfined by any architectural structure – becomes Robert's obsession.[27]

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[27] As much as we are invited to analyse and examine Lady Audley for her motives, the narrator also directs the reader's gaze towards Robert and his obsesssion. Robert, like Lady Audley, is

In this novel, Braddon experiments with what a house can reveal through a narrator with an architect's eye. She contrasts the architectural excavations she encourages for Audley Court with Robert's frustration that a house cannot always tell. While staying at the Castle Inn, Robert receives an unexpected visit from Lady Audley and attempts to describe his frustration that the mystery of George's disappearance remains unsolved: 'My friend might have been made away with in this very inn, stabbed to death upon this hearth-stone on which I now stand, and I might stay here for a twelve-month, and go away at the last as ignorant of his fate as if I had never crossed the threshold' (140). Robert is agitated by the idea of unknowingly inhabiting the rooms where a murder was committed, bringing to mind Mr Guppy's matter-of-fact statement that 'there have been dead men in most rooms' (*Bleak House* 474). Robert continues, asking rhetorically, 'What do we know of the mysteries that may hang about the houses we enter?' (140). Robert knows that houses do not spontaneously reveal the crimes committed within: 'Foul deeds have been done under the most hospitable roofs, terrible crimes have been committed amid the fairest scenes, and have left no trace upon the spot where they were done' (140). Here Braddon pushes back at Gothic tradition that presents the scene of a crime as dark and ominous. Instead, Braddon suggests that a murder could potentially occur within any room and this opens up the narrative possibilities of any setting.

Braddon forces Robert to grapple with the fact that, despite his best efforts, he may never discover a tangible clue to unravel the mystery of George's bodily whereabouts. He explains to Lady Audley:

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also self-aware to a certain extent and expresses concern over his own behaviour: 'am I to be tormented all my life by vague doubts, and wretched suspicions, which may grow upon me till I become a monomaniac?' (146).

> I do not believe in mandrake, or in blood stains that no time can efface. I believe rather that we may walk unconsciously in an atmosphere of crime, and breathe none the less freely. I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty. (140-141)

As Badowska writes, Braddon conveys 'the distressing realization that certain historical, even traumatic, events may be traceless or invisible, or leave only oblique traces' (166). Robert struggles to come to terms with a disappearance so sudden and absolute, ruminating on the inn: 'The place seems as gloomy as if the poor fellow had died in the next room, and had never been taken away to be buried' (151). Here we see the recurrence of the house as tomb metaphor so prevalent in the novels of this study, as authors seem intent on enforcing the idea that any room has the potential to hold a body and thus become a tomb, in addition to the fact that all humans are tending towards the grave. Robert ruminates, 'How long ago that September afternoon appears […] upon which I parted with him alive and well; and lost him as suddenly and unaccountably as if a trap-door had opened in the solid earth, and let him through to the Antipodes!' (151). This sentence concludes Volume One and recalls the suspension similarly enacted by Brontë in *Villette* when Lucy faints and we must wait for the next volume for her to resume both consciousness and her narration. In this case, Braddon's narrator leaves the readers with the image of George's body freefalling to the opposite side of the earth.

Uncontained, George's body infiltrates every thought Robert has and every place he visits. Like Esther Summerson, his vision becomes death-inflected and it seems to Robert that the body is everywhere, contaminating every room he moves through. At the Talboys mansion he observes 'wintery

shrubs of a funereal aspect' (185). Later, branches 'looked like the ghostly arms of shrunken and withered giants beckoning Robert to his uncle's house. They looked like threatening phantoms in the chill winter twilight, gesticulating to him to hasten upon his journey' (213). Trees later assume a foreboding bodily form in Belgium, when Robert observes, 'the shadows of the leafless branches went and came tremblingly, like the shadows of paralytic skeletons' (386). Robert knows that he is stagnating: he mourns his lost friend but also his own stalled life and his altered perspective that now manifests in seeing death everywhere.

Throughout the novel Robert exhibits an overwhelming anxiety concerning enclosure. Where is the body? Is it buried or exposed? Is it inside a building or under the ground? Is it entombed within any form of tangible architecture? We might question whether it is the murder we find so unsettling or the bodily absence, the body's unknown fate. For Robert, the act of murder itself seems to pale in significance to the crime of hiding a body. As a result of this acute focus, George's belongings become his body by proxy and Robert 'handled the things with a respectful tenderness, as if he had been lifting the dead body of his lost friend' (155). The creation of substitute bodily relics from material objects brings to mind Lucy Snowe's buried letters (the relics from her romance) as Braddon foregrounds Robert's overriding desire for tangibility. Braddon enforces this idea when Robert enters a church and examines 'the dilapidated memorials of the well-nigh forgotten dead' (256). Of course, this puts him in mind of his friend and George's lack of memorial:

> If my poor friend, George Talboys, had died in my arms, and I had buried him in this quiet church, in one of the vaults over which I tread to-day, how much anguish of mind, vacillation, and torment I might have escaped […] I should have known his fate – I should

> have known his fate! Ah, how much there would have been in that. It is this miserable uncertainty, this horrible suspicion, which has poisoned my very life. (256)

It is strange to wish that your friend died in your arms, but that is how strongly Robert needs for his friend's body to be well-housed. More than anything, Robert wants George found and properly enclosed within tangible architecture. As we have seen in *Bleak House*, the mausoleum seems to point to a continued stage of habitation and a place where a person can continue to exert influence, even after death. Robert longs to think of his friend in this way, as a resident of a particular churchyard or cemetery.

Robert ultimately zeroes in on the grounds of Audley Court as George's likely burial place: 'The lonely garden was as quiet as some solitary graveyard, walled in and hidden away from the world of the living' (274). He tells Lady Audley,

> I believe that he met with his death within the boundary of these grounds; and that his body lies hidden below some quiet water, or in some forgotten corner of this place. I will have such a search made as shall level that house to the earth, and root up every tree in these gardens, rather than I will fail in finding the grave of my murdered friend. (275)

Robert lists various potential organic tombs – from the water to the gardens, a continuation of the theme of imagining alternative burial places for his friend. Ultimately Robert learns that his friend lies in the pseudo-tomb of the old well. This revelation brings the reader full circle, back to the narrator's early descriptions of the abandoned well at the very beginning of the novel. Robert's relief at finally knowing the truth is quickly followed by a return to dismay when

Robert realises that he cannot remove his friend from the well without involving his uncle and bringing unwanted publicity to the family name. His emotions run the gamut:

> Sometimes he thought that it little mattered to his dead friend whether he lay entombed beneath a marble monument, whose workmanship should be the wonder of the universe, or in that obscure hiding-place in the thicket at Audley Court. At another time he would be seized with a sudden horror at the wrong that has been done to the murdered man. (396)

Dead is dead, and at this point the ritual of burial is more about bringing peace to Robert than to George. He also hits on the two extremes of burial options – a burial marked by a marble monument of a master craftsman or an anonymous return to the earth. The irony is of course that George is not even dead and is instead, like Lady Audley, a figure of living death. While Lady Audley is buried alive twice, both when she faked her own death and when she was prematurely entombed in the Belgian madhouse, George is a living murder victim.

Like Dickens, who represents the human experience as a progression of architectural enclosures terminating at the tomb in *Bleak House*, Braddon directs her readers' attention towards Robert and the acute anxiety resulting from a single human body severed from all architectural context. Through this emphasis on George's uncontained body, a body lacking definitive architectural enclosure, Braddon suggests the extent to which the human experience is intrinsically bound to dwelling. At the same time, Braddon manipulates the idea of a missing body for all of its narrative potential. She illustrates the effect the 'hidden grave' (172) and the 'unknown grave' (196) on Robert's psychological moorings. She indicates that our expectation and desire for enclosure extends

into death. Finally, Braddon illustrates the extent to which we, as authors, readers, and human beings, have an architectural imagination. We conceptualise our bodies through the architecture we move through and mediate the world through architectural metaphor.

Conclusion

As set out in her essay 'At the Shrine of *Jane Eyre*' (1906), Braddon had certain expectations for her visit to Haworth and the Brontë family parsonage: she anticipated an isolated setting, dramatic weather, atmospheric architecture, and most importantly a discernible connection between Charlotte Brontë's creative artistry and the architecture that enclosed and facilitated her development. Braddon was met with disappointment, renovations, and an architectural structure that no longer seemed to encapsulate Brontë and her literary output. With Braddon thinking about architecture and its expressive potential in this way, we can read *Lady Audley's Secret* as Braddon's endeavour to realise the connection between architecture and author that she hoped to discover at the parsonage. If Braddon was disappointed that the Brontë parsonage did not say enough about its inhabitants and their work, Audley Court tells us everything. In fact, Braddon pushes the utility of architecture to its limits in her novel, using architecture to express the march of time and taste; as a vehicle for artistic creativity; to critique faulty structures and bring to the fore the connection between architect and author; to experiment with the intersection of the organic and the built; to provide three-dimensional realistic solidity to her novel's built environment; and to represent her heroine's emotional and psychological interiority.

Braddon's particular realist aims for *Lady Audley's Secret* undoubtedly cohere around architecture. She is interested in writing architecture and building

up realist portraits of the built environment surrounding her characters. She is interested in depicting how houses appear, how and by whom they are built, and the lives contained within. Her novel encapsulates architectural progress, expansion, and landscapes in flux. Accordingly, she represents unsettling architectural encounters in the novel as her readers are exposed to new constructions and developing neighborhoods. Braddon encourages her readers to think about the texture of the world around them and to be mindful of the human experience within architectural enclosures. Deploying a narrator with an architect's eye ensures that the material built environment world of her novel will be described with precision. Such a narrator is capable of documenting, but also critiquing, the architecture she encounters. By writing about how things are constructed, how they are made and who makes them, if they are sound or faulty, Braddon offers ruminations on her own authorial method and the importance of a well-constructed novel. Braddon's narrator is also attuned to the metaphoric potential of architectural spaces and is capable of leading the reader through psychologically revealing enclosures. By creating a house that doubles as a blueprint of her heroine's labyrinthine mind, Braddon encourages us to think about what can be accomplished by imagining psychological interiority in this way. Braddon presents Audley Court as a psychological artifact and directs her reader to excavate and to participate in the unearthing of her heroine's secrets – secrets that Braddon has built into the very foundation of Audley Court.

4. Building the Brain: The Architectural Interior in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,
One need not be a house;
The brain has corridors surpassing
Material place.
-Emily Dickinson

Introduction

In a journal entry dated 26 May 1870, George Eliot writes of a trip to Oxford with her partner George Henry Lewes: 'G. and I went to the Museum, and had an interesting morning with Dr. Rolleston who dissected a brain for me' (Harris 140).[1] It is an intriguing cerebral encounter; Rolleston, the physician and professor of physiology slicing up the brain before Lewes, the philosopher with a burgeoning interest in the developing science of psychology, and Eliot, the realist author committed to an aesthetic that aimed to open up and explore the mental existence of her characters. The dissected interior of the organ can be understood to highlight challenges faced by both Lewes and Eliot in their respective endeavours: while Lewes was likely thinking of his work-in-progress *Problems of Life and Mind* and wondering how to unlock the scientific and psychological processes of the object before him, Eliot was also in the middle of a project, and, in the months that followed this trip to Oxford, she returned to work on her novel *Middlemarch* (1872).[2] In this chapter, the question is not whether or how Eliot might incorporate the scientific advancements of her day into her novel – although she was certainly aware of and interested in these developments – but rather how she chooses to imaginatively illustrate the internal workings of the mind: how she represents thought and its connection to

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[1] Lewes had an earlier encounter with the brain on an 1861 visit to Huxley where he saw the dissected brains of a human and a monkey compared (Ashton 214).
[2] Eliot's work on *Middlemarch* had been suspended as a result of the death of Lewes's son, Thornie, who died of tuberculosis on 19 October 1869.

character in a realist novel whose aesthetic parameters are defined by the visual world.

Middlemarch is often conceived of in terms of organic structures that have been thoroughly explored both within this particular novel and across Eliot's canon more broadly by scholars such as Sally Shuttleworth, Gillian Beer, and Rick Rylance.[3] Yet, while Eliot's use of organic imagery such as water, webs, and currents as a vehicle for the representation of contemporary psychological theories and mental processes has been widely attended to, far less consideration has been afforded to the structural counterpart to these images: the labyrinth, staircase, and anteroom. This chapter thus explores the architectural and built metaphors through which Eliot pushes at the boundaries of the realist aesthetic. What becomes fascinating in *Middlemarch*, then, is the slippage between the two modes, the organic and the built, and the moments in which Eliot displays a conversion technique by describing something organic in architectural terms.

Having been confronted with the material reality of the intricate, coiling lobes of the human brain, Eliot proceeds to represent the mind as an architectural space in her novel: a labyrinth. This chapter argues that Eliot's encounter with the brain raises questions about the limits of realist representation and suggests that Eliot's novel becomes an exploration of this moment and the aesthetic questions it raises about realism and its ability to represent psychology. In *Middlemarch*, we see Eliot challenging the conventions of this form, an engagement that in later novels emerged as full-blown psychological realism, a technique primarily associated with interiority.

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[3] See Sally Shuttleworth's *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (1984), Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983), and Rick Rylance's *Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850–1880* (2000).

Departing from an organic model and offering readers of *Middlemarch* an architecturalised mind, Eliot creates a bridge between material and psychological realism.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot internalises architectural structures such as labyrinths, staircases, anterooms, doors, and windows within her characters in order to bring her reader deep within the characters' minds and expose the unseen activity of mental life. Eliot's realist aesthetic employs familiar architecture in an effort to build up a three-dimensional brain model and to illustrate characters themselves as figures within that navigable structure. In these instances of what I have termed 'architectural internalisation', Eliot turns to architectural imagery in her depiction of characters' mental processes in order to make concrete the things which constitute the human brain yet cannot be seen by dissecting it: the inner workings of the individual mind. These interiors are not merely representative of psychological states or processes, but become the medium (an architectural medium) through which characters conceive of their own mental existence and attempt, often unsuccessfully, to comprehend the mental interiority of another person.

Eliot immediately indicates that architecture will have a foundational role in her novel by famously opening the Prelude with the sentence, 'Who that cares to know the history of man, and how that mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa' (3). Saint Theresa of Avila was a Spanish saint, author, and reformer of the Carmelite order. Theresa's most famous work, *The Interior Castle* (1577), is a guide to prayer constructed entirely around a sustained

architectural metaphor.[4] This metaphor takes the shape of the soul as a great castle within each person, containing various levels and layers of mansions. Theresa indicates in her preface that she is writing to her fellow nuns of the Convent of our Lady of Mount Carmel in order to clarify some aspects of prayer. To this end, Theresa sets up an extended architectural metaphor, 'in order that I may begin on some foundation' (1).[5] Her text, divided into chapters moving from the first to the seventh mansion, details the means by which, through prayer, an individual can progress through the mansions, from the periphery inwards, and ultimately achieve the centre, entering into dialogue with God. Through the metaphor of an interior castle existing within each person, Theresa represents the individual's distance from God, and the work required to correct that distance, as physical, familiar, and approachable.

