"ALL MEN ARE BUILDERS": ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES

IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Nineteenth-century Britain experienced a confluence of a rapidly urbanizing physical environment, radical changes in the hierarchical relationships in society as well as in the natural sciences, and a nostalgic fascination with antiquities, especially gothic architecture. The realist novels of this period reflect this tension between dramatic social restructuring and a conservative impulse to remember and maintain the world as it has been. This dissertation focuses on the word *structure* to unpack the implications of these opposing forces, both for our understanding of the social structures that novels reflect, and the narrative structures that novels create.

To address these issues, I examine the architectural structures described in Victorian realist novels, drawing parallels with their social and narrative structures. In Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), and Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), descriptions of houses and barns, churches and cathedrals, shops and factories, and courthouses and schools are thematically important because they draw our attention to the novels' interest in the social structures that underlie the fictional worlds they represent. Buildings provide spaces where members of a community may work towards a shared purpose; they also embody that community's common knowledge, values, and ideals.

These novels take up the thematic concern with structure through their own formal narrative structuring work. Much like an architect builds a physical structure, novels build a narrative structure by carefully arranging patterns, sequences, proportions, and perspectives. An examination of a novel's description of a building reveals moments of self-reflexive consideration of the narratives it constructs. These are moments that interrogate the building materials of narrative and how their arrangement becomes

meaningful, that consider what the narrative structure can accommodate and what it excludes, and that invite us to attend to the ways in which the act of structuring a narrative situates it in time, in relation to the past, present, and future.

The choices an architect makes about ornaments and materials, the way a building integrates the surrounding environment, and the way its proportions compare to a human scale, all constitute a kind of language; moreover, the way people interact with, in, and around these built spaces suggests it is a dynamic and evolving language. Preeminent Victorian art and social critic John Ruskin's architectural treatise, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) serves as a master key to interpreting the Victorian understanding of architectural language in the novels under investigation. Because Ruskin's writings pervaded mid-century artistic discourse, and because he turned his critical gaze on such a wide range of the mid-nineteenth century's most important aesthetic, social, philosophical, and ethical concerns, his work provides an invaluable bridge between the physical, social, and narrative structures in these novels. Each of Ruskin's "lamps" represents a specific architectural principle; each chapter in this project pairs a novel with a lamp with thematic and formal resonance.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: "ALL MEN ARE BUILDERS"

Thomas Hardy's novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) famously depicts the

Everdene barn where farmers and farm hands gather to shear their flock of sheep. The

description emphasizes that this small community has assembled for a purpose that is

common, not just to these particular individuals in this barn, but also to the generations

who have come before them:

> …the old barn embodied practices which had suffered no mutilation at the
> hands of time. Here at least the spirit of the ancient builders was at one
> with the spirit of the modern beholder. Standing before this abraded pile,
> the eye regarded its present usage, the mind dwelt upon its past history,
> with a satisfied sense of functional continuity throughout—a feeling
> almost of gratitude, and quite of pride, at the permanence of the idea
> which had heaped it up…. The lanceolate windows, the time-eaten
> archstones and chamfers, the orientation of the axis, the misty chestnut
> work of the rafters, referred to no exploded fortifying art or worn-out
> religious creed. The defence [sic] and salvation of the body by daily bread
> is still a study, a religion, and a desire. (125)

This description illustrates two important qualities of physical structures—temporal

presence and communal function. First, the barn's "past history" testifies to the

"functional continuity" of its purpose through time. Within this barn, humans labor, as

they have always labored, to meet their basic need for warmth, food, and shelter. Unlike

those of ancient churches or fortresses, the physical structures of the barn—its windows,

archstones, chamfers, and rafters—are still meaningful. Walter Benjamin asserts that

architecture can lay "claim to being a living force" (Benjamin 687); the barn is a "living

force" because unlike the "exploded fortifying art or worn-out religious creed" of the

church or fortress, it still helps to fulfill enduring human needs. Secondly, a building such

as the Everdene barn both produces common social space and embodies communal

ideals, demonstrating that architecture "has significance in every attempt to comprehend

the relationship of the masses to art" (Benjamin 687). Structures such as the Everdene barn provide spaces where a community may work towards a shared and defining purpose, and "embod[y] practices" that represent the community's shared knowledge and values.

As this example illustrates, buildings have stories to tell. My project looks at buildings and the stories they tell in four Victorian novels: *Little Dorrit* (1855), by Charles Dickens, *Adam Bede* (1859), by George Eliot, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) by Thomas Hardy, using Victorian art critic John Ruskin's architectural treatise *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) as a hermeneutic tool and a structuring device. In these novels, the various descriptions of houses and barns, churches and cathedrals, shops and factories, and courthouses and schools tell stories about cultural values, the passage of time, and ways of knowing and being in the world. These descriptions illuminate a very human need to impose structure through the construction of physical buildings, social institutions, and literary narratives, which then become frames through which humans perceive and make sense of their experiences.

The word "structure" is the foundation of this study: it is a word with multiple applications across disciplines, and with changing and sometimes contradictory definitions, making it a fascinating but potentially unstable ground to build upon. Therefore, I begin by delineating the three primary types or uses of structure that my project focuses on; my overarching premise is that putting these three types of structure in conversation with each other yields productive readings of the work the novels perform. First, the starting point for each of the following chapters is an examination of *architectural* structures—the physical buildings and spaces that narrators describe and

characters see, touch, and inhabit. The novels describe buildings as having material presence, with physical characteristics that signify for characters and readers. We can interpret meaning in a building's style of construction, choice of materials, and proximity to other buildings, which makes these architectural structures potentially readable texts. Secondly, I am interested in the way each of these novels reflects and reenacts *social* structures, including the formal and informal institutions, communities, and families that shape the characters' interactions with each other. With a variety of approaches, these novels all interrogate the processes through which individuals integrate into and disassociate from larger groups. Finally, my project is concerned with *narrative* structures, or the formal devices that novels deploy in order to effectively tell their stories. Much like an architect builds a physical structure, a novel builds a narrative structure by carefully arranging patterns, sequences, proportions, and perspectives.

Furthermore, in my study these three applications of structure—architectural, social, and narrative—are thematically and formally significant. At the level of theme, the conceptual language of architectural structure resonates with the exploration of social systems that is so important in Dickens's, Eliot's, and Hardy's work. There is also thematic significance in the reciprocally constitutive relationship of social and narrative structures—the way societies produce stories, and the way stories give societies a sense of meaning. At the formal level, examining a description of a physical building reveals a novel's self-reflexive consideration of the narratives it constructs; it draws our attention to the active process of building a narrative. This invites us to interrogate how the building materials of narrative become meaningful, what the narrative structure can accommodate and what it excludes, and how structuring a narrative situates it in time.

Although each chapter takes a very different focus, several important strands emerge throughout the project. First, for the Victorian realists in this study, the novel is a space for examining the interconnectedness of social relationships; the descriptions of buildings in their work reflect a concern with how these relationships are constructed and maintained. Beginning at least with Ian Watt's assertion in his seminal 1957 study *The Rise of the Novel* that the rise of domestic space and the individual subject found expression through the novel form, to Nancy Armstrong's and Mary Poovey's revisions of this relationship, scholars have tended to focus on the creation of the individual as expressed in or produced by private spaces and novelistic structure. For example, a recent study by Victoria Rosner specifically investigates the parallels of individual interiority to interior domestic spaces in early 20th-century modernist novels. However, my project follows John Bender in thinking of buildings and novels as "cultural systems" (Bender 22).[1] Therefore, my own goal is to shift our attention from the novel's portrayal of the relationship between the interior environment and the individual to the productive interaction of architectural, social, and narrative structures.