Middlemarch comes full circle around Saint Theresa, as Eliot mentions her in both the novel's prelude and in its finale. The fact that Eliot opens her prelude with a reference to the author of this fascinating and architecturally-organised work is significant in ways that have yet to receive sustained critical attention. In *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines,* Dorothea Barrett writes of Eliot's Prelude to *Middlemarch*:

> Theresa was chosen because she was passionate and dynamic: a reformer, a writer, an erotically charged woman, she expressed, in every aspect of her life, the energy and desire that obsessed George Eliot throughout the canon and is conveyed by the images

[4] Eliot's library contained a 1588 Salamancan copy of Saint Theresa's work, *The Way of Perfection*. *The George Eliot- George Henry Lewes Library, an annotated catalogue of their books at Dr. William's Library*. [online].

[5] I am using the Reverend John Dalton's 1852 translation from Spanish. If Eliot did in fact read *The Interior Castle*, it is likely that she read this version. Dalton's version is the second English translation, the first being published in 1675.

> of flowing water, currents, streams, rivers, and the tides that Barbara Hardy has elucidated so fully. (129)[6]

In this chapter I will be exploring a very different aspect of the Saint Theresa influence and arguing that Eliot's choice of Saint Theresa for the prelude signals a lesser-remarked preoccupation with architecture and construction in *Middlemarch*. I suggest that while organic structures are clearly important in the novel, architectural and built metaphors are equally significant and deserving of critical commentary.

While overt references to Saint Theresa open and close the novel, her authorial influence pervades *Middlemarch* through certain distinct points of contact which will be explored in this chapter: a heroine with an architecturally-inflected vision; the sustained emphasis on architectural metaphor as a tangible vehicle for navigation and narration; the technique of architectural internalisation utilised by both authors; and the use of the labyrinth journey as a subtle subtext of each work. This chapter argues that, as Theresa turns to internalised architecture to represent the soul's progress towards God, Eliot similarly employs layers of architectural and structural metaphors to represent the progress of the lives of her characters and the novel itself. Consequently, this chapter will take Theresa's sustained use of architectural metaphor in *The Interior Castle* as a point of departure for an examination of the under-acknowledged architectural significance of Eliot's *Middlemarch* and its crucial role in Eliot's representation of character and form.

[6] In his book, *George Eliot's Mythmaking* (1977), Joseph Wiesenfarth also discusses Saint Theresa's role in Eliot's Preface, writing, 'There are heroes and heroines who share the energy for good of a Theresa of Avila, but who for the most part can do no great work. Their interior life can achieve no exterior action that will be on a scale of importance with the work done by the saintly patroness of Spain, who reformed the Carmelite order in the sixteenth century and thereby renewed the religious life of her land. Having announced the impossibility of an epic subject, George Eliot sets herself the task of writing a novel of epic dimension' (186).

The Interior Castle enlivens an architectural reading of *Middlemarch*. Theresa never departs at length from her architectural metaphor as it is vital for the construction and conveyance of her argument and it is her stated aim to solidify the soul for her readers, to release it from obscurity through the tangibility of the architectural metaphor. For Theresa, the soul is not 'obscure', but is 'an internal world, containing so many and such beautiful mansions […] since God has an abode within this soul' (174). The language of architecture and habitation provides Saint Theresa with a vehicle of substantiation through which to represent the soul's potential progress towards God. By describing the soul's movement through the mansions, Theresa creates a tangible journey metaphor through which she illustrates the benefits of active, inward movement and the danger of stasis. Yet this technique goes beyond metaphor, as Theresa is not using the metaphor of the mansions to better describe or depict the soul itself, but to convey the soul's potential for progress and spiritual development. Further, the castle represents the soul, yet the individual worshipper also exists within and confronts the metaphoric structure firsthand, becoming a conscious traveller within the materialised architecture of the soul. Thus, Theresa's work hinges on the architectural internalisation technique and its potential to make the subject of a literary work navigable.

As mentioned in the introduction to this project, Ellen Eve Frank argues that architectural metaphor in literature provides the reader with access to the author's consciousness. Frank states that certain authors 'select architecture in order to give to language and thought spatial extension, to present the where-ness of ideas and thoughts. By means of the analogue, they may give, or seem to give, substance to that which is no-thing, to that which does not occupy what we call substantial space' (12). Frank's concept of 'spatial extension' provides a

useful term for describing the way in which Eliot represents mental architecture in *Middlemarch*, employing an architectural metaphor to provide a structure for the insubstantial and as a way of materialising immaterial consciousness. As Frank describes literary architecture as ‘those self-consciously selected structures which these [...] writers use to help them organize their perceptions’ (9), Eliot’s heroine does the same, turning towards architecture to convey her vision of the world as well as the construction of her memories and experiences. By doing so, Eliot pushes at the limits of the realist form by first describing the human mind as it appears physically, via the dissected organ of the brain (labyrinthine) and then imaginatively adapting and renovating the architecturalised minds of her characters.

In an article on Dickens’s *Hard Times*, Lauren Cameron considers the importance of architectural imagery to mental representation. Cameron argues that ‘[a]lthough it has gone mostly uncommented by scholars working on both British and American literature of the nineteenth century, architectural language applied to the mind is widely apparent in works of fiction and nonfiction of the time’ (65).[7] The significance of architecture in *Middlemarch* has not gone entirely unnoticed by critics, however. Barbara Leckie, for example, has described how the representation of Dorothea’s cottage-building plans affects the politics of the novel and its depiction of domestic ideology (53). Most recently, Heather Miner has examined the novel in terms of architectural reform through the progression of Dorothea’s interest first in building cottages, then an industrial village, and finally the fever hospital (193). Yet the way in which Eliot uses architectural imagery in the depictions of her characters’ minds has by no means been fully explored. While often in Victorian literature a character’s built

[7] Although she begins by talking about architectural language applied to the mind, Cameron spends most of her article discussing the ways in which rooms are described as minds, as in the cranial-recalling ‘vault’ of the *Hard Time’s* schoolroom.

environment works metaphorically to represent the psychological state of its inhabitant, the kind of architectural internalisation that I identify in *Middlemarch* is surprisingly rare in the nineteenth-century novel, even across Eliot's other works.[8] This rarity makes Eliot's sustained use of internalised architecture in *Middlemarch* all the more striking and worthy of critical analysis. Through this technique, Eliot directs her realist aesthetic inwards, using aspects of the material world to provide substantive form to her representation of the internal workings of the human mind.

The first section of this chapter focuses on Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of *Middlemarch* and a budding cottage architect who processes and understands the world through architecture. She is passionate about cottage reform and drafts architectural plans throughout the novel. Significantly, in addition to her two-dimensional cottage plans, architecture also provides the medium through which Dorothea attempts to comprehend her husband's mental interior. She directs her spatial imagination towards Casaubon and, consequently, her understanding of him is conveyed through significant shifts in architectural imagery. This section of the chapter will explore Eliot's representation of Dorothea's architect's eye on two levels: first, her awareness of the material conditions of the architecture enclosing both herself and other characters and her interest in participating in tangible building projects; and second, the way this interest in material architecture infiltrates her imagination and becomes a vehicle through which she attempts to understand and navigate the internal life of her husband. Dorothea first envisions her husband's mind as labyrinthine and this initial architectural imagining launches a sustained interest

[8] As I mentioned in this project's introduction, the closest we come to discerning the architectural internalisation technique in Eliot's other novels is when the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* describes the Meyrick family, with 'their minds being like mediaeval houses with recesses and openings from this into that, flights of steps and sudden outlooks' (174).

in the utility of architecture to build up a mental space that can subsequently be adapted and renovated.

While the brain to labyrinth is the most significant instance of Eliot shifting the register of her imagery from the organic to the built, there are smaller moments of translation constantly occurring across the novel, as Eliot constructs the novel around small but crucial architectural moments. She infuses *Middlemarch* and the organic psychological and emotional interiors of her characters with architecture, structure, and material texture. By doing so, Eliot explores the limits of realist representation, using well-known materials to represent what cannot be seen in the physical world of the novel. The second section of this chapter examines various significant instances where Eliot turns to this technique to represent the structure of the human body, a vocational awakening, moments of enlightenment, and the ability of one mind to influence another. In doing so, Eliot employs the architectural internalisation technique as a subtle insistence on the unseen architecture governing our lives – such as the doors of the heart or a window opening in the mind.

The third and final section of this chapter explores the labyrinth and its manifold importance in *Middlemarch*, arguing for a focus on the labyrinth's architectural significance in addition to the scientific and mythological implications that have received thorough critical attention. In this section I suggest that Eliot intends for her novel to reflect certain aspects of a Christian labyrinth journey such as the necessity of persevering on your path, the desire for a guide to lead you through your difficulties, and the ultimate goal of reaching the centre.

1. Cottage Building and Dorothea's Architect's Eye

Dorothea's architect's eye is a vital component of her character. Yet despite her clear and self-stated architectural ambitions, scholarship frequently

refers to Dorothea's lack of tangible aim or direction for her social benevolence. In *The Realist Imagination* (1981), George Levine writes,

> And it is one of the curious facts about the most virtuous heroes and heroines of nineteenth-century English realist fiction that they are inefficacious, inactive people. Their fullest energies are expended only (if at all) in response to external threat, in the preservation of familial and communal ties. Like Dorothea Brooke and Daniel Deronda, they are somehow incapable of imagining a satisfying action, a way of life which will allow them seriously to act at all. (33)

Levine's comment that Dorothea is incapable of even 'imagining a satisfying action' is surprising considering the novel's emphasis on her cottage building plans. While these plans do not take three-dimensional form, Dorothea clearly possesses a spatial imagination and approaches the world in terms of her cottages. She is capable but stalled, as Eliot indicates that translating our ambitions into physical form is not as easy as it sounds. In *George Eliot & the Novel of Vocation* (1978), Alan Mintz similarly states of Dorothea: 'what she wants most in life is to do some great good for the world, and although there is no adequate vehicle for this desire, it remains in George Eliot's eyes unequivocally vocational' (60). As we will see, Dorothea is in fact aware of an 'adequate vehicle', cottage building, through which to leave her mark on the world.[9]

Barbara Leckie, one of the few scholars to address architecture in *Middlemarch*, links Dorothea's cottages with the housing reform debates

[9] When Mintz does discuss Dorothea's building plans, he takes a critical view and questions her motivation, saying, 'Dorothea's fantasies of the good are inevitably entangled with fantasies of the self. Her colony will serve as a vehicle for her own redemption: she will plan it, populate it, legislate it, and bestow her friendship and attention on each of its inhabitants' (108-109).

occurring in England in the years between the novel's setting and the time of publication. She argues in her 2010 article 'The Architecture of *Middlemarch*: From Building Cottages to the Home Epic' that Dorothea's interest in cottage building should be examined more closely than it has been in the past, suggesting, 'It is through the framework of cottage architecture and reform that Dorothea makes sense of her world' (54). Leckie seeks to remedy the marginalisation of Dorothea's cottage building aspirations, saying that critics have treated her interest similarly to Mr Brooke, as merely a hobby.[10] Leckie writes,

> The 'home epic' that is *Middlemarch* – the story of Dorothea's failures to fulfill her vocation and her grandness – is made possible through the story of the failed epic of the architect and the laborers' cottages with which Dorothea engages. Her failure is not her failure to find a vocation, however, but, rather, her failure to fulfill the vocation she has already found. She has access, in other words, to a 'coherent social faith' (architectural reform), but she lacks the means to authorize and mobilize it. (69)

I agree with Leckie that Dorothea's cottage building ambitions plays a significant and under-acknowledged role in the novel. Heather Miner also examines the progression of Dorothea's various building projects, calling this progression a 'critically overlooked facet of reform in *Middlemarch'* revealing 'the novel's engagement with sites central to the evolving Victorian middle-class perspective on the reform of built environments from the 1830s to the 1870s' (193). While these studies focus on tangible building projects that could conceivably take

[10] On a visit to Tipton Grange, Dorothea immerses herself in her own plans, yet is cautioned by Mr Brooke who says, 'Why, yes, my dear, it was quite your hobby to draw plans. But it was good to break that off a little. Hobbies are apt to run away with us, you know; and it doesn't do to be run away with' (364).

shape in the built environment world of the novel, less explored is Dorothea's distinctly architectural outlook and technique of applying architectural strategies to mental representation. I will contribute a reading of Dorothea that continues to foreground the significance of her interest in cottage building while also drawing attention to her creative architectural constructions unseen in the world of the novel but nevertheless displayed for the reader.

Eliot gives her readers a heroine with an architect's eye, a woman attuned to the built environment world around her who constantly imagines ways to contribute to the existing texture of that world. Dorothea considers various building projects throughout the novel but wants most especially to transform her two-dimensional cottage drawings into tangible human habitations. Lynne Walker cites *Middlemarch* as an example of literature that reflects women's growing interest and engagement with in the architectural profession. She writes that, 'Many aristocratic women in the 19th century combined their interest in architecture with a desire to improve the conditions of their estate workers by creating model communities' (14). Walker suggests that Eliot might have been inspired to create her character Dorothea by the Marchioness of Waterford (a friend of John Ruskin) who built a model village. Harriet Martineau also had model cottages on her land and, during Eliot's October 1852 visit to Martineau, 'they trudged about, looking at the model cottages Miss Martineau was building' (Haight 124).

Eliot foregrounds Dorothea's interest in cottage design by first introducing her heroine as she sketches 'a plan for some buildings' (11). Other characters make light of Dorothea's interest and she herself jokes about her drawings, telling her sister, 'I shall think I am a great architect, if I have not got incompatible stairs and fireplaces' (14). Despite the self-deprecation, Dorothea

is serious about building cottages for those in need: cottages are Dorothea's chosen vehicle for accomplishing good works. Contemplating a marriage to Casaubon, Dorothea thinks to herself, 'I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now […] unless it were building cottages – there can be no doubt about that. Oh, I hope I should be able to get the people well housed in Lowick!' (27). She tells Sir James, 'I have been examining all the plans for cottages in Loudon's book, and picked out what seem the best things' (29). By referring to J. C. Loudon, the author of the widely popular *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture*, Eliot reveals that Dorothea's interest is not merely theoretical but has been carefully researched.[11] As Alan and Ann Gore write in *The History of English Interiors*, 'From the time of its publication in 1836 until at least the 1860s Loudon's book wielded an important influence' (133). Loudon writes that the main objective of his book, 'is to improve the dwellings of the great mass of society, in the temperate regions of both hemispheres' and 'a secondary object is to create and diffuse among mankind, generally, a taste for architectural comforts and beauties' (1). It is Loudon's hope that his aims will be realised through the participation of a large readership. To further this aim, he writes,

> By avoiding, when it is not absolutely necessary, the use of terms peculiar to Architecture; by explaining all such as are used, when they first occur; and by adopting such a style; as will render the work easily understood by the uninitiated reader, as well as subservient to the purpose of educating young persons in Architecture as an art of taste, especially those of the female sex. (1)

[11] While Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture* was a popular book with which Eliot's readers would likely be familiar, it was published a few years after the time in which *Middlemarch* is set.