Widening the focus from the interiors of buildings to also include the outside and especially the walls in-between creates a critical framework particularly appropriate for analyzing the interconnected social relationships of such concern to the Victorian authors in this study. First, buildings function as particular cultural systems where people live, work, and interact. Besides socially-regulated family relationships within domestic spaces, the novels portray the interactions of landlords, tenants, and rent collectors, of

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[1] Another recent useful model is *Corridor* (2013) by Kate Marshall, which uses connecting spaces such as sewers, hallways, and air ducts to analyze concepts of infrastructure in modernist American literature.

prisoners, jailors, and prison visitors, and of all manner of workers and craftsmen responsible for maintaining physical structures, including plasterers, carpenters, and stonemasons. The buildings themselves also emphasize their own insideness and outsideness, demonstrating that literal and figurative walls define and sustain a community's identity—those inside the walls of the Poyser home in *Adam Bede*, or the debtor's prison in *Little Dorrit*, or a Christminster college in *Jude the Obscure* are part of a community, while those outside are excluded. Finally, these novels use architectural structures as figurative imagery to evoke the structural organization of institutions and communities. Office buildings or churches can be figures for the institutions they house, and often the physical layout of these buildings is a spatialized representation of the institution's functioning, as with the labyrinthine halls of the inefficient Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*, or the towering spires of the hierarchical university system in *Jude*. The individual parts of a building can also stand for the members of a family or social group, highlighting the interrelationship of the parts to the whole.

Moreover, the homology of architectural and social structures extends beyond this kind of static spatial and figurative correspondence, to the important thematic and formal parallels of their temporal processes. Raymond Williams points out in *Keywords* (1983) that "in its earliest English uses… structure was primarily a noun of process: the action of building" (Williams 301); I want to recover this temporal usage in my analysis. At first, this may be counterintuitive because architecture would seem to be the most static of art forms. Thematically, as the description of the Everdene barn in *Far from the Madding Crowd* suggests, a building may epitomize permanence and continuity; even more importantly, the structural integrity of a building fundamentally depends upon its physical

stability. However, recent studies in architectural history have begun to challenge this understanding. For example, Brian Hanson's history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture points out that most historical accounts "tend to be preoccupied with static formal attributes at the expense of dynamic processes" (Hanson 4), which misses "any acknowledgement of the body politic as it is represented in building culture, which in the act of embodying the architect's and planner's vision, does manage to impose something of itself on the city's stones" (Hanson 5).[2] Hanson's approach argues that the "formal attributes" of a work of architecture embody a whole apparatus of political, economic, and social procedures that act together to produce a building. Iain Borden further argues that acknowledging the production processes is not sufficient, pointing out that more recently,

> a new strand of architectural history has been emerging, one that… sees architecture as a dynamic entity that continues to have life and importance long after the material object has been constructed…sees the building as having a social, political, cultural, and environmental relevance that stretches far beyond the building's original conception and construction, and extends into decades or even centuries of prolonged existence.
> (Borden x)

In fact, these "new" approaches to architectural history revive a dominant strand in nineteenth-century architectural discourse, and also reflect architecture's functions in the novels under consideration here. First, the buildings in these novels display material changes through time from the natural forces of weather and gravity, or the human impact of use and restoration. Furthermore, because the scale of a building is larger than that of the human body, a complete view of even the smallest cottage requires a temporal

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[2] Hanson further argues that this focus on the static formal aspects of architecture predominates even in the "revisionist commentaries of Michel Foucault and those inspired by his method" (Hanson 5).

process of moving around and through. Finally, temporal processes are at work in all the ways characters from each of these novels actively repurpose and recreate their physical environments in their everyday interactions—putting old buildings to different uses and even pulling down stones from one structure to build something new.[3]

As Hanson's and Borden's approaches emphasize, understanding buildings as structures in flux contextualizes them within a larger system of social relationships; furthermore, these social structures are also always in a state of temporal process that parallels that of the architectural structures. In other words, while social hierarchies and institutions may often appear rigidly fixed, like an architectural structure a social structure is always in process. In these novels, temporal incongruities, such as different ways of experiencing time, conflicts between traditional and modern ways of life, and "survivals" of older customs emphasize the temporality of social configurations.[4]

Most importantly, the spatial and temporal parallels between architectural and social structures that I have been laying out here extend to narrative structures as well; novels are also formal spaces with many of the same structural features of architecture. A novel's narrative encloses and excludes, and displays layers of time, which has implications for the way it reveals and occludes meaning. As with architecture, narrative structures bear witness to their own existence through time, and the meanings that these narrative structures produce are always in flux. Thus, the approach that I outline here asks us to read the Victorian realist novel not as a static reflection of a stable social system,

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[3] See, for example, Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991/ 1974), where Lefebvre argues that not only is space socially constructed, but that this construction is an ongoing process.

[4] My use of "survivals" comes from E.B. Tylor's concept in *Primitive Culture* (1871). See this dissertation's chapter 4 on *The Mayor of Casterbridge* for more discussion of this idea.

but as a dynamic reenactment of structuring forces, self-consciously committed to

revealing the processes through which those structures are constructed and maintained.

Moreover, noticing these processes allows us to recognize that these novels use their

formal narrative structures to actively intervene in the world around them by critiquing

existing structures and imagining new structural possibilities.

Historical Context

Analyzing the interconnected relationship of architectural, social, and narrative

structures could undoubtedly be productive in studies of any literary period; the centrality

of home and work spaces to the daily life of any era ensures that descriptions of

architecture in literature would always have interpretive value. However, I am arguing

that historically-situated concepts of architecture and structure are useful for unpacking

the particular epistemology of Victorian social and narrative practices. First, due to

factors such as a rapidly urbanizing physical environment, increased mobility through the

construction of the railways, and a nostalgic fascination with gothic architecture and

other antiquities, architecture was a potent signifier of progress, identity, social injustice,

and history in nineteenth-century Britain. For example, social reformers used descriptions

of overcrowded, poorly-ventilated, unsanitary houses and factories to great emotional

effect, while the "home" as a physical space and a conceptual category helped reinforce

class divisions and gender roles.[5]

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[5] One of the most vivid examples of the use of architectural space in social reform writing is Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845/ 1887 trans.), which devotes a great deal of its description to the spatial layout of houses and factories in factory cities, emphasizing their overcrowding, poor ventilation, and unsanitary conditions. For a recent examination of gender and domestic space, see Andrea Tange's

By the mid-nineteenth century, the discussion of architecture had currency across a variety of professional and scholarly disciplines, as well as in the popular culture. As Carol Flores points out, this was a period of "unprecedented public and private demand. The expansion of industry and trade, and dramatic changes in social conditions, required new types of buildings at a larger scale" (Flores 12).[6] Builders scrambled to meet the needs of industrialization, burgeoning cities, and a rising middle class.

The role of the architect also changed during this period, as the "eighteenth-century gentleman-architect, serving an enlightened aristocratic patron, was disappearing, replaced by the businessman-designer";[7] as a result, the period saw the founding of new architectural organizations including the Architectural Association (AA) in 1831, which focused on better systems for training architects, and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1834, which focused on increasing professionalization and status (Flores 12). By the end of the century the profession had shifted once again, as increasingly specialized civil and structural engineers assumed much of the responsibility for designing public spaces.

Architecture also fired the public's imagination for its aesthetic interest: any grand tour of the continent would include stops at every important cathedral and ancient

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recent study *Architectural Identities: Domesticity, Literature, and the Victorian Middle Class* (2010) which looks at each room in the Victorian home as sites of gender-based power struggles.

[6] See also, Hanson, for a thorough history of nineteenth-century architectural developments and practices.

[7] Both Dickens and Hardy wrote novels featuring architects experiencing this shift. Mr. Pecksniff from Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) epitomizes the corrupt patronage system that predated the professional era, and Hardy's George Somerset from *A Laodician* (1881) represents the new breed of young architect with professional skills and knowledge, clashing with less competent local architects.

ruin, and modern architectural spectacles such as the Crystal Palace, constructed for the

Great Exhibition of 1851, set off endless debates about architectural style and function.[8]

In 1851, *English Review* describes a fashionable interest in architecture, claiming that

civilized people everywhere are

> eager for a new intellectual pleasure…. One of the last and most
> fashionable is the study of architecture…. It has grown up in a few years
> from one of the most meagre and technical of all studies, to be a pursuit
> full of interest and variety. It has taken life and form, and colour. It has
> spread its roots and its branches every where [sic]. Besides its obvious
> connexion [sic] with utility and with beauty, it has its own history and its
> own system of metaphysics. It has been twisted into connection with the
> religious controversies of the day. It penetrates every where [sic]. (*English
> Review* 55)

As a topic of intellectual and aesthetic conversation, as a focus for religious, historical,

and social debate, and as a subject of practical concern for meeting the needs of an

urbanizing population, architecture pervaded public discourse and popular imagination

alike.