Loudon specifically reaches out to women, arguing, 'If the study of landscape drawing, by ladies, has led to the improvement of landscape gardening, why should not the study of architectural drawing, on their part, lead to the improvement of domestic Architecture?' (2). In a sense, Eliot crafts Dorothea as Loudon's ideal reader. Dorothea clearly agrees with Loudon's statement that 'The improvement of the dwellings of the great mass of society throughout the world, appears to us an object of such vast importance, as to be well worth attempting, even though we may not all at once succeed to our utmost wishes' (1-2), and is eager to help.[12] Yet Eliot shows us, through Dorothea's attempts to apply Loudon's theories, that architectural creation is not as easy as he would have us believe. Despite her dedication, Dorothea is never able to give three-dimensional form to her cottage sketches.

The fact that Dorothea works only with paper plans should not be ignored. Unlike Esther Summerson and Lucy Snowe, Dorothea will not create a written account of her life or serve as the narrator of her own story. But her work with paper materials nevertheless connects her to these women.[13] Dickens and Brontë imagine their heroines as creating a tangible written record and making themselves known through their use of various architecturally-based narrative strategies: Esther provides straightforward architectural reporting and exposes her dark outlook through her repeated use of house-tomb metaphors and Lucy

[12] Loudon continues, 'The efforts of Architects, in all ages and countries, have hitherto been, for the most part, directed to public buildings, and to the mansions of princes, noblemen, and men of wealth; and what have hitherto been considered the inferior orders of society, have been, for the most part, left to become their own architects […] The great object of this work is, to show how the dwellings of the whole mass of society may be equalized in point of all essential comforts, conveniences, and beauties' (2).

[13] George Eliot read and admired *Villette*. In a letter to Mrs Charles Bray (15 February 1853), she writes, 'I am only just returned to a sense of the real world about me for I have been reading Villette, a still more wonderful book than Jane Eyre. There is something almost preternatural in its power' (Haight *Letters* 116). In a 10 July 1854 letter, writing to Sara Hennell just before eloping with G.H. Lewes, Eliot says, 'I shall soon send you a good bye, for I am preparing to go to "Labassecour"' (Haight *Letters* 135). Finally, Eliot notes the new cheap edition of *Villette*: 'which we, at least, would rather read for the third time than most new novels for the first' (Haight *Biography* 183).

constructs creative enclosures for her most intimate thoughts and emotions. Dorothea similarly expresses herself through her sketches with the significant difference that she hopes to realise her cottages in the built environment world of the novel.

Dorothea has a desire to leave a physical mark on the world, to design, to initiate change, and understands that architecture is one way to achieve this goal. Unlike *Bleak House*'s Esther and countless other women in Victorian novels, Dorothea does not want to only visit cottages, she wants to make them and improve upon what she sees in her community. After her first visit to Lowick, Dorothea chastises herself for a moment of disappointment concerning the state of the cottages for Lowick's tenants: 'She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick' (71-72). With the cottages of Lowick in fine shape, the outlet for creative action that Dorothea anticipated is no longer available. Instead, Dorothea is invited to make decorative changes to Lowick.[14] In *The Victorian Parlour*, Thad Logan states: 'It was women who were responsible for deploying objects to create the interior space identifiable as "home." They were, in some senses, its inmates, but they were also its producers, its curators, and its ornaments' (26). She observes, 'an important part of middle-class woman's duty vis-à-vis the home was to manipulate effectively the signifiers available to her in the realm of decoration and consumption in order to "utter" the existence of a family, to articulate its

[14] Walker describes the later entry of women into the architectural profession: 'Architecture moved from the Industrial Class in the 1871 Census to the Professional Class under Artists in the Census of 1881 (the same date that women began entering the profession). Architecture became not only a profession, but as many of its most vocal and able members argued, an art. And since art was an area of employment for women that could be seen as an extension of the traditional feminine accomplishments of the period, women could safely be encouraged to participate, and employment could be viewed as an acceptable enlargement of their "natural" sphere of activity' (15). Walker continues, 'When women were finally taken into architects' offices as pupils, they began, not surprisingly, by designing decorations, a task thought appropriate to their femininity' (16).

distinct being in the social world' (93). Logan indicates that 'Decorating the parlour, whether with the work of one's own hands or with consumer goods, constituted one of the primary duties of woman: it was a generally recognized aspect of domestic management, and to neglect it was a sign of domestic distress and incompetence' (35). Dorothea refuses to make any alterations to her future home, rejecting the only socially sanctioned 'occupation' available to her. She tells Casaubon, 'I shall be much happier to take everything as it is – just as you have been used to have it, or as you yourself choose it to be' (69). While Dorothea's refusal could be read as self-abdication and placing Casaubon's supposed comfort over her own, it is important to realise that it is easy for Dorothea to pass up the opportunity to redecorate because she is not interested in interior design but in building. She does not jump at the opportunity to make changes that she would consider meaningless. Dorothea is not interested in articulating her identity through a decorative display – she is thinking bigger.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot avoids detailing the ornamentation of her domestic spaces, unless she has a distinct point to make about a character, such as the materialistic Rosamond, whose nature is bound to material objects. Gillian Beer argues that Eliot 'saw that what was designated as "women's work" symbolized their enclosure and their enforced uselessness beyond the private domain' (154). Eliot herself 'had scant patience with the submissive activity of sewing and mending, and even less with that of decorative work such as the chain-work that Rosamond occupies herself with' (Beer 154). Haight writes of Eliot in the year 1860: 'Marian begrudged more than ever the time-frittering details of shopping and housekeeping' (334). Eliot's customary exclusion of decorative

detail creates a significant contrast to the dominant imagery of architectural metaphors in the novel as a whole.

Dorothea's architectural interests infiltrate her imagination and become the vehicle through which she envisions the mind of her future husband. Dorothea, whose enthusiasm for designing practical cottages is contrasted with Casaubon's archaeologically inflected interest in the 'dwellings of the ancient Egyptians' (31) early in the novel, initially believes that he possesses a labyrinthine mind. Dorothea first attributes mental expansiveness to Casaubon, a mythography scholar working on an ambitiously titled 'Key to all Mythologies'.[15] Shortly after the couple meet, Eliot writes of her heroine, 'Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought […] and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent' (22). Dorothea imagines Casaubon's mind and work as infinitely filled with the qualities she desires him to possess. The phrase 'labyrinthine extension' recalls Frank's 'spatial extension' and the idea that architecture can support the 'where-ness of ideas and thoughts' (12). While the idea of a labyrinthine mind as an attractive trait might initially appear surprising given the labyrinth's connotations of chaos and confusion, we must remember that Dorothea, an amateur cottage architect, is imagining Casaubon's intellectual potential with her architect's eye: in this profession the labyrinth was considered the height of architectural achievement.[16] As Penelope Reed Doob writes in *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, a

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[15] Dorothea fully participates in the architecturalisation of her future husband, the narrator noting that, 'almost everything he said seemed like a specimen from a mine, or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages' (30).

[16] Architects used the labyrinth image as the insignia for their profession. See Herman Kern's *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5,000 Years* for a detailed visual history of the labyrinth.

work that explores classical, early Christian, and medieval labyrinths in literature and art, 'the labyrinth is a miraculous work of art, a masterpiece of master-architects, a fitting monument to the name of designer and commissioner, a worthy temple or palace for gods or men' (24). As such, Dorothea envisions Casaubon's mind as a grand design of structural complexity.

In both her novel and her private writing, Eliot capitalises on the complexity and multiple meanings inherent in a labyrinth. As Doob writes, 'the maze is an embodiment of contraries – art and chaos, comprehensible artifact and inexplicable experience, pleasure, and terror' (24-25). In the section of her journal titled 'Recollections of our Journey from Munich to Dresden' (1858) Eliot describes the Schonbrunn gardens as 'a labyrinth of stately avenues with their terminal fountains' (323). She writes in a letter from Weimar: 'the immense parks and plantations with labyrinthine walks are a constant source of new pleasure' (12). In her journal she also describes the 'labyrinthine arches' of a church in Brussels (16). These references illustrate that Eliot was already thinking alternatively about the labyrinth. Instead of focusing on its chaotic and bewildering connotations, Eliot turns to the labyrinth to express a positive experience and uses the word as synonymous with grandeur.

Relying, as always, on her architect's eye, Dorothea constructs Casaubon's mind spatially, initially as a labyrinthine structure bewildering to the uninitiated traveller (herself) but highly ordered to the architect with the bird's eye view (Casaubon). Dorothea has the sense that she would be unable to navigate the 'labyrinthine extent' of such an expansive scholarly work without a guide, and she considers its inaccessibility indicative of its merit. Later, though, Eliot reveals that Casaubon does not have an elaborate or orderly plan for his work, a revelation also conveyed architecturally through her heroine's spatial

imagination. Casaubon's perspective is not from above but from within: he is a traveller wandering his own mental labyrinth, unable to successfully navigate his own mind. At the same time Dorothea, with her architect's eye, quickly gains a visual mastery that aligns her more with the bird's eye view than the uninitiated traveller. Doob writes of labyrinths: 'They presume a double perspective: maze-treaders, whose vision ahead and behind is severely constricted and fragmented, suffer confusion, whereas maze-viewers, who see the pattern whole, from above or in a diagram, are dazzled by its complex artistry' (1). The labyrinth provides an ideal vehicle for playing with perspective and allows Eliot to express the extent to which Casaubon and Dorothea are seeing differently. Again, we might speculate that Eliot made this brain-as-labyrinth connection while looking down at the coiling lobes of the brain dissected for her by Rolleston. The conversion of brain to labyrinth is one of many instances in which Eliot describes an organic structure in architectural terms, showing the easy fluidity between the two modes of imagery.

Eliot employs architecture to signpost Dorothea's transitioning understanding of Casaubon and her marriage. Eliot powerfully illustrates this reorientation of perspective during Dorothea's unhappy honeymoon in Rome, during which she undergoes a radical re-evaluation of her husband. Eliot signals this change via a shift in Dorothea's spatial imagination. It is a visual transition entirely dependent upon architectural metaphor, as Eliot compels her heroine to renovate her vision of Casaubon's mind and his academic potential. Significantly, Dorothea awakens to a more accurate understanding of her husband largely by seeing him in the context of the ancient city, the archaeological stratification of which Sigmund Freud would later use to describe

the layering of human consciousness. Rome and its architecture thus provide the catalyst for the adaptation of Dorothea's architectural vision. Eliot writes,

> How was it that in the weeks since her marriage, Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead no whither? (183)

Despite here claiming that she expected to find 'large vistas' in Casaubon's mind, it was initially the 'labyrinthine extension' (22) of his intellect that Dorothea found attractive. Now, Casaubon's mind has devolved for Dorothea as she replaces the image of a grand, complex, but ultimately ordered structure (the labyrinth) with a jumble of house parts; the mental labyrinth is replaced by the domestic architecture of daily life, and the 'labyrinthine extension' becomes stifling domestic enclosure. While the shift to domestic architecture might be read as emasculating or mirroring Casaubon's daily enclosure within the architecture of Lowick, I find instead that it reflects Dorothea's clearer vision of her husband. As an amateur architect, anterooms and passages are Dorothea's familiar materials and we can recall her concerns about 'incompatible stairs and fireplaces' in her cottage drawings (14). As Barbara Leckie writes, 'Architecture, in other words, is a language that Dorothea does know' (55). With her knowledge of domestic architecture Dorothea understands that it is crucial to the success of a building that these parts fit well together, and the fact that Casaubon's mind now resembles an ill-conceived domestic interior is highly revealing of Dorothea's altered conception of her husband's academic potential: she turns to domestic architecture to express the extent to which Casaubon's mind is poorly arranged. While Dorothea could not comprehend Casaubon's

mental labyrinth earlier, she now senses that he also cannot comprehend it, and this is a devastating discovery.

In *Middlemarch*, the reader has direct access to an internal view of the character to an extent unprecedented in the Victorian novel. Eliot employs the technique of architectural internalisation to illustrates the degree to which Casaubon is now lost within his own mental architecture: ‘Poor Mr Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs […] With his taper stuck before him he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscript marks on other men’s notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight’ (185). This is exactly what is special about Eliot’s treatment of architecture, as she shows us the three-dimensional mental interior as well as a character’s encounter with his own architecturalised consciousness. Through this architectural internalisation technique, Eliot represents the mental realm as a reality apart from the material world her characters navigate, yet nevertheless does so through the familiar imagery of the material world. The mind, then, comes to life through recognisable architectural imagery.

The labyrinth’s capacity to disorient directly relates to Eliot’s treatment of architecture in *Middlemarch*, as she reveals the three-dimensional construction of a character’s encounter with his own mental interior. Doob writes,

> But sometimes order disintegrates into chaos: as Daedalus was puzzled by his own construction, so too those who have studied the diagram […] would grow confused upon experiencing its three-dimensional realization. Many maze metaphors focus on this process of conversion from confusion to admiration, or vice versa. (52-53)

Through Eliot's use of the technique of architectural internalisation, Casaubon becomes a path-walker within his own mind, and this opens him up to the confusion inherent in the shift in perspective described by Doob. Having lost perspective, Casaubon can no longer navigate his argument. Instead, he wanders down various intellectual paths, ending up in dead-end closets. Through her use of architectural details, Eliot creates a structural interior space to represent human consciousness – a space explored by the reader but also the character, who at times and especially in terms of Casaubon, willfully inhabits his mental interior as a primary dwelling space.[17]

Dorothea's distress concerning Casaubon's intellectual interior is only heightened by the material architecture she encounters on her honeymoon. She finds the layering of the architectural strata of Rome disturbing: she confronts the architecture of the past, a tangible representation of a lost time. For someone who wants to build functional housing for the present, the lingering architecture, made up of archaeological fragments, is unsettling in its associations with death and deterioration. The narrator calls Rome 'the city of visible history' (180) and describes the architecture that deeply disturbs Dorothea: '[r]uins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of superstition divorced from reverence' (181). Dorothea's experience of Rome is so significant because, as she once wanted to see the past 'constructed' through Casaubon's scholarly work, she finds the

[17] At the very beginning of the novel, Casaubon himself admits: 'I feed too much on inward sources; I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying to construct it as it used to be' (16). By representing his scholarly pursuits in this manner, Casaubon clearly indicates the premium he places on his mental life. In fact, Casaubon bases his entire identity on the understanding that he possesses an expansive interior, and never misses an opportunity to draw attention to its existence. For example, during his honeymoon, when he agrees to pose for a portrait at an artist's studio, he says, 'Having given up the interior of my head to idleness, it is as well that the exterior should work in this way' (202).

juxtaposition of the architecture of the past and the 'sordid present' extremely disturbing. Significantly, it is the buildings themselves – the '[r]uins and basilicas, palaces and colossi', the remaining shell of a long dead society – that later haunt her. As Frank writes, '[a]rchitectural places – literary and physical – echo and resonate in the life of our mind' (220). The entire city of Rome is coloured by Dorothea's vision of death and decay and these 'deep impressions' stay with her for the rest of her life:

> in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina. (182)

Her memory of the physical structure of the basilica exists as a tangible touchstone of her marital disillusionment: 'the vision of St Peter's at Rome was interwoven with moods of despondency' (306).[18] As Barbara Hardy writes, 'Dorothea cannot see Rome as a background. Its ruins, cultural confusions, and vivid erotic art solicit personal identification, though frighteningly and suggestively, not clearly and securely. The vision is suffered, felt as a loss of animation, a draining away of meaning, a defamiliarization' (10-11). Dorothea cannot think about the architecture of Rome without associating the physical

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[18] Eliot imbues Dorothea with her own initial dislike of Rome. In her journal essay, *Reflections on Italy 1860*, Eliot writes of St. Peter's: 'But the exterior of the cathedral itself is even ugly: it causes constant irritation by its partial concealment of the dome. The first impression from the interior was perhaps at a higher pitch, than any subsequent impression either of its beauty or vastness; but then, on later visits, the lovely marble, which has a tone at once subdued and warm, was half covered with hideous red drapery' (344). Eliot visited Rome during the holy week of Easter while her heroine visits during the Christmas. Both women dislike the 'red drapery' hung for the respective religious celebrations. Eliot eventually warmed to the city, but Dorothea, associating it inextricably with her changed impression of her new husband, never does. Eliot and Lewes were thorough sightseers and 'As they grew better acquainted with Rome, their initial disappointments gave way to enthusiasm, and Marian filled many pages of her Journal with the things that delighted her' (Haight 324).

structures with a dark time in her life, as Eliot foregrounds the power of architecture to have a lasting impact on our mental landscape.