There was also an increasing concern for the best way to preserve the crumbling

architectural relics of previous eras; according to Benjamin Cannon, over the course of

the nineteenth century "England engaged in a massive project of architectural

restoration…between 1840 and 1873, 7,144 churches were restored, with fully half of

England's medieval churches affected" (Cannon 201). This intense push to restore fragile

churches created backlash leading to the founding of the Society for the Protection of

Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877; members such as prominent art critic John Ruskin

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[8] *Little Dorrit* depicts the Dorrit family's grand tour of Italy and Switzerland and the
architecture they encounter. See Rachel Teulkosky's *The Literate Eye* (2009) for a
thorough examination of the writings about architecture (and art more generally) in the
Victorian era.

and artist William Morris protested against often incompetent and inaccurate restoration practices, and sought to preserve the original structures and materials.[9]

The realist novels of the period take up these various architectural conversations directly in, for example, their depictions of daily life in the home and workplace, and indirectly in their examinations of social upheaval. The rapid pace of building, especially in cities, reflects new ways of structuring society, while the debate over preservation or restoration of churches demonstrates anxiety about remaining connected with the past. Contemporary novels use their descriptions of architecture to capture this tension between dramatic social restructuring and a conservative impulse to remember and maintain the world as it has been.

Thus, architecture is a powerful interpretive lens through which to examine a whole of host of social, economic, and political changes in nineteenth-century England. However, architectural discourse is just part of the story—it is a manifestation of a larger epistemological shift in ways of understanding structure. During this particular period, concepts of structure emerge and evolve; other manifestations include radical changes in the organizing principals of the social and natural sciences. For example, Marx uses structural concepts to reimagine social, economic, and political interactions, while Darwin's theory of evolution undermines existing taxonomic systems. This period also sees the development of structural thinking in social sciences such as statistics and demography. Such developments set the stage for concepts of structure and structuralism to continue to branch out in disciplines ranging from anthropology, linguistics, and

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[9] Thomas Hardy worked as an architect before turning to writing; much of his work was in restoring churches. He was also a member of SPAB, and spoke out against restoration practices.

literary theory to physics and computer sciences in the twentieth century. Williams claims that "we need to know this history" of the development of structure as a concept in the nineteenth century "if we are to understand the important and difficult development of *structural* and later *structuralist* as defining terms in the human sciences, notably linguistics and anthropology" (Williams 303). In other words, nineteenth-century discourse of and about structure was crucial to the development of concepts of structure that we still rely on today.

In particular, our thinking about the way a delineated structure produces meaning (both the structuralist assumption that it does, and the post-structuralist rejection of this assumption) begins to emerge through Victorian intellectual and popular discourses. For my purposes, one of the most important concepts of structure emerging in this period comes from the development of theories of culture as structure, most prominently articulated in E.B. Tylor's foundational *Primitive Culture* (1871). Tylor famously defines culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capability and habit acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1). The related fields of linguistic and anthropological structuralism that followed Tylor's work in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries develop the idea that all behaviors and customs within a discrete group are meaningful manifestations of culture.[10]

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[10] Tylor's theory of culture is different from later functionalist theories of culture that also understand culture as an integrated whole; whereas Tylor's version thinks of culture as a structure that all societies experience through different stages of evolutionary development, functionalists posit that different cultures develop their own particularized systems. But while these two schools of anthropology were opposed to each other in the early twentieth century, in the nineteenth century the distinction between structure/ structural and function/ functional is less clear. According to Williams, there was a "traditional distinction in biology between *function* (performance) and *structure* (organization) itself emphasized in sociology by Spencer" but, at the same time, "early

In the novels in my study, the various descriptions of architecture emphasize this sense of

producing meaningfulness within an interconnected social system. My analogy of

architectural and social structures anachronistically applies this understanding of culture

to the earlier writers in this study; however, Christopher Herbert traces the conversation

that leads to the emergence of the "culture concept," and argues that Tylor's famous

definition of culture consolidates a set of ideas that had been circulating throughout

various social, religious, economic, political, and literary discourses throughout the early

and mid-nineteenth century. The descriptions of architecture in all of these novels are one

such kind of discourse—architectural language provides a conceptual vocabulary for

concretizing social relationships in spatial terms. And while neither Dickens nor Eliot

would have used the word "culture" quite as Tylor does to describe a "complex whole"

(Tylor 1) of behaviors and social interactions, their work does reflect an emerging

assumption that these various constituent parts exist in an integrated structural

relationship to each other. By the later part of the century, the engagement with the

concept was direct; Hardy's novels are directly influenced by his familiarity with Tylor's

theory of culture.

Furthermore, as James Buzard claims, the new paradigms for understanding

cultural structure that emerge in the nineteenth century become templates for

developments in novel form in the ways it reproduces, reflects, and reenacts the

hierarchies of personal and institutional relationships, the rhythms of daily interactions,

and the epistemology of social practices. Buzard argues that the development of narrative

strategies that give the nineteenth-century novel its sense of insideness and outsideness

structuralist linguistics and *functionalist* anthropology shared an emphasis on studying a
particular organization, a language or a culture in its own terms" (Williams 304).

parallels the discourse of insideness and outsideness that culminates in Tylor's definition of culture as a "complex whole;" in fact, the nineteenth-century emergence of a particular novel form and a particular cultural theory are not merely contemporary but develop in conversation with each other. [11] Thus, in each of these novels, the narrative form delineates discrete social systems within which meaning is produced.

But while these novels clearly reflect an understanding of culture as an integrated social system, and reproduce this space within the narrative itself, it is important to recognize that the novels also challenge this understanding and expose its limitations. They use their own narrative structures to demonstrate the porousness of social and narrative spaces and the instability of the meanings produced within them; for example, in *Little Dorrit*, the impossibility of enclosing homogeneous groups within clearly-defined spaces parallels its incapacity to coherently contain multiple voices and experiences with its narrative boundaries. Furthermore, by reenacting the processes of constructing social structures through their narratives, these novels reveal the subjectivity and instability of these structures. This is particularly true in *Adam Bede*, which demonstrates that the structures that shape perception and experience—for the characters and the readers—are never fixed. Finally, these novels all remind us that the meanings produced within the "inside" space of a social system or a narrative will inevitably change with time; Hardy's *Mayor* and *Jude* are especially concerned with understanding the effects of time on social and narrative structures.

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[11] For example, Buzard points to the ubiquitous omniscient third-person narrator of the Victorian novel—the idea that a narrator can stand "outside" of the novel emphasizes a sense of an "inside" where every character and event is a manifestation of an integrated, bounded narrative space, much like the bounded cultural space that Tylor's theory assumes.

"… All Men are Builders, Whom Every Hour Sees Laying the Stubble or the Stone":

A Ruskinian Methodology

The choices an architect makes about ornaments and materials, the way a building integrates the surrounding environment, and the way its proportions compare to a human scale, all constitute a kind of language; moreover, the way people interact with, in, and around built spaces suggests it is a dynamic and evolving language. To translate the Victorian understanding of this language, I rely on preeminent Victorian art and social critic John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849); this architectural treatise serves as my project's master key to interpreting the historically-situated architectural language of the novels under investigation. Because Ruskin's writings pervaded mid-century artistic discourse, and because he turned his critical gaze on such a wide range of the mid-nineteenth century's most important aesthetic, philosophical, and ethical concerns, his work provides an invaluable bridge between the physical, social, and narrative structures in these novels.

Ruskin's introduction to *Seven Lamps* argues that there are parallels between the principles he outlines for architecture and those that guide all artistic endeavors:

> there is no branch of human work whose constant laws have not close
> analogy with those which govern every other mode of man's exertion.
> But, more than this, exactly as we reduce to greater simplicity and surety
> any one group of these practical laws, we shall find them passing the mere
> condition of connection or analogy, and becoming the actual expression of
> some ultimate nerve or fibre of the mighty laws which govern the moral
> world… the truth, decision, and temperance, which we reverently regard
> as honourable conditions of the spiritual being, have a representative or
> derivative influence over the works of the hand, the movements of the
> frame, and the action of the intellect. (4-5)

More than just embodying analogous principles, each form of art finds its own way of expressing inherent "laws" that are deeply embedded in the best part of our human nature. Ruskin's sense of the universality of artistic principles makes his work ideal for this cross-pollination of architecture and literature.

Ruskin's writings about architecture are uniquely capable of translating the particular details of a work of architecture into a broader understanding of the nature of art and society. As Eliot claims in her review of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, "it is obvious that [Ruskin] will have a great deal to say which is of interest and importance to others besides painters" ("Modern Painters" 247-8).[12] There are numerous points of intersection between Ruskin's sensibilities and those of Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy, including a realist aesthetic, a concern for the relationship of art and social justice, and a keen sense of the connectedness of the material world and the world of ideas.

Furthermore, although critics often accused Ruskin of conflating moral and aesthetic principles, *Seven Lamps* does much more than make grand pronouncements about the nature of art and society; each of the chapters uses descriptions and sketches of minute architectural details to demonstrate the general principle under investigation.[13] Ruskin's careful eye never misses the pointedness of an arch, the angle of a shadow, or the depth of a carving, and each of these details has significance for whether a building

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[12] Eliot wrote this in her capacity as an editor and reviewer for the *Westminster Review*. This is the most sustained written response to Ruskin available from the three novelists in this study. As a former architect, Hardy was familiar with Ruskin's architectural writings, and, as Bullen points out, although "Hardy rarely mentions Ruskin by name,… his literary notes show that, during his life, he frequently turned to Ruskin's views on the nature of perception, or his ideas about verisimilitude in painting and literature" (Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* 23).

[13] See Ray Haslam, "'For the sake of the subject': Ruskin and the tradition of architectural illustration" in *The lamp of memory: Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture* (1992) for a fascinating look at Ruskin's architectural sketches and plates.

succeeds or fails to embody the larger ideal. For Ruskin, a work of architecture is a legible text, and each angle or curve is a telling detail—just as each custom or habit is a telling detail in an integrated cultural system, and each particular of character or setting is a telling detail in a realist novel.

Ruskin's interpretive processes also provide a model of reading the relationship of architectural, social, and narrative structures I examine in this project. Eliot highlights Ruskin's ability to communicate the deep level of connection between the "artistic products of a particular age" and the "mental attitude and external life of that age" (248). Ruskin construes the social conditions of production in a work of architecture; for example, his attraction to gothic architecture is largely due to "his idealized vision of generations of men, working in unity, freely sacrificing themselves for an inspired common goal" (Garrigan 175). In each gothic cathedral, Ruskin infers an entire system of highly-trained craftsmen, each working with enough freedom to add individual creative touches—much preferable to the increasingly mechanized, standardized work of his own time. Moreover, these social conditions produced open, irregular work that more accurately reflected his understanding of imperfect humankind's relationship with a perfect God. Thus, for Ruskin, the particular elements of gothic design, including asymmetrical ornamentation and construction encode political, religious, and moral values.

Ruskin's articulation of the interconnectedness of aesthetic, social, and moral values is crucial to my historically-situated reading of architecture in this project. Architectural structures in these novels have thematic and formal resonances; one of the challenges of my analysis is to carefully delineate each strand. However, ultimately, these

strands must come back together again—the formal structure a novel takes has thematic

significance. What Ruskin understands so well, and what makes him so useful for this

study, is that formal structure is never devoid of social context or moral implication. Just

as these novels thematically explore the significance of the structures that shape

perception and experience, they also reflect an understanding of the moral consequences

of formal structures. Therefore, their structural choices both critique the limitations,

dysfunctions, and deceptions of structure itself, and also imagine alternative possibilities.

Ruskin's goal in *Seven Lamps* is to guide the architects of his own time toward

the best artistic principles; he derives his title from religious imagery of lighting the way

down the proper path.[14] These particular values offer a helpful conceptual vocabulary and

framework for interpreting the interplay of architectural, social, and narrative structures

in the four novels I focus on here. Each of the chapters in *Seven Lamps* is devoted to a

specific "lamp" or guiding principle: Ruskin calls these principles the lamps of sacrifice,

truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience; each of these lamps outlines a

different focus for reading the way architectural structures signify in various social,

aesthetic, historical, moral, and personal contexts. My strategy is to align several of these

individual lamps with individual novels, thereby highlighting the specific thematic notes

that resonate most clearly in each. I read *Little Dorrit* with "The Lamp of Obedience,"

because both are concerned with the paradoxical relationship of freedom and obedience,

and the physical, institutional, and fictional walls that may produce or conceal meaning

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[14] Ruskin gives two footnotes that explain the title: "The Law is light" (Ruskin's footnote 4), from Proverbs 6:23: "For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life" (King James Authorized Version, Cambridge); "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, (Ruskin's footnote 4), from Psalms 119:105 "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (King James Authorized Version, Cambridge).

and knowledge. *Adam Bede,* like Ruskin's two related chapters, "The Lamp of Power" and "The Lamp of Beauty," is interested in the ongoing construction of experience and the temporal processes that enable connections and change. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and "The Lamp of Memory" question the possibility of generational continuity and legible history. Finally, *Jude the Obscure* and "The Lamp of Life" take up the challenges of adapting traditional structures during a moment of transition.[15]

I find great interpretive value in using a different lamp to explore the thematic significance of architecture in each novel; more importantly, however, this framework helps demonstrate the specific formal structural tensions that each of these novels enacts. Again, *Seven Lamps* provides a useful model: Ruskin writes his treatise because he has grave concern for the impact of modern social and technological change on architecture. In his introduction he warns that the relationship of "technical and imaginative elements" in architectural design is increasingly becoming out of balance; as building becomes more reliant on technology and modern materials, the aesthetic qualities he values are "evidently inapplicable to the new forms and functions of the art, which the necessities of the day demand" (3). Moreover, these "necessities":

> …rise, strange and impatient, out of every modern shadow of change….There is no law, no principle, based on past practice, which may not be overthrown in a moment, by the arising of a new condition, or the invention of a new material; and the most rational… mode of averting the danger of an utter dissolution of all that is systematic and consistent in our practice, or of ancient authority in our judgment, is to cease…our endeavours [sic] to deal with the multiplying host of particular abuses,

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[15] Incidentally, my chapters are not arranged according to Ruskin's chapter order for his lamps. He makes clear in his introduction that "[b]oth arrangement and nomenclature [of the lamps] are those of convenience rather than of system; the one is arbitrary and the other illogical: nor is it pretended that all, or even the greater number of, the principles necessary to the well being of the art, are included in the inquiry" (4).

restraints, or requirements; and endeavor [sic] to determine… some
constant, general, and irrefragable laws of right. (3)

Ruskin is arguing that the demands of technology and engineering are leaving no place

for communal or temporal continuity in architectural design, because the faster the world

changes, the less possible it becomes to construct architecture according to socially-

accepted practices or traditional authority. Ruskin proposes here that the solution is to

shift focus from the particular artistic "abuses" that are merely symptomatic of the

problem, and instead to delineate the absolute, unchangeable principles that enable

architectural artistry to flourish. This not only describes his rationale for writing *Seven

Lamps*, but also its structural tensions; each chapter works to fix architectural and social

meaningfulness against the momentum of traditional and communal structures in flux. By

identifying and stabilizing the aesthetic laws that are based on the "unchangeableness" of

"man's nature" (3), Ruskin believes he can define a field of knowledge that is impervious

to changing materials, techniques, and social values.

Moreover, this structural tension in *Seven Lamps*—this push to define

unchangeable laws across a community and across time—is also a model of the central

tension under investigation in each of these four novels. I am arguing that when these

novels deploy their unique narrative capabilities, it demonstrates an ongoing process of

construction—a constant tension produced by fixing meanings against a shifting, moving

field. These four novels represent four possible formal strategies for reenacting that

tension. Therefore, I have paired the novels according to the ways each conceptualizes

structures as momentum that works against opposing stabilizing forces: *Little Dorrit* is

centrifugal and *Adam Bede* is centripetal; *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is accretive while

Jude the Obscure is dissolutive.