Eliot's representation of the architectural strata of Rome as psychologically revealing anticipates Freud, who later uses the image of Rome's numerous, lasting layers of ancient architecture to describe human consciousness. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud writes,

> Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. (18)

I quoted this passage in the previous chapter but it bears repeating, as Eliot, like Braddon, is interested in the layering of mental and material architectural textures. Freud read and respected Eliot's *Middlemarch*. His biographer, Ernest Jones, writes that *Middlemarch* 'appealed to him very much, and he found it illuminated important aspects of his relations with Martha [his wife]' (166). Like Eliot, Freud's metaphor translates the organic to the built, using the idea of architecture to provide tangibility to his stratified representation of human consciousness.[19] Freud himself was an eager collector of archaeological antiquities, statues, and fragments. Peter Gay writes of Freud, 'He told the Wolf Man that, "the psychoanalyst, like the archaeologist in his excavations, must uncover layer after layer of the patient's psyche, before coming to the deepest, most valuable treasures"' (171). In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea imagines Casaubon

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[19] Rick Rylance writes of Eliot's partner: 'Like Freud in his very different way, Lewes was keen to see the unconscious as a structure with a history, not as a nebulous free-standing entity like the soul or spirit' (305-306).

similarly delving deep into the past as he aims to construct a groundbreaking scholarly work. Dorothea finds these efforts disconcerting and maintains ‘a vivid memory of evenings in which she had supposed that Mr Casaubon’s mind had gone too deep during the day to be able to get to the surface again’ (187). Unlike the professional psychoanalyst, Casaubon does not succeed in excavating his mind’s archaeological riches, uncovering only mundane and commonplace domestic architecture.

Dorothea tries unsuccessfully to stem her doubts about Casaubon, as ‘her devotedness […] was so necessary a part of her mental life’ (182). Eliot gradually illustrates Dorothea’s awakening to the truth of her marriage, a truth brought home forcefully when Dorothea re-enters Lowick after returning from her disastrous honeymoon. While Dorothea was captivated with Lowick on her first visit, Eliot quickly telegraphs to the reader through the architecture of Lowick that it was not a place destined to make Dorothea happy.[20] In fact, the architecture of Lowick foreshadows many of the problems that Dorothea will encounter: ‘The building, of greenish stone, was in the old English style, not ugly, but small-windowed and melancholy looking: the sort of house that must have children, many flowers, open windows, and little vistas of bright things, to make it seem a joyous home’ (67). Windows in the novel are associated with mental clarity and Lowick’s indicate Casaubon’s mental constriction. The greenish colour of the stone suggests mouldering. Clearly, the things necessary to make Lowick ‘a joyous home’ will be impossible for Dorothea achieve, as the elderly Casaubon appears past the fathering age and the very name of Lowick

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[20] Eliot writes to Mr Blackwood, referring to a letter from W.L. Collins: ‘Thanks for the extract from Mr. Collins’s letter. I did not know that there was really a Lowick, in a midland county too. Mr. Collins has my gratitude for feeling some regard towards Mr. Casaubon, in whose life *I* lived with much sympathy’ (424). Eliot also indicates her sympathy for Casaubon in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe. Eliot writes, ‘I fear that the Casaubon-tints are not quite foreign to my own mental complexion. At any rate, I am very sorry for him’ (Haight *Biography* 450).

(low-wick), suggests darkness and, perhaps, alludes to Casaubon's likely impotence.[21] Like the surrounding trees and Casaubon himself, 'the house too had an air of autumnal decline' (67). Yet Dorothea remains oblivious of her situation: 'Dorothea walked about the house with delightful emotion. Everything seemed hallowed to her' (68).

Dorothea's unsettling experience of Roman architecture fundamentally changes her architectural vision. While her own architectural projects are symbolic of her capacity for small but meaningful good, Rome and its looming, crumbling architecture overwhelms and depresses her. Dorothea returns to Lowick with her architect's eye clouded with visions of death and decay. After her honeymoon, Lowick no longer seems 'hallowed', but instead takes on a ghastly tint. Now, 'The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before' (256) and '[t]he duties of her married life, contemplated as so great beforehand, seemed to be shrinking with the furniture and the white vapour-walled landscape' (257). Eliot represents a shrinking of architectural space to match her heroine's disappointment with what she has discovered within her husband's mind – a smallness. In a chilling passage Eliot writes of Dorothea,

> Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight. (258)

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[21] Gilbert and Gubar write, 'The book is Casaubon's child, and the writing of it is his marriage, or so Dorothea believes as she realizes how completely textuality has been substituted for sexuality in her marriage' (505).

Dorothea projects her disappointment onto every material detail of the room. Eliot further indicates Dorothea's newfound understanding that she misjudged Casaubon when she states of her heroine, 'The ideas and hopes which were living in her mind when she first saw this room nearly three months before were present now only as memories: she judged them as we judge transient and departed things' (258).

Eliot illustrates the extent to which Dorothea's architectural vision is impacted by her own mental and emotional health. Through Dorothea's change in perspective, Eliot indicates that Dorothea is now an uneasy inhabitant of her new home. Instead of redecorating Lowick, Dorothea gravitates towards the one room within the house that she feels a pre-existing sympathy with, her blue-green boudoir:

> The bow-window looked down the avenue of limes; the furniture was all of a faded blue, and there were miniatures of ladies and gentlemen with powdered hair hanging in a group. A piece of tapestry over a door also showed a blue-green world with a stag in it. The chairs and tables were thin-legged and easy to upset. It was a room in which one might fancy the ghost of a tight-laced lady revisiting the scene of her embroidery. A light book-case contained duodecimo volumes of polite literature in calf, completing the furniture. (69)

The blue-green of Dorothea's boudoir is one of the few colours that Eliot emphasises repeatedly throughout *Middlemarch* and, like everything having to do with Casaubon, it is dated. In *The History of English Interiors*, Alan and Ann Gore briefly discuss the printing and dyeing improvements of the nineteenth century, explaining:

> One of the most influential discoveries was that of quercitron – a fast yellow that, when overprinted with indigo, produced green. When the fifteen-year patent on the use of this dye expired in about 1800 'drab' colours became fashionable. The effect of printing green in this way was that the yellow tended eventually to fade, leaving the blue green that is characteristic of old patterns of this time. (135-138)

Eliot writes of Dorothea, 'Any private hours in her day were usually spent in her blue-green boudoir, and she had come to be very fond of its pallid quaintness' (349). Dorothea's thoughts and emotions become intimately bound to that room: 'The thoughts which had gathered vividness in the solitude of her boudoir occupied her incessantly through the day' (350). Later in the novel, upon learning of the precarious state of Casaubon's health from Lydgate, the couple retreat to their respective space of comfort: 'He entered the library and shut himself in, alone with his sorrow. She went up to her boudoir' (399). As Glenda Sacks writes:

> the initial description of the boudoir undergoes radical changes every time the altered Dorothea enters the room. It is in this way that the blue-green boudoir can be seen to be transformed from a location for the body into a location of the mind as George Eliot attempts to describe Dorothea's embodied experiences. (93)

To do so, Sacks writes, Eliot must 'enter into Dorothea's private world of fluctuating thoughts, thereby locating the world of reality in the mind' (93).

Dorothea's nonexistent cottages are powerfully present and recurring in the novel. They represent Dorothea's character and provide a touchstone for her values. They illustrate how Dorothea sees the world and embody her hope

that she will be able to put her abilities to good use. Dorothea wants to project tangible goodness out onto the world and her cottages provide a stark contrast to Casaubon's goals, which are entirely ego driven. Her cottage sketches establish her architect's eye and set the stage for the architectural metaphors that pervade the novel. Dorothea's architectural priorities at times even guide the novel's plot. For example, her decision to abandon her model community scheme allows her to contribute to the new fever hospital, bringing her together with Lydgate at the height of his difficulties in Middlemarch. When speaking to Lydgate about the new hospital and the good that can be done, Dorothea admits 'Everything of that sort has slipped away from me since I have been married' (412). Despite her other disappointments, the fever hospital is built over the course of the novel. After Casaubon's death, Dorothea immediately rekindles her architectural planning, telling her sister, Celia, 'I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make it a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well' (517). Ultimately, though, she remarries and building projects are never again mentioned, as Eliot indicates that being a creator is not as easy as it might sound. Consequently, Eliot does not allow Dorothea to act as an architect in the material world, instead concentrating her heroine's creative power on renovating her architecturalised vision of her husband's mental mindscape.

2. Psychological Realism and Shifting Imagery: The Organic to the Built

Critics have noted Eliot's use of an organic register of imagery to describe her characters' mental processes and to express contemporary psychological theories. Rick Rylance associates Eliot's use of water imagery with the fact that the term 'stream of consciousness' was coined by G.H. Lewes during the time that Eliot wrote *The Mill on the Floss* (13) and states: 'It is very typical of George Eliot's practice – and that of the intellectual circle in which she

moved – that she should choose topical and relevant metaphors from the psychology and science of the day to convey these issues (135). Sally Shuttleworth writes of *Middlemarch*, 'the recurrent imagery of flowing water and streams in the novel is not simply metaphoric in origin but is grounded in contemporary social and psychological theories of energy flow' (158). So much attention has been paid to living structures with relation to Eliot's work, but the built also has a significant role in Eliot's representation of the human mind and body and contributes to her particular mode of realism. While not strictly 'realistic' in terms of mirroring contemporary psychological theory, Eliot nevertheless turns to architecture as a psychologically revealing vehicle. In her 1856 essay published in the *Westminster Review*, 'The Natural History of German Life', Eliot speaks to the importance of a psychological portrayal of character in literature when she describes Charles Dickens as

> one great novelist who is gifted with the utmost power of rendering the external traits of our town population; and if he could give us their psychological character – their conceptions of life and their emotions – with the same truth as their idiom and manners, his books would be the greatest contribution Art has ever made to the awakening of social sympathies. (53)

While Eliot regrets that Dickens focuses primarily on his characters' 'external traits', she uses architectural metaphor to give form to her characters' organic interior, successfully portraying 'psychological character' in *Middlemarch* through a psychological penetration depicted in architectural terms. In *Middlemarch*, we see Eliot move beyond the work of realist authors like Dickens, forging into the territory of the self's interior by using the built register of the material world in addition to the organic metaphors that have been more

frequently examined by critics. Through this second layer of architecture in the novel – the 'unseen' architecture of a character's mind – Eliot reveals a formal mode that creates a bridge between material and psychological realism.

Indeed, her accomplishment was acknowledged by the Victorian psychologist James Sully, who published his essay, 'George Eliot's Art', in the journal *Mind* in 1881, seven months after Eliot's death.[22] Significantly, Sully reviews Eliot's literary work in a respected psychological journal, calling attention to her contribution to the field. Considering that he is addressing his peers, Sully makes an unexpected claim: 'What distinguishes the reflection of George Eliot's writing from that of earlier works is, first of all, its penetration, its subtlety, and its scientific precision. And it is this fact which renders her even to the trained psychologist a teacher of new truths' (389). Sully finds Eliot's work revealing and rich for psychological exploration and comments upon Eliot's representation of the mind when he writes, 'A higher kind of artistic characterization aims at giving something of the complexity of mental organization. We see the inner as well as the outer side of the living personality' (381). As demonstrated by her comment on Dickens, Eliot is aware of the importance of representing both the 'inner' and the 'outer' and consequently approaches the 'mental organization' of her characters by constructing the architecturalised mind and shifting the register of her metaphors from the organic to the built.

Eliot possessed a keen interest in the developing science of psychology, which she was able to witness first hand through the work of G.H. Lewes. An

[22] Sully was known to Eliot and her partner, G.H. Lewes, and acted as a literary executor of Lewes's work. Eliot was not happy with the results of Sully's involvement, writing to Mrs Trollope and referring to an article written by Sully: 'There is no Biography. An article entitled "George Henry Lewes" appeared in the last "New London Quarterly." It was written by a man for whom we had much esteem, but it is not strong. A few facts about the early life and education are given with tolerable accuracy, but the estimate of the philosophic and scientific activity is inadequate' (Haight *Letters* 520).

entry from Eliot's 1868 Journal states, 'The greatest happiness (after our growing love) which has sprung and flowed onward during the latter part of the year, is George's interest in his psychological inquiries' (*Journal* 134).[23] While Eliot absorbed the psychological theories of her day, it is important to recall Sully's argument that Eliot's novels also *generate* revealing psychological insight. An earlier letter exchange between Sully and Eliot confirms this. In his work, *Pessimism*, Sully uses the word 'meliorism' and credits Eliot for coining the term.[24] In apparent response to his query, Eliot writes to Sully in 1877, 'I don't know that I ever heard anybody use the word "meliorist" except myself. But I begin to think that there is no good invention or discovery that has not been made by more than one person' (Haight 480). A second instance of word sharing occurs in Sully's essay, 'The Dream as a Revelation', published in 1893 in the *Fortnightly Review*. After citing various instances of bizarre dreams, Sully states,

> as these examples show plainly enough, the dream is an outcome of a *maimed consciousness*. When overtaken by sleep the mechanism of mind does not work as a co-ordinated whole, but only in a disjointed fashion. (my emphasis 356)

The term 'maimed consciousness' can be found in Eliot's *Middlemarch* when the narrator describes Mrs Bulstrode's reaction upon learning of her husband's dishonour: 'She locked herself in her room. She needed time to get used to her *maimed consciousness*, her poor lopped life, before she could walk steadily to the place allotted her' (my emphasis 706). In this dramatic passage, Eliot

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[23] The fact that Lewes and Eliot were engaged with each other's work is highlighted in Lewes' July 13 1874 letter to Blackwood in which he refers jokingly to his *Problems of Life and Mind* as his 'key to all psychologies' and jokes prophetically, as Rosemary Ashton notes, about 'Dorothea' finishing his great work (Ashton 259).