The first part of the project looks at novels by Dickens and Eliot that are roughly contemporaneous with *Seven Lamps* and engaged in similar issues of realism and social responsibility. One of the important ways that both *Little Dorrit* and *Adam Bede* take up these issues is through their explorations of the limitations of surface descriptions and reflections through the structural forces I describe above.[16] The formal structures of each novel suggest that in order to engage with the real and create social change, it is not sufficient to describe the surface; instead, they must strategically reenact a sense of structure in process. *Little Dorrit* crowds the surface with seemingly endless array of details; J. Hillis Miller argues that "[Dickens] sought an ever closer approach to the truth hidden behind the surface appearance of things….not so much by going behind the surface as by giving an exhaustive inventory of the surface itself" (Miller, *The World* xvi). In Chapter 2, I argue instead that Dickens's "exhaustive inventory" of surface details in *Little Dorrit* creates the centrifugal force that the enclosing walls of narrative work to contain.[17] "The Lamp of Obedience" uses the imagery of enclosing walls to argue for the necessity of clearly delineated aesthetic laws—expression can only be meaningful within established boundaries. The narrative structure of *Little Dorrit* pushes against those boundaries, and exposes their gaps.

At stake for both Ruskin and Dickens are questions of how to collectively construct a culture within which knowledge and cohesion is possible, while still

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[16] According to Williams, by the late nineteenth century "there was a conventional distinction between *structural* and *decorative*, which reinforced the sense of an internal framework or process" (Williams 302).

[17] *Little Dorrit* emphasizes the limitations of the surface through the satirical character, Mrs. General, whose sole purpose is to instruct Fanny and Amy in the "formation of a surface" (470).

preserving the possibility of free and creative expression. While both writers employ the language and imagery of submission and imprisonment, they ultimately emphasize not only the potential repression of cultural structures, but also the communal agency and responsibility involved in choosing how to build a work of architecture or a social institution. Herbert provides a useful context for this discussion, arguing that the discourse of culture as a defining structure arose in the nineteenth century in response to fears of chaos and anomie. The paradoxes of freedom and obedience that frame "The Lamp of Obedience" and *Little Dorrit* are in keeping with this larger conversation.

  Little Dorrit uses images of walls and enclosed spaces to demonstrate a number of related paradoxes; first, architectural structures, and the social structures they represent, can be fragile, corrupt, and precariously propped up, but they can also be oppressive literal and figurative prison walls, deterministically affecting the people within them. In addition, walls and borders may delineate families, debtors, workers, or even countrymen—walls help characters and readers to distinguish among all these different groups—but these boundaries are often less stable and definitive than they initially appear. Furthermore, communities produce common knowledge within walls—those enclosed within the walls of the debtor's prison or a family home may work toward a common purpose and follow unspoken procedures—but this sense of collective understanding, or what narratologist Alan Palmer calls the "intermental mind," can also defer or disguise important knowledge. Finally, characters find meaning within these walls—as Mr. Dorrit does in his role as "father" of the Marshalsea debtor's prison—but these meanings are often carefully constructed fictions that conceal as much as they reveal. The novel does not set out to resolve these tensions, but rather to expose and enact

strategies of containment; the process of constructing walls to define knowledge and meaning against a continually expanding field is both an important thematic thread and a model of the novel's narrative structure.

Just as characters continually construct fictional structures through which they attempt to define meaning and knowledge, *Little Dorrit* uses plot as limiting device that attempts to contain the ever-expanding centrifugal push of incongruous perspectives and stories. But despite using plot as a wall to contain the centrifugal force, the narrative structure cannot ultimately accommodate the multiplicity of experience; the fact that not all the versions of the story can fit together creates cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, the novel draws attention to the arbitrariness of its narrative boundaries, so that the beginning and ending that enclose the narrative seem as porous as the walls of the debtor's prison or the borders of a nation.

In this way, the structure of *Little Dorrit* critiques existing social structures by emphasizing its discordant narrative strands, and the impossibility of containing them coherently within the boundaries of the text. This narrative structure reminds us that the only way the social structure it reflects makes sense is if its individuals deliberately choose not to see its moral incongruities. At the same time, the novel explores more flexible structural possibilities—for individuals connecting in social systems and for open, but still meaningful, narrative patterns.

In contrast to *Little Dorrit's* centrifugal push, *Adam Bede's* structure is centripetal (like the mollusk Eliot describes, drawing in water from its surroundings to construct its shell); it draws from the outside, first by reaching backwards to the past and forwards to the future to construct the present, and secondly, by counteracting the force of the

extraordinary moments that pull characters and readers outside of the structured routines with a centripetal pattern of return to the interior spaces of ordinary time. This centripetal process reveals the limitations of a temporal "surface." The narrator famously pauses the story in chapter 17 in order to consider the "doubtless[ly] defective" (238) power of the flat surface of a mirror to reflect the real; in Chapter 3 I argue that the mirror's most important defect is its incapacity to reflect temporal processes. *Adam Bede* is interested in constructing a narrative that can go beyond an immediate surface reflection, and instead enact a present moment that pulls in the past and the future. "The Lamp of Power" and "The Lamp of Beauty" provide a model for this narrative structure by describing artistic creation as a process of gathering and governing—the centripetal processes of pulling in the outside world, from building materials, to sunshine and shade.

Adam Bede explicitly invites us to evaluate the realism of its representation of characters, communities, and situations; just as importantly, the novel deploys architectural descriptions to signal that its own construction reproduces the lived experience of moving through the present, remembering the past, and anticipating the future. Homes, workshops, churches, and courtrooms tell stories about the passage of time, the experience of everyday life, and the ongoing construction of perception. For example, descriptions of buildings demonstrate it is impossible to see an entire house without taking time to move around and through it, which parallels the crucial thematic principle that it is impossible to understand an isolated present moment without contextualizing it with memories of the past and anticipation for the future. Moreover, because the narrative uses overlapping timeframes to gradually reveal information, this lesson applies to readers as well as to characters.

The architectural descriptions also emphasize the novel's use of competing chronotopes, especially the contrast of a repeating pattern of everyday, ordinary time with more extraordinary experiences; my analysis of this contrast draws on Frederic Jameson's explanation of realism's temporal antinomies, especially what he calls the antinomy of destiny and the eternal present, and the antinomy of narrative impulse and affect. Houses and workshops provide spaces that literally structure daily routines and also figuratively represent daily experience. The more extraordinary events and changes—the kind that make up a plot—pull people out of their homes and out of ordinary time. The contrast demonstrates Eliot's and Ruskin's concern with whether ordinary or extraordinary experience is the more effective way to connect with a viewer or reader.

The second half of the dissertation shifts from the mid-century novels of Dickens and Eliot to two of Hardy's works from the latter part of the nineteenth century. At the distance of a generation removed from the publication of *Seven Lamps* and from the height of Victorian realism, Hardy's novels reflect an ongoing reconsideration of Ruskin's assumptions about architecture and the ideals of realism.[18] Undoubtedly due to his early training and professional work as an architect, Hardy's fiction displays a particularly materialist sensibility that has much in common with Ruskin's writings; specifically, they share an acute awareness of the tangible, material processes that mark out the lifespan of a building. Both draw our attention to gradual changes in buildings we

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[18] This reconsideration of Ruskin had mixed results: while many of his ideas fell out of favor, some of his concerns about restoration and technology would grow somewhat more influential with time as they were taken up by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. See Garrigan's chapter "Relevance of Ruskin's Architectural Thought" for a description of Ruskin's ambiguous legacy in the late-nineteenth century.

might otherwise miss: the accumulation of grime, the slow spread of fungi, the bleaching effects of sunlight, the settling of walls, and the wearing away of surfaces from friction. More importantly, both guide our understanding of the significance of these changes to memory, history, and renewal. J. B. Bullen draws comparisons between the two, claiming

> [t]he 'unconscious' Hardy is the watcher, the observer, the recorder of impressions. In this he somewhat resembles Ruskin, who was for ever [sic] attempting to reconcile reason and visual imagination … As for Ruskin before him, visual effects were imbued with a life independent of specific meaning, and [Hardy's] notebooks and diaries are filled with observations of such effects" (Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* 4).

In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*, buildings show the passage of time by accumulating layers of dust or by crumbling away and dissolving into nothingness; moreover, these opposing forces of accretion and dissolution reflect the structural processes at work in each novel.

In Chapter 4, "The Lamp of Memory's" faith in architecture's potential to keep the past alive from one generation to the next provides a useful frame for reading Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a novel where the past pervades the present, in the form of architectural ruins of older civilizations, and individual histories that cannot be repaired. Ruskin's "The Lamp of Memory" passionately argues for the value of architecture as a repository of cultural memory, and just as vehemently against the architectural restoration practices that were common at the time. Ruskin argues that restoring decaying churches and other old structures ultimately destroys them, because restoration scrapes away the physical accretions of weather and use that bear witness to the passing of time. Instead, he advocated the preservation of original materials as much as possible. This chapter contextualizes *Mayor* within the debates between restoration and preservation, and the questions about the possibility of coherent historical narrative that this debate provokes.

Ultimately, both "The Lamp of Memory" and *Mayor* emphasize the layers of mediation that accumulate in the process of remembering individual and collective pasts.

In *Mayor*, architectural ruins become what Virginia Zimmerman calls a "trace," displaying the accretions of passing time. But while these structures are fixed in the Casterbridge landscape, the meanings they produce are fragmented and only partly legible. Ruskin's assumption that buildings preserve cultural memory is challenged by the actual interaction of the community with its built environment in this novel; ancient buildings in the novel are fragments that still exert an often unexamined influence, more akin to Tylor's cultural survivals than Ruskin's coherent memories. As Andrew Radford demonstrates, Hardy uses Tylor's concept of survivals throughout his novels to highlight a sense of historical and temporal discontinuity.

There is accretion in the narrative structure as well, in the overlapping layers of pagan, classical, Norse, and Old Testament myth that permeate the story. These myths provide a structure through which to read the events, but as Roland Barthes describes, mythologizing creates a totalizing effect that disguises the incoherence and gaps of memory and the historical record. *Mayor's* fragmented, disjointed version of memory and history suggests a mistrust of what Foucault calls an "empty synthesis" (Foucault 142)—a mediated narration of the past that conceals its erasures and obfuscations.

Finally, this chapter turns to the preservation work the novel itself performs, asking whether the fictionalized Casterbridge, part of Hardy's expansive Wessex project, can preserve the collective memory of a disappearing way of life, or whether such mediation ultimately makes the past unrecognizable.

Chapter 5 reads *Jude the Obscure* in connection with "The Lamp of Life." *Jude* examines what it means to live in a moment of transition to modernity; "The Lamp of Life" takes up similar questions about producing art that can communicate life in a time of change. *Jude* enacts the opposite structural force of *Mayor*; in *Jude*, the disintegration of its physical structures, including the disappearing cottages and churches in rural Marygreen and the crumbling mediaeval stone colleges in Christminster, interrogates both the way of life of the inhabitants, and the viability of the ideas and beliefs these cities represent.

This chapter begins by examining what it means to physically live in bodies and in buildings during this period of rapid change. The way *Jude's* characters occupy and fill domestic spaces, and the way they move from one space to another portrays a world where people cannot inhabit spaces in the same ways as previous generations did, and where the dissolution of traditional homes and traditional family and economic institutions leaves characters alienated and homeless.

Even the structures that appear to be more permanent, such as the physical and institutional structures of the university city of Christminster (Hardy's fictionalized Oxford) are less stable than they initially appear; only constant restoration keeps the medieval city from rotting away. The physical state of the colleges calls into question the relevance of the educational ideals the university is supposed to represent by drawing parallels between the mindless reproduction of gothic forms for the crumbling buildings and the mechanical assembly-line production of classical scholars.

Moreover, both Ruskin and Hardy suggest that the loss of physical structures is a loss of association and connection with previous generations. "The Lamp of Life" and

Jude emphasize the sense of physical connection that comes from touching the same stones that other hands have touched; Ruskin argues that this allows inorganic stone to communicate life, and indeed, Jude feels a sense of deep connection to the famous scholars of Christminster's history when he touches the same stones they touched and breathes the same air they breathed. However, while it is clear in "The Lamp of Life" and in *Jude* that this sense of connection requires an act of imagination, *Jude* ultimately challenges the legibility of subjective reception.

Finally, as Hardy's final novel before he turned to verse drama and poetry, *Jude* questions the viability of traditional novel structures in a modern age. Hardy always claimed that the outraged response to *Jude's* frank portrayal of sexuality and marriage prompted his decision to give up writing novels, which serves as an indication of the difficulty of communicating "life" through artistic structures. However, within the novel it is also clear that the disintegration of buildings and the ideas they represent, as well as the larger disappearance of Wessex, make certain kinds of narrative structures irrelevant.

Each of these novels enacts a particular structural force, but also self-consciously reflects on the process of containing those forces by fixing meaning through a variety of strategies including naming, fictionalizing, mythologizing, preserving, and restoring. Thematically, the social work of collectively constructing traditions and stories emphasizes that communication is only possible when meaning is stable. However, my architectural readings of these novels also demonstrate their thematic suspicion of these stabilizing approaches: in *Little Dorrit*, the structures that enclose and define also conceal; *Adam Bede* demonstrates that the past, present, and future are always under construction, even as we assume they are not; in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, restoration

and mythologizing seem to offer a fullness of meaning that obscures the accumulation of incongruous, disjointed temporal layers; finally, *Jude the Obscure* offers us a world where meaningful structures can only be maintained through artificial measures or highly subjective associations. Most importantly, this thematic skepticism extends to the novels' self-reflexive examination of their own stabilizing procedures. Even as they work to tell coherent stories, they draw our attention to their discordant strands, temporal overlapping, and narrative obfuscations.

Ruskin concludes *Seven Lamps* by making a claim for its value: beyond the practical use of the specific architectural principles he lays out, he hopes that it will be worthwhile for a more general audience because he believes "… all men are Builders, whom every hour sees laying the stubble or the stone" (213). For Ruskin, "building" not only describes what all artists do, but what all humans do as well. In Dickens's, Eliot's, and Hardy's novels, we see this process in action—thematically in the reciprocal relationships between architectural and social structures, and formally in each novel's narrative strategies.

CHAPTER 2
LITTLE DORRIT AND "THE LAMP OF OBEDIENCE"
WITHIN THE WALLS: FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE IN *LITTLE DORRIT*

The most dramatic moment in Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855) surely

comes when the old Clennam house, with a "thundering sound…heaved, surged outward,

trembled asunder in fifty places, collapsed, and fell" (775). Just as dramatic as the

suspenseful and breathless series of events leading up to the collapse is the sheer audacity

of the metaphor Dickens employs. The house is closely associated with the secrets that

Mrs. Clennam has so carefully constructed; it is, as Affery says, "full of mysteries and

secrets…full of whisperings and counsellings…full of noises" (675), and Rigaud's

naming their "ravishing little family history" as "the history of this house" (754) makes

this connection explicit. The sudden collapse of this physical structure, which for years

"had been propped up…and was leaning on some half dozen gigantic crutches, which …

appeared in these latter days to be no very sure reliance" (44-5) vividly manifests the

breakdown of the domestic and institutional structures of the Clennam family and

business, and the unstable girding of lies and secrets that had propped them up for so

long. When the house's structure can no longer hold together, the house must "surge…

outward," and finally come down.

As with the Merdle financial catastrophe a few chapters earlier, the dissolution of

the Clennam house emphasizes the ominous specter of collapse that threatens the entire

social fabric represented in the world of the novel. This particular collapse comments on

the private affairs of a family while also echoing a larger warning: earlier the narrator

cautions that London's homeless children "like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on offal,

huddled together for warmth, and were hunted about" and that we should "look to the rats

… for before God they are eating away our foundations, and will bring the roofs on our heads!" (171). Similarly, the Dorrit family visits crumbling Italian palaces and barracks, described as "vast piles of building mouldering to dust," and

> showing to the mind like hosts of rats who were (happily) eating away at
> the props of the edifices that supported them, and must soon, with them,
> be smashed on the heads of the other swarms of soldiers, and the swarms
> of priests, and the swarms of spies…(460).