[24] 'Term, possibly coined by George Eliot, for a position midway between pessimism and optimism: the view that the world can be made better by human effort. In political contexts, the view that the world can be made better by government effort, a rather more controversial doctrine' (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*).

represents Mrs Bulstrode's mind as physically wounded by the revelation of her husband's true character.

Sully's remarkable willingness to credit Eliot with insight into in his own field is noted by Vanessa L. Ryan in 'Reading the Mind: From George Eliot's Fiction to James Sully's Psychology'. Ryan suggests that 'Sully's essay brings to light a reverse trajectory in which fiction influenced the development of psychology. His central question concerns what fiction could teach psychologists about the mind' (618). She notes Sully's piece as 'a compelling illustration of the bi-directional influences of science and literature' (618).[25] I agree with Ryan that this reverse trajectory of influence is lesser remarked. A great deal has been written on the manner in which Eliot incorporates scientific advancements in her novels, such as the microscope in *Middlemarch*, while less attention has been paid to Eliot's interest in creating navigable mental spaces through the use of architectural metaphors and the materiality of the immediate environment causing them to take shape.[26] This section looks at Eliot's contribution to psychological realism, her role as 'a teacher of new truths' (Sully 389), and her ability to offer psychological insight, as Sully suggests, 'even to the trained psychologist' (389).

While this chapter has focused largely on Dorothea's vision of Casaubon's architecturalised mind, Eliot also represents her heroine's mind architecturally. Eliot frequently conveys Dorothea's enlightenment through the

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[25] In a contemporary review of *Middlemarch*, Sidney Colvin writes, 'There is a medical strain in the tissue of the story. There is a profound sense of the importance of physiological conditions in human life. But further still, I think, there is something like a medical habit in the writer, of examining her own creations for their symptoms, which runs through her descriptive and narrative art and gives it some of its peculiar manner' (144).

[26] Mark Wormald writes, 'Through her own union with George Henry Lewes […] Eliot acquired an intimate knowledge of the theory, technology, and, just as important, the social history of microscopy over forty years. This was a period of immense upheaval in the spheres of scientific perception and of aesthetics alike: its boundaries link the late 1820s, when *Middlemarch* is set; the mid 1850s, when the couple first pursued microscopical and literary studies in tandem; and the years of the novel's composition, 1869-71' (502-503).

image of opening windows.[27] For example, Dorothea experiences a moment of clarity concerning Casaubon's financial duty to Will Ladislaw, Casaubon's cousin: 'The vision of all this as what ought to be done seemed to Dorothea like a sudden letting in of daylight, waking her from her previous stupidity' (350).[28] Sometimes Dorothea's mental windows are opened for her by other characters, for example: 'All through their girlhood [Celia] had felt that she could act on her sister by a word judiciously placed – by opening a little window for the daylight of her own understanding to enter among the strange coloured lamps by which Dodo habitually saw' (769). Celia believes she has the power to access and illuminate Dorothea's mind with her own organic insight. By using the window metaphor, Eliot suggests that certain minds are penetrable and receptive, while others cannot be accessed or influenced. Casaubon, for example, is beyond reaching. As we have seen, Eliot frequently employs a dark labyrinth to suggest Casaubon's intellectual stagnation, and an open window to reflect Dorothea's sudden inspiration or mental awakening. Consequently, as the novel progresses the reader begins to visualise and understand the characters in terms of their respective architectural structure. Eliot brings a sense of dimension to these mental interiors by imbuing them with the same darkness and light that affects material architectural structures. These metaphors are extremely effective in conveying Eliot sense of her character's state of mind.

Eliot turns to architecture to represents Dorothea's mental distress as a form of imprisonment: Dorothea feels imprisoned with a husband whose mind cannot be penetrated or influenced and who has become 'indifferent to the

[27] In 'Consciousness and Unconsciousness', G.H. Lewes uses the architectural image of shutters: 'Unconsciousness is by some writers called *latent* Consciousness. Experiences which are no longer manifested are said to be stored up in Memory, remaining in the Soul's picture-gallery, visible directly the shutters are opened' (166).
[28] Will is associated with light throughout the novel. Eliot writes, 'The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness […] Mr Casaubon, on the contrary, stood rayless' (196).

sunlight' (185). Entirely disenchanted with her husband's mental labyrinth and fruitless scholarship, 'She longed for work which would be directly beneficent like the sunshine and the rain' (446). Trapped within the stifling enclosure of her husband's intellect, Dorothea now craves some sort of communion with the outside world. Without fully understanding what her feelings mean, Dorothea holds out hope that she might see Will Ladislaw: 'the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air' (339). Dorothea now considers Casaubon's work meaningless and suffers as a result of her restricted intellectual freedom as well as her inability to enact change in the material world around her. Of her relationship with Casaubon at this point, Eliot writes of Dorothea 'She was able enough to estimate him – she who waited on his glances with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him' (400). Dorothea represses both her emotions and her intellect in order to do her husband's bidding.

In addition to its role in structuralising mindscapes, architecture plays a crucial role in Eliot's representation of character. Eliot's emphasis on building and construction throughout the novel contributes to her representation of her characters' motives, perspectives, abilities and limitations. In fact, Eliot gives us a cast of characters who envision their vocational pursuits and their place in the world through the language of structure and construction, as Eliot indicates the extent to which we reach for the architectural register of imagery when describing ourselves and our place in the world. By moving though smaller and smaller architectural moments in the novel, we will see the materiality of the life journey and the way the materiality of the physical world influences layers of the novel. Casaubon, Lydgate, Dorothea and Eliot herself are all engaged in

construction projects of sorts, as the cottage, scholarly text, human body, and novel must each be well constructed in order to function properly. Casaubon attempts to reconstruct the past through his scholarly research and then build a coherent scholarly argument. Lydgate hopes to contribute to the scientific understanding of the human body's structure. Dorothea draws plans for model cottages based on Loudon and hopes to create a model community. Significantly, all of these characters' attempted construction projects fail and they never assume physical form in the novel. As Alan Mintz writes, 'For a novel so concerned about ambitious vocational achievement, *Middlemarch* ironically records almost no successes of this sort' (112). Through these failures, Eliot indicates that it is easier to imagine change than to enact it, easier to reach for construction metaphors than to actually build something tangible.

Casaubon's scholarly aim is to show 'that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences' (22). As a consequence of his devotion to his studies, Casaubon himself admits, 'I feed too much on inward sources; I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be' (16). Blissfully unaware, Dorothea thinks: 'To reconstruct a past world, doubtless with a view to the highest purposes of truth – what a work to be in any way present at, to assist in, though only as a lamp holder!' (17).[29] Dorothea does not expect to be a part of the construction process intellectually, but hopes to be of help in some way. Casaubon's goal of reconstructing the past provides

[29] Eliot is successfully constructing a past world in her novel, as she is writing forty years after the time of her novel's setting.

a sharp contrast with Dorothea's interest in cottage building and cottage reform for the present day.

Through Casaubon and his academic struggles, Eliot illustrates the danger of attempting 'Daedalian' authorship. Eliot makes it clear in *Middlemarch* that while Casaubon attempts complexity in his work and fails, she attempts complexity and succeeds with her novel. Doob describes the dangers inherent in authoring complex literary works:

> Would-be Daedalian writers may grow bewildered by the sheer proliferation of their sources or their own verbiage; readers or listeners may be so disoriented by elaborate amplification, circuitous expression, and a multiplicity of interpretative options that they lose all sense of the whole or even abandon the pursuit of a center entirely, closing the manuscript or sleeping through the sermon. Intellectual and literary labyrinths can be as inextricable and inexplicable as architectural ones. (192-193)

This is a danger Eliot would have been attuned to. While her novel is complex but navigable, Casaubon's is jumbled and impenetrable. Eliot overlooks the labyrinth of the novel with an architect's eye. From her privileged perspective, she maintains the greater vision of the way in which the various plots and characters intersect. Doob attributes a great deal of the metaphorical potential of the labyrinth to the idea that the image encompasses two models, the unicursal and the multicursal. The unicursal model comes from visual art and is a single twisting path. The walker has only one path to follow so there is no danger of getting lost, although they can experience frustration and disorientation. The walker must endure steady and continuous movement inwards. The journey is long, tedious, and requires persistence to reach the

centre. The multicursal model derives from literary tradition and the journey consists of choices between various paths. There is the chance of getting trapped within the labyrinth and the walker might require the aid of a guide for extraction. Eliot's multicursal plot constructions become unicursal for the reader, who progresses through the novel on a single path yet remains unaware of where it might lead. In fact, Eliot literally combined two writing projects by folding her story 'Miss Brooke' into the greater novel.[30] Unlike authors who title their novel after the leading household in their novel, Eliot does not name her novel after her most important household, Lowick. By doing so, she reveals her vision of the novel as a cohesive whole, despite the numerous storylines occurring simultaneously. Mansfield Park remains proudly intact at the end of Austen's novel, Esther finds herself in a replica of the original Bleak House, and Brontë endows Wuthering Heights with new life and young romance. Lowick, in effect, disappears entirely without the reader's notice or alarm.

The architecturalised mind is the most widespread example of the organic-to-built shift in *Middlemarch*, yet there are subtler moments of conversion that constantly occur within the novel, as Eliot constructs the text around small but crucial architectural moments. These conversions, from the organic to the built, simultaneously represent a shift from the formless to the formed and are often associated with the crystallisation of an idea. The dawning of Lydgate's vocation is conveyed through architecture, as he looks by chance at the anatomy section of an old encyclopaedia and notes the 'folding-doors' (135) of heart valves:

> The page he opened on was under the head of Anatomy, and the first passage that drew his eyes was on the valves of the heart. He

[30] Haight *Biography* pg. 432.

> was not much acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that valvae were folding-doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first notion of finely-adjusted mechanism in the human frame […] From that hour Lydgate felt the growth of an intellectual passion. (135)

An understanding of architecture stimulates Lydgate's epiphany: he comes to understand the organic through the inorganic. Throughout the rest of the novel he repeatedly states his interest in advancing scientific understanding of the body's 'internal structure' (135), telling Farebrother, 'I was early bitten with an interest in structure' (161). The narrator explains that Lydgate follows the work of the eighteenth-century anatomist Marie-François Xavier Bichat, providing a revealing description of Bichat's discoveries, explored through an extended building metaphor:

> That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs – brain, heart, lungs, and so on – are compacted, as the various accommodations of a house are built up in various proportions of wood, iron, stone, brick, zinc, and the rest, each material having its peculiar composition and properties. No man, one sees, can understand and estimate the entire structure or its parts – what are its frailties and what its repairs, without knowing the nature of the materials. (138–9)

This passage is significant because it represents another conversion moment: Eliot gives form to the unseen, representing the internal workings of the body through tangible, navigable building materials.

Significantly, as Lydgate's scientific pursuits are derailed by the trials of his marriage, his altered understanding of his relationship with his wife, Rosamond, is conveyed through devastating architectural metaphors. When Rosamond frustrates Lydgate's plan to sell their house, the narrator states, 'He was feeling bitter disappointment, as if he had opened a door out of a suffocating place and had found it walled up' (617). This is a conversion similar to Casaubon's mind transitioning from a labyrinth to an anteroom, as doors first indicated the beginning of Lydgate's medical interest and are now used to convey his domestic claustrophobia and diminishing prospects. Instead of breaking through mysteries of the human structure, Lydgate finds himself trapped within the concerns of domestic architecture. It is a harsh image of domestic defeat, and is, like Dorothea's, conveyed architecturally. Eliot never lets her reader forget about her characters' original intentions, in a sense using their expressed interest in certain materials to convey their failure. As a result of his domestic responsibilities, Lydgate abandons his original vocational intentions: 'His skill was relied on by many paying patients, but he always regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he had once meant to do' (781).

Rosamond, lacking the materials of a vocation, mentally constructs the life that she feels she deserves. 'Rosamond, whose basis for her structures had the usual airy slightness, was of remarkably detailed and realistic imagination when the foundation had been once presupposed' (110). Later, when she fears that she has lost Lydgate's interest the narrator notes, 'no other man could be

the occasion of such delightful aerial building as she had been enjoying for the last six months' (281). Lydgate is bewildered by Rosamond's approach to their marriage: 'There was gathering within him an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond. His superior knowledge and mental force, instead of being, as he had imagined, a shrine to consult on all occasions, was simply set aside on every practical question' (549). As we have seen, the shrine is a powerful image of intimacy and communion. Unlike Lucy Snowe and her eagerness to find alternative dwelling space within the heart and mind of other characters, Rosamond has no interest in worshiping at the shrine of Lydgate's mind.

Eliot was already thinking about the connection between the organic body and the built environment. Gordon Haight writes of Eliot and Lewes' social circle in the year 1862: 'Lewes's old friend Owen Jones, the architect, who had superintended the decoration of the Crystal Palace, was a regular visitor' (371 *Biography*). When Eliot and Lewes bought The Priory, Haight writes of Jones: 'He designed a beautiful wall-paper for the drawing-room, chose elegant carpets and draperied and sconces, ruthlessly discarded all their drawing-room furniture and bought new' (371). Two years after his work on The Priory, Eliot reviewed a new edition of Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament* in *The Fortnightly Review* (15 May 1865). Eliot begins her review by questioning,

> Has anyone yet said what great things are being done by the men who are trying to banish ugliness from our streets and our homes, and to make both the outside and inside of our dwellings worthy of a world where there are forests, and flower-tressed meadows, and the plumage of birds; where the insects carry lessons of colour on their wings, and even the surface of a stagnant pool will show us

> the wonders of iridescence and the most delicate forms of leafage? (124).

She writes,

> One sees a person capable of choosing the worst style of wall-paper become suddenly afflicted by its ugliness under an attack of illness. And if an evil state of blood and lymph usually goes along with an evil state of mind, who shall say that the ugliness of our streets, the falsity of our ornamentation, the vulgarity of our upholstery, have not something to do with those bad tempers which breed false conclusions? (124)

It is interesting to read her review knowing that by this time Jones had already personally designed a wallpaper for her and Lewes. Nevertheless, this review illustrates the relationship between the built and the organic, between our rooms and our health.[31] This brings to mind the work of asylum reformers and theorists who similarly suggest a dynamic connection between the health of their patients and the architecture and décor surrounding them.

In Eliot's hands, architecture becomes a way of seeing and understanding for both her characters and her narrator. Again, we can revisit the brain dissection incident and the conversion of brain to labyrinth: clearly Eliot was thinking about brains and hearts and the thoughts and emotions they

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[31] Edward Lacy Garbett also explores the connection between good taste and good health in his 1850 text, *Rudimentary Treatise on the Principles of Design in Architecture, as Deducible from Nature and Exemplified in the Works of the Greek and Gothic Architects*. Garbett writes, 'if, as all admit, it is the mind, and the mind alone, that sees, tastes, feels, likes and dislikes objects of art or taste, are not these self-preservative antipathies of the mind to be respected, as well as those of the body […] Are not ugly objects to be withdrawn as *inflicting mental injuries*, just the same as a nuisance, or a stench, which is known to be injurious to the body, because unpleasant? We may laugh at the idea of the mental injury accruing from one glance at an object of bad taste; so we may at the bodily injury from a passing whiff of smoke; yet we acknowledge a difference between the health and longevity of those who live in smoke and those who live out of it. Habit counteracts and renders us insensible to the unpleasantness, *but not the injury*. Who then shall dare to guess the difference in *mental health* between a people living surrounded and immersed in objects of bad taste, or in objects of good taste' (10).

contain in architectural terms, adapting her realist aesthetic and using architecture as a bridge from material realism to a representation of the psychological and emotional interiors of her characters.