Corrupted structures built upon a foundation of poverty and injustice may someday soon smash the entire system. The structures that maintain the hegemony of the military, the church, and the government are vulnerable to the "rats"—the poor, neglected people who may finally push back against the walls that oppress them.

This repeated image of collapse is a visual representation of the novel's tension between walls that enclose, imprison, and define, and the forces that push against those literal and figurative boundaries. In *Little Dorrit,* the Marseilles and Marshalsea prisons, the homes of the working poor, the faded gentility, and the nouveau riche, the crumbling castles in Venice and Rome, and the institutional headquarters of the Circumlocution Office, are all physical structures that house families and institutions. Because the individuals inside the walls of these buildings speak a common language, follow a set of unspoken codes, and move with a sense of collective purpose that is often difficult to comprehend for those outside the enclosure, these buildings also represent the social structures that give these families and institutions their sense of meaning. The architecture in *Little Dorrit* is thus a thematic commentary on the physical and social walls that define experience.

The deterministic effects of physical and metaphorical prison walls have long

been the focus of critical attention for this novel.[19] My study expands that focus to the

novel's parallels between architectural and cultural structures more generally, and the

ways in which these shape the formal narrative structures the novel employs.

Architecture is an important site through which the novel works through a central

thematic paradox: do solid walls and rigid social hierarchies provide coherent systems

through which effective communication is possible or do they repress expression and

efface individual experience? Alternatively, does the absence or failure of these structures

offer freedom to construct meanings, or only anomie and incoherence? The novel is not

necessarily interested in resolving this tension; rather, it seeks to expose the centrifugal

push against enclosing walls, and the continual process of constructing walls to contain

that force. In *Little Dorrit*, walls can bind people together in a sense of shared identity

and purpose, but just as often, the novel portrays interior spaces that obscure knowledge

and nearly suffocate the inhabitants. The very sense that those within a common space

share a common understanding can mask dissenting voices. Furthermore, the walls that

ostensibly contain and delineate families, debtors, workers, or even countrymen, are often

less stable and definitive than they initially appear.

The final chapter of art critic John Ruskin's treatise *The Seven Lamps of*

Architecture (1849) offers a useful critical lens through which to examine the novel's

descriptions of architecture as representations of social institutions; "The Lamp of

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[19] See, for example, Jonathan Grossman's chapter on *Little Dorrit* in *Charles Dickens's Networks* (2012) for a summary of the long history of approaching the novel with a "carceral" reading (Grossman 155). See also *Stones of Law, Bricks of Shame: Narrating Imprisonment in the Victorian Age* (2009) (ed. Alber and Lauterbach) for more recent studies of the architectural and institutional structures of prison in Dickens's novels.

Obedience" is particularly useful because in this chapter Ruskin also takes up the paradoxical relationship between what he understands as obedience and freedom in architectural design. Ruskin's argument for obedience to a set of communal standards explicitly aims at improving the stylistic integrity of British architecture, but also encompasses the social bases of coherent architectural expression. He claims that a sense of obedience to aesthetic and social principles is important in all art, but especially so in architecture because of its uniquely collaborative process and collective function. Because architecture is the most communal of arts, both in creation and effect, it is most in need of strict laws "as minutely authoritative as the laws which regulate religion, policy, and social relations" (202). Both Dickens and Ruskin critique the ways societies construct defining boundaries—the literal and figurative walls within which coherent meaning can be produced, communicated, and received—as well as the potential instability and limitation of those boundaries.

At stake for both Ruskin and Dickens are questions of how to collectively construct a society within which knowledge and cohesion is possible, while still preserving the possibility of free and creative expression. While both writers employ the language and imagery of submission and imprisonment, they ultimately emphasize not only the potential repression of social structures, but also the communal agency and responsibility involved in choosing how to build a work of architecture or a social institution. Within their social framework, individuals and communities choose whether the walls they build will enclose or exclude—whether their walls will enable connection and understanding, or conceal what they don't want to see.

In *Little Dorrit*, the figurative walls that enclose or conceal can also come in the form of stories or fictions. Along with the importance of familiar social structures such as families, institutions, and neighborhoods, fiction itself has a special thematic function to define the boundaries of identity and meaning. Fictions can construct enclosing walls that shape social cohesiveness and continuity, or erect screens meant to obscure the truth. Mr. Dorrit's enclosure within the physical walls of the Marshalsea as well as its institutional apparatus define him as a debtor and a prisoner, but the legend of his extended stay, passed on from generation to generation of debtors, creates a meaningful hierarchy where he occupies the most important place as the "father" of the Marshalsea. Society produces the Merdles and the Barnacles, while the stories of their importance perpetuate those social structures indefinitely. The novel's individuals and communities assign meaning to their experiences through the narratives they construct: some of these narratives allow self-delusion, such as Mr. Dorrit's and Mrs. Gowan's comforting tales of their family importance; some are intended to deceive, such as Rigaud's version of his wife's death; and some, like the tale of the princess and the old woman that Amy tells Maggy, are fantastical reconstructions of painful experience.

Just as importantly, descriptions of architecture in the novel also point us to ways in which the novel reenacts and reimagines these social and fictional structures in its own narrative strategies. *Little Dorrit's* enclosed spaces—the literal insideness and outsideness of its homes, prisons, and institutions—self-reflexively comment on the narrative forms it employs. A Dickens's novel such as *Little Dorrit* masterfully holds together complex situations in sprawling settings, teeming with characters; as James Buzard describes, novels can do this by "using plot as the device for turning characters

arrayed in the mere adjacency …of textual space into participants in a common, purportedly integrated—or at least prospectively integrateable—whole" (Buzard 39). In other words, a novel's plotting is one of the structures that demonstrates and produces the interconnectedness of its characters, so that plot turns adjacency into meaningfulness. As the novel proceeds, it encompasses an ever-expanding field of characters, settings, and situations, limited only by what happens in the plot. Just as the walls of the Marseilles quarantine barracks briefly enclose a random assortment of "[t]ravelers on business, and travelers for pleasure; officers from India on leave; merchants in the Greek and Turkey trades …" (35) and a variety of families on their way from one place to another, bringing them all together for a brief moment to "meet and react on one another" (41), the narrative holds together a disparate array of people and circumstances. This suggests a useful model for understanding Dickens's complex narrative structures by thinking of plot spatially instead of linearly. Instead of visualizing the characters and situations of the novel as points along a line, we can think of them as an expanding field. The plot is the wall that encircles the field of action and defines its limits. However, this novel exposes the constructedness of plot as limiting device, ultimately undermining the assumption that a novel functions as a bounded and coherent system, and acknowledging the impossibility of containing everything within the pages of its text. The beginning and ending that mark the limits of a novel are as porous and contested as the walls of a building or the boundaries that define a culture.

In this way, the structure of novel itself becomes a biting social critique by emphasizing its discordant narrative strands, and the impossibility of containing them coherently within the boundaries of the text. The forms of the narrative remind us that the

only way the social organization it reflects makes sense is if its individuals deliberately choose not to see its moral incongruities. But while the novel offers its formal structure as critique, it also offers it as an alternative possibility, modeling more flexible uses of forms that can encompass both communally and individually produced meanings.

Forms of Obedience and Obedience to Forms: Building the Walls

In "The Lamp of Obedience," Ruskin's opposition of obedience, loyalty, and duty to freedom and liberty establishes the parameters of his discussion, but these key terms become freighted with new significance through the lens of a novel where physical, mental, and spiritual prisons are a pervasive metaphor. Both "The Lamp of Obedience" and *Little Dorrit* use the imagery of solid walls, the spaces they enclose, and the shadows they cast to reflect upon the competing values of cultural obedience and individual freedom. Ruskin advocates obedience to avoid the dangers of anomie and incoherence; *Little Dorrit,* with its collapsing buildings and financial markets, acknowledges this potential threat. At the same time, the omnipresent shadow of prison in *Little Dorrit* makes oppression seem equally menacing. *Little Dorrit* asks whether freedom exists, or whether, as Ruskin claims, "not only its attainment, but its being [is] impossible" (199). Is the "mockery and semblance" (199) of liberty that men put their faith in the source of tragic self-delusion? Given that the Marshalsea casts a long shadow, even after its inhabitants have left its walls forever, freedom does indeed seem illusory in *Little Dorrit*.