3. The Labyrinth in *Middlemarch*

While many scholars have attended to the labyrinth in *Middlemarch*, the majority of criticism discusses the image in a mythological context, linked to Casaubon and his search for the Key to all Mythologies.[32] Scholars have also located the labyrinth among the various other mythological allusions that scatter *Middlemarch*.[33] In the Introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition, Felicia Bonaparte describes Eliot's use of metaphors, which 'act like scaffolding on which poetic structures are erected. One of the most important kinds of poetic scaffolding draws on mythological imagery' (xxxvi). What is missing in this scholarship, even in Bonaparte's architecturally based simile, is an acknowledgment of the labyrinth as a built structure. Instead, it is typically treated as a pre-existing configuration, serving primarily for character archetypes to function within. As a result of scholarship tending to locate Dorothea as Ariadne, Casaubon as the Minotaur, and Will Ladislaw as Theseus or Dionysus, the architectural implications of the labyrinth are frequently overlooked. While Eliot certainly incorporates allusions to the mythical labyrinth, these associations are only one layer of the larger labyrinth metaphor governing the novel.

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[32] In the myth of the labyrinth, Theseus volunteers to be one of the fourteen youths sent to Crete as a tribute to King Minos, as food for the Minotaur. On arrival in Crete Theseus was seen by Minos' daughter Ariadne, who fell in love with him and decided to help him. She convinced Daedalus (the architect) to reveal how Theseus could penetrate the labyrinth where the Minotaur was imprisoned, and gave him a clew of thread to help him find his way back out. The minotaur was vulnerable only to his own horns, so Theseus pulled one off and stabbed the creature to death. (Stoneman, *Greek Mythology: An Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend*).

[33] For example, Mrs Vincy's 'Niobe-throat' (245). Rosamond looks like 'a sculptured Psyche' (603-604).

J. Hillis Miller reads Dorothea variously as Ariadne, the Virgin Mary, and Antigone, arguing that 'The narrator presents her as an uneasy incarnation of several conflicting mythological archetypes' (143).[34] He writes, 'Within the reenactment of the myth of Ariadne, Casaubon is both a grotesque parody of Theseus and at the same time the devouring Minotaur at the center of the labyrinth' (143). Yet 'unlike Theseus, he has not even accepted her proffered help in escaping that self-made labyrinth of moldy notes and out-moded theories in which he dwells' (143). He goes on to say that if Casaubon is Dorothea's minotaur, he is also her Creon, 'who buries her alive as another Antigone' (143). A.D. Nuttall also locates Dorothea as Ariadne who 'supplied the solution to the puzzle of the labyrinth' (55). Nuttall reads the labyrinth as indicative as Casaubon's academic failure and 'the nightmare […] of an endlessly recessive labour' (53). Joseph Wiesenfath reads Dorothea as Antigone, Lydgate as Hercules and Theseus, Will as Theseus, Apollo and Bacchus, and Casaubon as the Minotaur with the labyrinth representing 'Casaubon's distrust, his mind, his research, and his dark house Lowick – a fittingly named extension of Casaubon's dimness' (190).[35] The association of Dorothea with Ariadne can be overstated. Reading Dorothea as a saviour and solution giver ignores the fact that Eliot describes her heroine as frequently bewildered and looking for a knowledgeable guide to lead her through a baffling world. That being said, Eliot certainly incorporates references to the Theseus

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[34] 'A Conclusion in Which Almost Nothing is Concluded: *Middlemarch's* "Finale"'. In his book, *Reading for Our Time: Adam Bede and Middlemarch Revisited* (2012), Miller refers to *Middlemarch* itself as 'labyrinth of words' (142) that the reader must thread their way through.
[35] In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar discuss the Ariadne myth in Eliot's novel, *Romola*, writing, 'Rewriting abduction as seduction into a marriage of death, the Ariadne myth is an especially compelling version of Persephone's story for Eliot. Both the fact that Ariadne alone has the clue that will thread a way through the labyrinth and the fact that she is still unable to effect her own escape make her an important symbol to Eliot of female helplessness and resilience, supportiveness, and endurance such helplessness paradoxically engenders' (527). Gilbert and Gubar continue, 'Ariadne's gift of the thread, even though it seems destined to be offered to the wrong man, represents what George Eliot sees as women's special capacity for altruism' (528).

myth in *Middlemarch*, although these are usually comical. For example, the narrator describes Rosamond when she feels neglected by Lydgate: ‘Poor Rosamond lost her appetite and felt as forlorn as Ariadne – as a charming stage Ariadne left behind with all of her boxes full of costumes and no hope of a coach’ (281). Eliot indicates that Rosamond is not capable of feelings that reach the heights of tragedy and is instead preoccupied with material concerns. In a similarly playful reference, Fred, now under Mr Garth’s supervision, tells Mary: ‘it will be rather harder work to learn surveying and drawing plans than it would have been to write sermons […] and as to Hercules and Theseus, they were nothing to me. They had sport, and never learned to write a book-keeping hand’ (631).

This is not to say that all critical discussions of the labyrinth in *Middlemarch* cohere around mythology. In *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* (1984), Sally Shuttleworth addresses the labyrinth image in terms of psychological developments:

> The ruling idea of *Middlemarch* is that of a labyrinth. Fundamentally, a labyrinth is a structure that dissipates energy, impedes the free flow of force. With the rise of physiological psychology it was a concept that could be applied equally to social, mental, or physiological structure. Drawing on contemporary developments in scientific theory, George Eliot employs the idea of channeled, free-flowing energy to establish a framework for her novel. (157)

I agree with Shuttleworth that the labyrinth and its implications dominate *Middlemarch*.[36] While Shuttleworth focuses on the organic significance of the

[36] G.H. Lewes also employs the image of the labyrinth in his work. In *The Problems of Life and Mind*, he states, ‘It is the greatness of Science that while satisfying the spiritual thirst for

labyrinth, my analysis focuses on the materiality of the labyrinth and the idea that the labyrinth itself provides the 'framework' for the novel, rather than the energies channelled within. While acknowledging both the mythological and scientific associations, I would like to broaden the discussion of the labyrinth in *Middlemarch,* emphasising the significance of the labyrinth as an architectural structure as well as examining the allusions to the Christian adaptation of the labyrinth journey.

Eliot's adaptation of the theme of a Christian labyrinth journey shows us characters attempting to navigate their own life experiences, their personal limitations, and their own desires to build and construct something substantial in their lifetimes. Despite focusing on the Christian adaption of the mythological labyrinth motif, this chapter is interested in the architectural connotations rather than in Eliot's complex and well-documented relationship with Christianity.[37] Kern writes, 'the act of tracing the labyrinthine path was thought to purify the Christian soul, to prepare it for meeting its Maker' (146). The Christian labyrinth journey highlights the movement of an individual within a restricted environment and consequently, the architectural vehicle itself becomes a significant aspect of the experience. As we will see in the work of Saint Theresa, the potential danger does not come from a threatening monster within, but rather stems from the self and its potential inability to progress spiritually. In this section of the chapter I will examine three aspects of a labyrinth journey: the importance of adhering to the path and enduring continual inward movement (while overcoming difficulties of tedium), the desire for a guide to help lead you safely through the confusion, and the ultimate goal of achieving the centre. As Saint

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knowledge, it satisfies the pressing desire for guidance in action: not only painting a picture of the wondrous labyrinth of Nature, but placing in our hands the Ariadne-thread to lead us through the labyrinth' (Lewes 26).

[37] Haight *Biography,* Chapter Two: The Holy War, pg. 32.

Theresa employs the layers of mansions to substantiate the ideal progress of the soul, we will see Eliot use the labyrinth to substantiate the subject's journey through life.

Eliot's novels reveal her interest in writing about the labyrinthine and capitalising on the inherent complexity of the labyrinth image. In *Daniel Deronda* (1876) we see Gwendolyn's 'labyrinth of reflection' (530). She has the 'labyrinth of life before her' (241). In *Romola* (1863), Florence has a 'labyrinth of narrow streets' (53). Savonarola delivers 'labyrinthine allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures' (300). Initially, for Baldassarre the 'narrow passes of the streets, with their strip of sky above, and the unknown labyrinth around them, seemed to intensify his sense of loneliness and feeble memory' (360). Later, 'That city, which had been a weary labyrinth, was material that he could subdue to his purpose now' (406). In *Adam Bede* (1859) there is a single usage, the 'delicious labyrinthine wood' (174). In *Felix Holt* (1866) we have the 'dim labyrinth' of knowledge. This collection of labyrinths illustrates thematic clusters, such as the labyrinth being used to describe city streets and either mental or social confusion. The use of the labyrinth to describe chaos or confused thoughts can also be found in the novels discussed in the previous chapters of this project. In *Bleak House* Dickens represents the Dedlock estate as 'A labyrinth of grandeur […] A waste of unused passages and staircases' (910). For Esther, London is 'a labyrinth of streets' (803). Richard says of Woodcourt's understanding of his chancery case, 'He can't be expected to know much of such a labyrinth' (724). In *Villette*, Brontë uses the labyrinth to describe M.Bassompierre's thought process: 'Slow in remarking, he was logical in reasoning; having once seized the thread, it had guided him through a long labyrinth' (410). As we have seen in the previous chapter, Lady Audley finds herself in 'a labyrinth of guilt and

treachery' (296) and 'a weary maze of confusion' (298). Eliot refers to the labyrinth by name only three times in *Middlemarch*, all within the first thirty pages. These instances – Casaubon's labyrinthine mind, his labyrinthine work, and the labyrinth of society – launch a sustained meditation on architectural imagining and spatial extension rehearsed throughout the novel, influencing both character and form.

As we have seen, the labyrinth enters the novel as a positive image, associated with wonder. In this instance, the labyrinth exists as a vehicle for psychological insight as Eliot illustrates what her heroine first expects to find in her husband's mental interior. Over the course of the novel, Eliot transforms and adapts the labyrinth image to accommodate Dorothea's altered understanding of her husband and his scholarly capabilities. Through Eliot's use of architectural internalisation, we have also seen Casaubon confront the texture of his own mental labyrinth. Dorothea herself must face a different type of labyrinth, this time a social one and finds herself 'hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled in maze of small paths that led no wither' (26). Here the labyrinth resumes perhaps its most typical connotation as a bewildering structure. The social labyrinth the narrator describes is multicursal, with various potential paths to choose from and no guarantee of discovering anything meaningful. Emphasising its enclosed walls, the social labyrinth appears far more restricted than the anticipated 'labyrinthine extension' of Casaubon's mind and academic work. While the named labyrinth disappears from the novel at this point, thematic aspects of the labyrinth pervade the entire novel in the form of paths, guides, and prized centres.

Although Theresa does not once include the word labyrinth in her text, her description of the soul's metaphoric progress through architecture also mirrors key elements of a Christian labyrinth journey: she uses an architecture register of imagery to convey her argument, emphasise the necessity of inward movement and progress, explain the importance of following the proper path, and illustrate the rewards of achieving the centre. In *The Interior Castle*, Theresa stresses the importance of this inward movement and progress for the soul:

> But you must understand that there is a great difference between one room and another; for many souls dwell near the walls of a castle, viz. where the guards are, and yet never care about going further into it; neither do they wish to know what is within that precious place, nor who lives there, nor what rooms there are. (4)

In contrast, the dedicated soul that makes use of prayer must 'walk freely through all of these rooms, above, below, and on the sides' (10); she cautions, 'Let her not force herself to remain long in one room only' (11). One must be on guard against the devil, who will attempt to hinder the soul's progress through the mansions (13); thus stasis is akin to failure in her paradigm.

As with an encounter with a physical labyrinth, one must begin at the periphery and work inwards to reach the centre of the soul's castle. There is no way to penetrate the centre without first experiencing the periphery. Theresa suggests that the same holds true for the soul, that one cannot bypass the intermediate steps, the first of which is to achieve knowledge of the self:

> I say then again, that it is very good, nay, the very best thing, to enter first into the mansion where this [knowledge] is practiced, rather than fly to the others, because this is the way to them; and

> if we can advance in a safe and smooth path, why should we desire wings to fly? (11).

If you allow your soul to follow this true path, you will inevitably be rewarded by reaching the centre (God). This idea of advancing along a regulated path also suggests a unicursal labyrinth journey where, as long as the individual has perseverance, she will reach the centre. The journey itself is beneficial and requires discipline.

Like Theresa, Eliot uses paths to signpost the progress, if any, made by her characters. As such, many characters in *Middlemarch* vocalise a preoccupation with the paths of their lives and describe their position in the world according to these paths. Bulstrode constantly positions his own path as the righteous one, justifying his actions by imagining his path as set and sanctioned by God. Bulstrode, arguing with Mr Vincy about Fred's future, explains his position by saying, 'it is not an easy thing even to thread a path for principles in the intricacies of the world – still less to make the thread clear for the careless and scoffing' (122). Bulstrode later rationalises keeping his wife's wealth from his stepdaughter and his stepdaughter's husband because they appeared to him like 'people who seemed to lie outside the path of remarkable providences' (581). Five years after he withholds the money, 'Death again came to widen his path, by taking away his wife' (581). In *Middlemarch*, wide paths always represent opportunity and possibility (like Dorothea wishing there were wide paths down which to follow her husband). Despite Eliot and the reader's scorn for Bulstrode and belief that his path is in fact unrighteous, Eliot uses the image of paths to substantiate Bulstrode's belief that his life has been well-arranged by a higher power.

Throughout the novel the reader maintains the impression that characters in *Middlemarch* are bound to their own individual paths and are frequently blind to the bigger picture and to the plight of others. This seems especially true in the case of Lydgate and his fundamental misunderstanding of his wife. Lydgate, though attracted to Rosamond, still 'believed that he should not marry for several years: not marry until he had trodden out a good clear path for himself away from the broad road which was quite ready made' (87). Marrying nevertheless, all of Lydgate's scientific aspirations are ultimately thwarted by his premature marriage. Lydgate fails to adhere to his own path, and consequently fails in his self-stated vocational aims. After they are married, Rosamond describes Lydgate's contact with wealthy patients as allowing him to go through 'wide corridors' (275), another example of widening paths being associated with beneficial opportunity.[38] Clearly, though, Rosamond and Lydgate's idea of what is beneficial differs greatly. Discussing the new hospital with Bulstrode, Lydgate tells him, 'I hope I shall have nothing to do with clerical disputes […] The path I have chosen is to work well in my own profession' (118). Again, Lydgate will be forced to modify his expectation: unbeknownst to Lydgate his chosen path will directly intersect with clerical disputes and thrusts him front and centre into the debate over who will have the living of the new hospital. Through these intersections and diversions, Eliot illustrates the way our lives are destined to impact others and the ease to which our path can be altered as a result of this contact.

While Daedalus' construction might be the first thing that comes to mind when we think of the meandering paths of a labyrinth, there are other significant labyrinth structures to consider. Edward Trollope, an Anglican Bishop and

[38] For a useful article on the architectural history of the corridor, see Mark Jarzombek's article 'Corridor Spaces'.

author, wants his readers to understand that the labyrinth is not solely associated with mythology, although he is aware that the mythological associations will always dominate. In his 1858 'Notices of Ancient and Medieval Labyrinths', Trollope lists the various possible manifestations of the labyrinth: 'Labyrinths may be divided into several distinct classes, comprising complicated ranges of caverns, architectural labyrinths or sepulchral buildings, tortuous devices indicated by coloured marbles or cut in turf, and topiary labyrinths or mazes formed by clipped hedges' (216). He writes that labyrinths 'have been used for the most varied purposes, viz., as catacombs for the burial of the dead, as prisons, as a means of performing penance, and as portions of pleasure-grounds' (216). Trollope then walks the reader through a concise history of the labyrinth's trajectory: from mythological prison, to a representative motif of the trials of the Christian soul, to pleasure garden.[39] In *Middlemarch*, Casaubon is famously associated with death and decay and Eliot furthers this connection by describing his academic fumbling through the image of labyrinth-like catacombs.

The path that Casaubon walks is distinctly funereal. The narrator tells us that Casaubon's approaching marriage does not cheer him, 'nor did the contemplation of that matrimonial garden-scene, where, as all experience showed, the path was to be bordered by flowers, prove persistently more enchanting to him than the accustomed vaults where he walked taper in hand' (78). A path, bordered by flowers and reflective of a garden or topiary labyrinth

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[39] In an early Christian context, 'The whole device was deemed to be indicative of the complicated folds of sin by which man is surrounded, and how impossible it would be to extricate himself from them except through the assisting hand of Providence' (Trollope 219). While walking the labyrinth on hands and knees was a form of penance, after the Reformation they were converted into a medium of recreation (228). Mazes were popular during the reign of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, Trollope writing with flair, 'there must then have been a frequent demand for fabricators of verdant subtleties, a maze formed by neatly clipped hedges being an usual adjunct to the royal residences, and probably also to those of the nobility' (228). Trollope indicates that while garden mazes were not popular under Charles I and Charles II, they were revived by William III.

cannot tempt him away from the dark vaults he prefers to explore. In this instance of architectural internalisation, Casaubon is once again roaming his mental 'vault', hoping for academic illumination. Through this image, Eliot illustrates some of the difficulties Casaubon encounters with his work, such as becoming distracted by his fear of criticism: 'for even when Mr Casaubon was carrying his taper among the tombs of the past, those modern figures came athwart the dim light, and interrupted his diligent exploration' (394).[40] Casaubon mentally catalogues his academic slights relating to his pamphlets: he was 'bitterly convinced that his old acquaintance Carp had been the writer of that depreciatory recension which was kept locked in the small drawer of Mr Casaubon's desk and also in the dark closet of his verbal memory' (263). The image of an academic slight held within 'the dark closet of his verbal memory' is highly revealing of Casaubon's authorial insecurities. Of his hopes that Dorothea will complete his work after his death, the narrator writes of Casaubon, 'he willingly imagined her toiling under the fetters of a promise to erect a tomb with his name up on. (Not that Mr Casaubon called the future volumes a tomb; he called them the Key to all Mythologies)' (463).[41] Through the image of internalised catacombs, the narrator represents Casaubon as dwelling among the dead by choice. By representing Casaubon as deathly in every aspect (his physical appearance, his mind, his studies, and his library)

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[40] The image of Casaubon wandering the catacombs with a dim candle recalls a passage from Eliot's *Reflections on Italy 1860* in which Eliot describes her and Lewes' visit to the Catacombs of St. Calixtus, recalling, 'We saw the Catacombs of St. Calixtus on the Appian Way – the long dark passages with great oblong hollows in the rock for bodies long since crumbled, and the one or two openings out of the passages into a rather wide space, called chapels, but no indication of painting or other detail, our monkish guide being an old man who spoke with an indistinct grunt that would not have enlightened us if we had asked any questions'(348). While this visit occurred ten years before the composition of *Middlemarch*, this passage, nevertheless, recalls Casaubon: grunting, unwilling to provide information, and walking through decaying passages with a candle. This is one of the many links between Eliot's 1860 trip to Rome and the imagery she incorporates into *Middlemarch*.

[41] After Casaubon's death, the narrator describes the sunlight 'shining on the rows of note-books as it shines on the weary waste planted with huge stones, the mute memorials of a forgotten faith' (506).

Eliot encourages us to think about Casaubon in this way. Celia reflects on her sister's upcoming marriage: 'There was something funereal about the whole affair, and Mr Casaubon seemed to be the officiating clergyman' (45). Mr Brooke repeatedly connects Casaubon's studies with death, saying 'He is a little buried in books, you know, Casaubon is' (36) and 'Poor Casaubon was a little buried in books – he didn't know the world' (455). Sir James responds to the idea of Dorothea marrying Casaubon by exclaiming, 'Good God! It is horrible! He is no better than a mummy!' (54) and 'He has one foot in the grave' (54). Like Dickens enforcing the inevitability of death and burial via his house-tomb metaphors in *Bleak House*, Eliot represents Casaubon as a man who has been written off as dead before his bodily death. Casaubon turns away from the living in favour of his fruitless scholarship and, as a result, the living consign him to his own premature house-tomb.

The impression of Casaubon as a figure of living death impacts Dorothea as well. We have already seen Eliot describe Dorothea's position in Lowick as one of mental and emotional imprisonment and Eliot later renovates this image to assume the greater hopelessness of premature burial and Dorothea's entanglement in Casaubon's mental catacomb. Dorothea has been pulled onto Casaubon's own funereal path. Despite her earlier desire to aid her husband in his studies, Dorothea is only allowed entry to the library when Casaubon fears his death might interfere with the completion of his work. Ironically, by this time Dorothea has become painfully aware of her husband's academic impotence. Consequently, Dorothea must stifle her own intellectual impulses to serve the futile, ego driven aims of her husband. In turn, the narrator, Will, and Dorothea herself all envision her as dwelling in some form of tomb. Before leaving Rome, Will remarks to Dorothea, 'You have been brought up in some of those horrible

notions that choose the sweetest women to devour – like Minotaurs. And now you will go and be shut up in that stone prison at Lowick: you will be buried alive. It makes me savage to think of it!' (206). Dorothea despairs utterly of her work with Casaubon:

> now it appeared that she was to live more and more in a virtual tomb, where there was the apparatus of a ghastly labour producing what would never see the light. To-day she had stood at the door of the tomb and seen Will Ladislaw receding into the distant world of warm activity and fellowship – turning his face towards her as he went. (446)

Through the metaphor of the tomb, Eliot illustrates the massive weight crushing Dorothea's spirit and the extent to which she feels like life if passing her by.[42] This passage recalls Lucy Snowe and her description of herself as a person who must 'creep into a hole of life's wall' (255). Both Lucy and Dorothea imagine themselves as somehow confined within life itself – as if the very texture of their lives is smothering them. Later, when her feelings become more accessible to her, Dorothea thinks of Will as

> the bright creature whom she had trusted – who had come to her like the spirit of morning visiting the dim vault where she sat as the bride of a worn-out life; and now, with a full consciousness which had never awakened before, she stretched out her arms towards him and cried with bitter cries that their nearness was a parting vision: she discovered her passion to herself in the unshrinking utterance of despair. (739)

[42] Eliot writes in an 1852 letter of her residence with Chapman: 'I have felt something like the madness which imagines that the four walls are contracting and going to crush one' (123 *Biography*).

The image of Dorothea as ‘the bride of a worn-out life’ is perhaps the most disturbing of the novel. Casaubon’s association with death has completely permeated Dorothea and subsumed all of her expectations and ambitions.

In addition to marking the paths of her character’s lives, Eliot represents the human desire for guidance through the paths of a confusing world. From the beginning of *Middlemarch*, Eliot indicates that her heroine is looking for such a guide. The narrator explains that when Dorothea envisions marriage, ‘the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path’ (27). When Dorothea realises that Casaubon may want to marry her, ‘it would be almost as if a winged messenger had suddenly stood beside her path and held out his hand to her’ (27). Dorothea is anxious not to be any bother to her future husband, telling him ‘You must often be weary with the pursuit of subjects in your own track. I shall gain enough if you will take me with you there’ and he responds, ‘How shall I be able now to persevere in any path without your companionship?’ (47). He is being disingenuous, as Dorothea realises during her honeymoon: ‘she was gradually ceasing to expect with her former delightful confidence that she should see any wide openings where she followed him’ (185). Casaubon, tangled in the stairways and anterooms of his mind, does not move through ‘wide openings’. Back at Lowick after her honeymoon, Dorothea is even more aware of the great distance between her and her husband and,

> Like one who has lost his way and is weary, she sat and saw as in one glance all the paths of her young hope which she should never find again. And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw

> her own and her husband's solitude – how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. (399).

Casaubon will not allow Dorothea to walk with him, instead creating critical distance between them. Through Dorothea's mistaken choice of 'guide', Eliot reveals that, while we might long for a guide, for someone to navigate, make choices, and light the way for us, in reality understanding comes from experience. As we have seen in Dorothea's trip to Rome, there is no shortcut through to the centre. Dorothea's experience of Rome and her contact with Roman architecture gave her perspective on Casaubon and his priorities: she saw decay writ large on the architecture of the city and that disturbing vision shifts her understanding of her husband's mental interior. By illustrating the flaw behind the strategy of following a guide, Eliot is suggesting that there is no substitute for experience, for trial and error. A person, like Dorothea, must see and experience things for herself. That is the only way to come to knowledge.

The final Christian labyrinth implication to discuss in terms of the novel is the ultimate goal of achieving the centre. As Doob states, 'most mazes are designed on behalf of, an in subordination to, their centers' (54). In *The Interior Castle*, Theresa describes the moment when the individual achieves the centre and enters God's mansion within the soul:

> When our Lord is pleased to be moved by what this soul suffers, and *has* suffered through her desires for Him, which He has now spiritually chosen to be His spouse, He allows her to enter this His Seventh Mansion, before the consummation of the spiritual nuptials; for as He has a mansion in heaven, so He is to have an abode in the soul, in which His Majesty alone resides. Let us call it another heaven, since it is very important for us, sisters, not to

> imagine the soul to be something obscure; and, as we do not see it, we generally think there is no other interior light except what we see, and that there is in the soul a certain obscurity. (173)

For Theresa, reaching the centre means entering into communion with God. Theresa repeats her caution against considering the soul obscure and, as we see from her description of 'a mansion in heaven' and 'an abode in the soul', Teresa relies on images of architectural habitation to ensure that the soul appears tangible for her readers.

The Finale of *Middlemarch* certainly feels to the reader like achieving the centre. In the penultimate paragraph of *Middlemarch*, Eliot writes,

> Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know. (784-785)

In this passage Eliot reminds her readers about Saint Theresa, named first in the Prelude and now again in the Finale. By pairing Theresa with Antigone, Eliot

draws together the Christian and the classical while creating distance between these women and her heroine. Dorothea will be one of many unrecognised women who sacrifice and struggle.

Henry James was famously dissatisfied with the novel's conclusion, as evident in his review of *Middlemarch* published in the March 1873 issue of *The Galaxy.* Perhaps James' most pointed misreading of Eliot's novel is revealed in the following statement concerning Ladislaw: 'The impression once given that he is a *dilettante* is never properly removed, and there is slender poetic justice in Dorothea marrying a *dilettante*' (165). James considers the reader's dissatisfaction with Dorothea's fate as an authorial flaw, rather than an intentional quality of the novel. In *Vocation and Desire*, Barrett writes of *Middlemarch*,

> The novel we have anticipates modernism in the tepidness of its ending. In Victorian novels, generally speaking, we leave protagonists either happy or dead. The assumption that *Middlemarch* conforms to this convention has led to the many misreadings of Dorothea's second marriage as a failed attempt by George Eliot to make a happy ending. (124-125)

James, like Eliot's fictional community of Middlemarch, cannot offer a satisfying alternative: 'no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done – not even Sir James Chettam, who went no further than the negative prescription that she ought not to have married Will Ladislaw' (Eliot 783). Dorothea defends her decision to her sister, simply telling Celia, 'No, dear, you would have to feel with me, else you would never know' (771). Her statement reveals Eliot's understanding of the complexities of personal experience. Dorothea cannot explain her motives; only she possesses the

feelings and experience to understand them.[43] Yet the end of the novel finds Dorothea herself uncomfortable with her lack of accomplishment: '[she] herself had no dreams of being praised above other women, feeling that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better' (782). Eliot prevents Dorothea from giving form to her drawings as part of the deliberately unsatisfying conclusion of the novel. The discomfort of the ending reflects Eliot's belief that a person may not leave a physical mark on the world through a tangible achievement but will nevertheless influence the future.

In her final paragraph, Eliot writes,

> Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs. (785)

Scholars discussing the closing lines of the novel typically focus on the idea of channels and diffusion, routinely ignoring the fact that Eliot ultimately leaves her reader with the architectural image of the tomb. For example, J. Hillis Miller writes in *Reading for our Time: Adam Bede and Middlemarch Revisited* (2012) that, while he expected closure at the novel's end, 'The finale, however, it turns

[43] In her essay 'George Eliot', Virginia Woolf discusses Eliot's heroines: 'They do not find what they seek, and we cannot wonder. The ancient consciousness of woman, charged with suffering and sensibility, and for so many ages dumb, seems in them to have brimmed and overflowed and uttered a demand for something – they scarcely know what – for something that is perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence' (204).

out, ends the novel only by presenting generalizations about openness' (133). Similarly, in his article 'A Conclusion in Which Almost Nothing is Concluded: *Middlemarch's* "Finale"', Miller reiterates, 'The last paragraph of *Middlemarch* ends the novel on a note of eloquent openness to an unpredictable future. It also gathers up one last time the image of human life as flowing water' (137). Gillian Beer discusses the water imagery in *Middlemarch* as 'the irrigating version of the labyrinth' (180). The point is to understand such diffusion in architectural as well as organic terms, as the image of the tomb is definitive, enclosed, and contained. Eliot pointedly ends her novel with the word 'tombs', offering a final meditation on architectural enclosure and reiterating the architectural emphasis of the novel: *Middlemarch* begins with Dorothea's desire to provide shelter for the less fortunate, and ends with the tomb, the architectural enclosure symbolically representative of the inevitability of death for every human being. The labyrinth that we are all walking tends to the same place, to death and the tomb. We might achieve the centre without an awareness of tangible achievement or understanding, but simply walking the path of our lives effects the future in ways we will never know. Chances are, even if we do good, we will not get to see the mark we leave on the world – a fact Eliot enforces through her characters' failure to realise their various construction projects. Dorothea's cottages are not built. Casaubon's book is not written. Lydgate's discoveries are not made. The tomb might very well be the only structural acknowledgment of our existence.

Conclusion

Eliot presents her reader with a heroine who has distinct architectural ambitions. Although Dorothea jokes about her abilities, telling her sister, 'I shall think I am a great architect, if I have not got incompatible stairs and fireplaces'

(14), Dorothea is serious about enacting her plans. Dorothea has an architect's eye and we can learn a great deal about Eliot's heroine by examining both the way she digests her surroundings and her eagerness to alter the built environment of her world. Dorothea thinks of her own identity in terms of her interest in cottages and ultimately judges herself critically for her inability to give her drawings three-dimensional form. Instead, Dorothea becomes an architect of creative, adaptable mindscapes as she grapples with the disappointing condition of her husband's mental interior.

Eliot contrasts Dorothea's architectural objectives with the technique of describing the functioning organic body or mind via tangible building materials. This technique becomes a revealing way to look at Eliot's realism as she internalises the materiality of a character's immediate environment within them to solidify that character's thoughts and emotions. Eliot not only gives us a vision of Casaubon's mind, she internalises him within his own mental corridors and represents him as a figure struggling to navigate his own mental landscape. Eliot's use of the architectural internalisation technique provides insight into how Casaubon's mind functions without using the organic register of images associated with the writing of contemporary psychological theorists.

While architectural metaphors permeate *Middlemarch*, the labyrinth dominates as Eliot capitalises on the multiple meanings of the labyrinth image to represent visual mindscapes and key narrative themes. The labyrinth becomes flexible and adaptable as Eliot builds and rebuilds Casaubon's mental labyrinth for her reader through the architectural imagination of both Dorothea and her narrator. As Theresa writes mansions but reflects a labyrinth journey, Eliot employs architectural imagery and metaphor to similarly represent various aspects of a labyrinth journey: the path one must follow, the desire for a guide,

the disorientation resulting from a limited view, and the search for the centre. The labyrinth becomes a model for the novel as a whole with Eliot as the architect with the bird's eye view.

The labyrinth's ability to guide or impede a traveller has distinct literary implications. Writing at roughly the same time as Eliot, John Ruskin also explored the narrative potential of the labyrinth and the way organic and built structures can be combined in our spatial imagination. Ruskin, like Eliot, considers the labyrinth a foundational image. He devotes Letter XXIII of *Fors Clavigera* to a discussion of Theseus, Daedalus, and the labyrinth. This letter is dated 24 October 1872 (Book VI of *Middlemarch* was published in October 1872). Ruskin writes that Theseus is, 'An idea only; yet one that has ruled all minds of men to this hour, from the hour of its first being born, a dream, into this practical and solid world' (8). This idea of Theseus 'still rules, in a thousand ways, which you know no more than the paths by which the winds have come that blow in your face. But you never pass a day without being brought, somehow, under the power of Theseus' (8). The governing force of this myth may be unseen, like 'the paths' of the wind, but is nevertheless ingrained in our collective imaginations.

Ruskin takes as a point of departure the labyrinth carved into the cathedral at Lucca – using the translated inscription 'This is the labyrinth which the Cretan Daedalus built' (9) to establish an extended comparison with the children's rhyme 'This is the house that Jack built'. In doing so, Ruskin suggests that perhaps the only image more foundational than the labyrinth is that of the house. Ruskin writes,

> You will want to know, next, whether Jack ever *did* build it. I believe, in veritable bricks and mortar – no; in veritable limestone

> and cave-catacomb, perhaps, yes; it is no matter how; *somehow*, you see, Jack must have built it, for there is the picture of it on the coin of the town. (15)

While Daedalus might not have constructed a labyrinth in our built environment world, Ruskin considers this inconsequential, as ‘Jack’s ghostly labyrinth has set the pattern for almost everything linear and complex, since’ (16). In *Middlemarch*, we see Eliot’s literary contribution to the enduring symbol of the labyrinth: when confronted with the organic interior of the dissected human brain with its coiling lobes, Eliot turned to that foundational image to illustrate an architectural conceptualisation of the mind and its functioning. To use Ruskin’s phrase, Eliot’s choice of the labyrinth for a brain model ‘sets the pattern’ for an architectural study of *Middlemarch*. By incorporating layers of architectural metaphors in her novel, Eliot was clearly thinking about the architectural texture of our surroundings and how that texture permeates our creative imaginations.

Conclusion

In *The Child in the House* (1878), Walter Pater employs numerous architectural metaphors to describe the emotional and psychological impact of a child's first home on an author and his creative imagination. After a traveller reminds Florian Deleal of his childhood home, he launches into a meditation on 'that process of brain-building by which we are, each one of us, what we are' (10-11). Pater later returns to the phrase 'brain-building' to indicate 'the house of thought in which we live' (28). Florian details the familiar architectural features of the house, such as the wainscoting, carved staircase, closet, window, children's room, and attic, beginning on the ground floor and moving upwards (12-13). He traces the origin of his imaginative impulses to the objects and experiences enclosed within his first home and finds that 'ever afterwards the like aspects and incidents never failed to throw him into a well-recognised imaginative mood, seeming actually to have become a part of the texture of his mind' (16). Pater here uses the architectural internalisation technique to illustrate how the home infiltrates the mind and becomes a part of its 'texture'. At the same time, the house itself embodies memory and emotion. Pater writes, 'the early habitation thus gradually becomes a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment; a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions' (18). Pater explores how a house embodies comfort and security, but also opens up an awareness of death and an understanding of human mortality, suggesting that our attachment to home forms 'the larger part of our fear of death' (19).

Pater's *The Child in the House* encapsulates many of the themes of this thesis and we can see how Pater was influenced by the developing understanding of the capacity of the realist novel to represent psychological

interiority that this thesis has been tracing. In fact, Pater uses some of the same metaphors in his story. He describes the architectural structure of the home as a form of shrine, a place of intellectual and emotional intimacy. At the same time he indicates that our attachment to the home leads to a fear of death and an awareness of our mortality – the feature of our lives that will ultimately sever us from this place of safety and comfort. Pater, then, adopts the idea of the heart-shrine and the house-tomb. He also incorporates elements of Braddon's self-house metaphor to similarly facilitate a psychologically-revealing guided tour of the home and, like Eliot, uses built materials to describe the structure of the brain and the composition of thought. Like Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot, Pater understands that these images are foundational in terms of how we conceptualise the human experience as fundamentally architectural.

In addition to the use of compelling architectural metaphors, Pater's aesthetic also embraces the use of a narrator with an architect's eye and the architectural internalisation technique to foreground something that is more latent in the novels of this study, namely, the connection between author, house, and literary product. Pater constructs his work entirely around this relationship and the idea that an author's mind can be made navigable and knowable through architecture, much as Dickens represents Esther as a first-time author who uses architecturally-based strategies to narrate the events of her life as well as her subjective vision and dark outlook; Brontë envisions her heroine as an author of a written account and gives Lucy creative license to observe her architectural surroundings and then construct imaginative architectural enclosures that are psychologically and emotionally revealing; Braddon emphasises the author-as-architect connection by contrasting sound and flawed architectural structures and representing her narrator as making

good use of her materials; and Eliot acts as a literary architect who overlooks the labyrinth of the novel from a bird's-eye view and inserts a heroine with architectural aspirations. These are just a few of the many ways that the connection between author, house, and literary product take shape in their novels.

As such, I have advocated for a dedicated focus on architecture and architectural metaphor as it appears in *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch*. My central aim has been to show that Victorian literary architecture is about more than constraints and limitations: I have argued that images of architectural enclosure should not be reflexively characterised as confining or imprisoning but be examined for their constructive and expressive potential. To do so, I have explored the significance of authors deploying a heroine or narrator with an architect's eye and argued that this narrative feature advances the psychological realism of each novel. This thesis has offered a new perspective on these women and the power of creative mutability that they possess and that their authors chose to foreground as a significant feature of their character.

Esther Summerson, Lucy Snowe, Dorothea Brooke, and Braddon's third-person narrator each possess an architect's eye. They are capable of providing the reader with straightforward reporting about the architectural structures they encounter yet their response to this contact with the material world also provides new insight into heroines and their method of expressing their subjectivity. This particular way of seeing has shown us how certain women observe, digest, and then replicate the architecture of the built environment surrounding them with the added feature of creative expansion and mutability that simultaneously reflects features of their emotional and psychological

interior. Architecture provides them with a register of images through which they express themselves and enclose past thoughts and memories. By turning to architecture to represent these immaterial aspects of life, Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot signal their interest in expressing the immaterial via the built and using architecture to substantiate what cannot be seen in the built environment world of the novel – thoughts and emotions.

This intimate access to a character takes shape through the technique of architectural internalisation, when authors take material architectural features and internalise them within the bodies of their characters. The creation of this second layer of architecture apart from the built environment is compelling and complicates the idea that Victorian heroines are victimised by architecture. Instead, we learn a great deal about these heroines through their implementation of this literary technique. Esther uses architecture as a form of self-expression and as a way to construct her own subtle psychological profile for the reader. Lucy envisions and creates alternative homespaces to enclose her most intimate thoughts and memories. Dorothea builds and renovates her understanding of Casaubon's mental interior through her shifting architecturalised vision of that enclosed space. This technique is about the layering of architectural features in a novel: what can be seen in the material built environment world of the novel versus the architecture that heroines and narrators construct for the reader alone – a privileged view of what is happening on the inside and consequently a form of psychological realism made manifest in architecture.

The narrators of *Bleak House*, *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch* each indicate their understanding of the narrative potential of architecture: they use architecture to give shape to their narrative priorities.

Esther gains narrative authority and confidence through her detailed descriptions of the architectural structures she encounters over the course of the novel. She also frequently turns to architecture when detailing significant moments of her life and architecture becomes a tool for expressing emotional and psychological distress. For a heroine who is not expected to possess psychological depth, Esther is emphatic about her death-inflected vision and dark outlook. Esther gives voice to her own psychological interior through her repeated descriptions of houses as anticipating tombs. Lucy takes architecture into her own hands by constructing creative architectural enclosures unseen in the material world of the novel. While she might not find architectural compatibility in the built environment, Lucy constructs her own spaces of comfort and belonging and becomes a creative literary architect through metaphor. Frequently considered a guarded and withdrawn narrator, Lucy in fact provides intimate access to her heart and mind and regulates her reader's contact with those spaces. Like Esther and Lucy, Braddon's narrator is attuned to the narrative potential of architecture. In fact, Braddon experiments with building layers of architectural signification into her novel: her narrator offers intricate descriptions of the built environment world of the novel; she critiques faulty or flawed architecture and ridicules unsuccessful architects; she draws parallels between well-constructed architecture and writing; she uses architecture to explore new and developing neighborhoods; she crafts Audley Court as an extended psychological diagram of her heroine's mind; and she probes the anxiety occasioned by a missing body lacking any defined architectural boundaries. Finally, Eliot's narrator foregrounds Dorothea's interest in designing and building cottages. Dorothea applies her architect's eye to her cottage building sketches but also to imaginative representations of her

husband's mindscape. For Dorothea, architecture becomes the medium through which she navigates the material world and comes to understand Casaubon's mental interior. Eliot provides psychological insight into her heroine through a subtle insistence on the progression of Dorothea's shifting architectural vision and accompanying emotional upheaval.

Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot each foreground a dominant architectural metaphor in their novel in order to suggest that architecture is foundational to how we navigate the human experience and conceptualise our place in the world. Unlike Bachelard's revealing analysis of the metaphoric potential of the familiar architecture of the home, I have looked at what could be called the less emphatically domestic architectural metaphors of house-tomb, heart-shrine, self-house, and mental labyrinth, metaphors that are inherently complex and often dualistic. While one metaphor might dominate, the tomb, shrine, house, and labyrinth are woven across each novel and indicate that Dickens, Brontë, Braddon, and Eliot were mutually engaged in an exploration of the ability of these dualistic architectural metaphors to represent the emotional and psychological interiors of their characters as well as universal human concerns such as death, love, and the longing for home. These particular architectural structures encode multiple meanings. The tomb with its familiar architectural features represents death but also suggests habitation. The shrine indicates religious worship but also intimacy and human connection. The display home incorporates privacy and visibility, revelations and concealments, secrecy and exposure. Finally, the labyrinth encloses a journey and a destination, suggests frustration and meditation, enclosure and expansion, chaos and order. Taken together, these are powerful images that could be seen

as containing and restricting but must also be acknowledged as constructive, and expressive.

Through her repeated use of the house-tomb metaphor, Esther expresses her own death-inflected vision: for Esther, houses represent anticipating tombs. By dwelling on the idea that every door might be Death's Door, Dickens conceptualises the unknowable experience of death through recognisable architecture. A similar preoccupation with death, mortality, and the location of our bodies both before and after death appears in *Villette*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch*. A character with a death-inflected vision might project death onto every structure they encounter and, as we have seen, any room has the potential to hold a body and become a tomb.

Lucy turns to the metaphor of the heart-shrine to express her desire for an intimate space of belonging and her proactive technique of creating alternative homespaces to achieve this aim. Brontë foregrounds her heroine's impulse to organise, categorise, and regulate access through metaphoric building material when she might not have a similar opportunity in the material world. At the same time, Lucy's conceptualisation of the shrine is about self-expression, making yourself known, inviting visibility, and celebrating your subjectivity. Architecture as a vehicle for self-expression and the means to make the unseen knowable also materialises in *Bleak House*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *Middlemarch*. We have seen characters and narrators repeatedly draw on this connection to describe something organic in architectural terms.

Braddon foregrounds the connection between home and inhabitant by constructing Audley Court as a tangible psychological diagram of Lady Audley's mental interior and psychological profile. Through the self-house metaphor Braddon illustrates how houses are capable of shaping our perceptions and

underscores their capacity to conceal, reveal, lead and mislead, shelter and expose. Dickens, Brontë, and Eliot also capitalise on the idea of a house as a psychological entity in their novels.

Finally, the metaphor of the mind as a labyrinth provides a compelling way of playing with perspective and incorporating the longing for a guide, the understanding of life as a journey down various paths that inevitably intersect with the lives of others, as well as the desire to reach the centre of things and achieve some form of knowledge or accomplishment. In this project we have seen labyrinthine mindscapes, labyrinthine houses, and labyrinthine novels as authors explore different ways of traversing these structures.

Ultimately, these novels represent a layering of architectural features, both material and metaphorical. While authors build up a realistic built environment world in a way that Peter Brooks suggests is similar to the construction of scale models, the most significant and under-acknowledged feature of these novels is that their authors empower their heroines to build as well – to give voice to their own internal thoughts and emotions through the language of architecture. The resulting metaphorical architecture takes shape for the reader but remains unseen in the built environment world of the novel. This thesis represents a dedication to examine the various narrative strategies that generate from architecture and are deployed by heroines and narrators who build architecturally-mediated psychological interiors. Architecture has a pivotal role in the psychological realism of these novels and as such I have advocated for a reassessment of architecture in the Victorian novel and a broader view of its capacity to be not only constraining and punishing but constructive, creative, and expressive.

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