More importantly, both Ruskin and Dickens underline the slipperiness of words such as liberty and freedom. Ruskin's initial opposition of liberty and freedom to obedience gradually slides into an uneasy conflation. On the one hand, liberty is only

possible through obedience—only enclosure within a meaningful cultural structure allows the artist to be "[f]reed from the agitation and embarrassment of that liberty of choice which is the cause of half the discomforts of the world" (208). On the other hand, as the novel makes clear, freedom and liberty are not transcendently meaningful truths, but rather cultural constructs that may ultimately serve as yet another form of imprisonment.

In *Culture and Anomie* (1991), Christopher Herbert argues that the concept of culture as a framework that encloses coherent meaning arises in the nineteenth century in opposition to fears of what is eventually defined by Durkheim as "anomie": "boundless desires" or, worse, "desires for boundlessness" (Herbert 107). This was the fear that without a culturally-constructed apparatus to reinforce and restrain, "advanced" societies would become as anarchic as they believed the "primitive" societies were.[20] Although Herbert does not look at Ruskin specifically, Ruskin's insistence in this chapter that liberty and freedom are illusory and even dangerous ideas is very much of a piece with the fears of anomie that Herbert identifies. Ruskin assumes that the way to avoid cultural chaos and incoherence in architecture and society as a whole is through the deliberate sublimation of the individual to the values and rules of the larger community.

Ruskin paradoxically claims that true freedom is derived from obedience to a set structure of rules. Having too many choices, like having too much undelineated space, is a burden that hinders artistic expression. The architect who obeys the established laws

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[20]Dickens illustrates this attitude through the novel's representative of Society, Mrs. Merdle. She tells Fanny that while it is regrettable that Society is "hollow and conventional and worldly and very shocking"—and therefore not willing to countenance a marriage between the son of a rich socialite and a common dancer—they must obey it because they are not "Savages in the Tropical seas" (243).

"would find his whole understanding enlarged, his practical knowledge certain and ready

to hand, and his imagination playful and vigorous, as a child's would be within a walled

garden," while the architect without a guiding structure is like this same child "who

would sit down and shudder if he were left free in a fenceless plain" (208-9). This

comparison uses the image of a wall to make clear that the words freedom and liberty are

not as distinct from obedience and duty as it would at first appear. Ruskin argues

obedience ultimately is liberty—people who define liberty otherwise are misusing the

term.

When Ruskin associates artistic obedience with the imaginative freedom of a

child within a walled garden, it suggestively echoes Mr. Dorrit's sense of safety within

the walls of the Marshalsea prison. When the "Father of the Marshalsea" leaves the

prison walls for the first time in twenty-five years, he is indeed like Ruskin's child "left

free in a fenceless plain." This contradictory conflation of freedom, obedience, and

enclosure is emphasized early in the novel, when the doctor who delivers Amy within the

prison walls explains to Mr. Dorrit the benefits of prison life:

> We are quiet here; we don't get badgered here; there's no knocker here,
> sir, to be hammered at by creditors and bring a man's heart into his
> mouth…. Nobody writes threatening letters about money, to this place.
> It's freedom, sir, it's freedom! ... Elsewhere people are restless, worried,
> hurried about, anxious respecting one thing, anxious respecting another.
> Nothing of the kind here, sir. We have done all that—we know the worst
> of it; we have got to the bottom, we can't fall, and what have we found?
> Peace. That's the word for it. Peace. (74)

To be contained within the walls of the prison is to be free from the challenges of the

world and free from the expectations of what one's life should be like. Mr. Dorrit soon

finds it quite true that "the lock and key that kept him in, kept numbers of his troubles

out" (75). What's more, Mr. Dorrit's enclosure within the prison walls gives his life a

sense of meaning as the Father of the Marshalsea, much like Ruskin's argument that, like a child in a walled garden, the architect needs structure to create meaningful work.

However, it would be difficult to argue that Mr. Dorrit's time inside the Marshalsea gives him freedom, because imprisonment makes him "a captive with the jail-rot upon him, and the impurity of his prison worn into the grain of his soul" (232), even after he has left for good. The novel uses the image of physical, solid prison walls that enclose narrow spaces and cast dark shadows to describe how the psychic effects of prison deterministically shape his every thought and action. Even after they leave the Marshalsea forever, Amy comes to understand that "she could never see him as he used to be before the prison days … there was the well-known shadow of the Marshalsea wall. … she was not strong enough to keep off the fear that no space in the life of a man could overcome that quarter of a century behind the prison bars" (471). Her brother Tip similarly finds his world narrowed by his experiences growing up inside the Marshalsea. When he leaves as an adult, he "appeared to take the prison walls with him… and to prowl about within their narrow limits in the old slip-shod, purposeless, down-at-heel way" (86). Furthermore, it is not only the Marshalsea's walls that impose "narrow limits" on its inhabitants. Mrs. Clennam, trapped inside her home and her crippled body, has a constricting understanding of religion and retribution, and Mrs. Gowan and her poverty-stricken genteel friends distress Arthur with their conversation in which "a great nation is reduced to such little bounds" (314). The inflexibility of religious and social institutions can function like the walls of a prison, so that a restricted experience often produces a narrowed world view.

Chapter 21 has a memorable description of the gathering of England's most important political and business leaders that uses architecture to emphasize the rigidity of social structures. This comparison of members of society with the buildings that house them first draws attention to the visual similarities between rows of houses "staring" at each other across a street and rows of people staring at each other across a dinner table:

> Like unexceptionable Society, the opposing rows of houses in Harley Street were very grim with one another. Indeed, the mansions and their inhabitants were so much alike in that respect, the people were often to be found drawn up on opposite sides of the dinner-tables, in the shade of their own loftiness, staring at the other side of the way with the dullness of the houses.

The focus of this comparison quickly shifts from a physical to a more conceptual correspondence:

> Everyone knows how like the street the two dinner-rows of people who take their stand by the street will be. The expressionless uniform twenty houses, all to be knocked at and rung at in the same form, all approachable by the same dull steps, all fended off by the same pattern of railing, all with the same impracticable fire escapes, the same inconvenient fixtures in their heads, and everything without exception to be taken at a high valuation—who has not dined with these? (249-50)

This image of party guests as dull, conventional, useless, and over-valued houses effectively paints the scene for the gathering that is to follow, where the characters are so generic that they are only referred to by their occupation (i.e. "Bar," "Bishop," "Physician," etc.); it also spatially reflects the seeming impenetrability of social structures. The opposing rows of houses are so "grim" because they are locked into place across from each other; it is their "expressionless uniform" repetitive pattern that produces the oppressive "dullness." The dinner party, itself a microcosm of Society, is epitomized by the central image of guests locked in place around a dinner table, and as

with the houses, this produces a pattern of overwhelming sameness. The architectural arrangement of houses is a model for the social arrangements of a dinner party.

However, the novel's argument about the power of these deterministic spaces and rigid social organization is much more complex. The same prison walls that produce the "prison rot" moldering in Mr. Dorrit, Tip, and Fanny, also produce Amy, the "Child of the Marshalsea," who is somehow "inspired to be something which was not what the rest were… for the sake of the rest" (82). The same decrepit, crumbling home that narrows Mrs. Clennam's world view also imprisoned Arthur as a child (even to the extent that he was locked in the closet as a punishment), but he emerges as "a man who had deep-rooted in his nature, a belief in all the gentle and good things his life had been without" (170). Individual characters can and do transcend the limitations of the walls that enclose them. Moreover, the novel does not advocate escape from the imprisoning effects of modern life: the happy ending for the newly married Amy and Arthur is one in which they famously go "down into" (806) a life of duty and responsibility to their community—the kind of meaningful engagement within the bounds of cultural structures that Ruskin promotes.

So how can we interpret the complexity of the distinctions between obedience and imprisonment, and between freedom and anomie throughout the novel? For that matter, how can we also account for the fact that Ruskin's claims for the value of obedience are more nuanced than an unquestioning, unexamined following of the rules? In both cases, it is important to clarify what structures are to be obeyed, and how these structures are built up in the first place.

This may be best accomplished by looking more closely at the way both Ruskin and Dickens think about the way societies develop, use, and understand forms. For Ruskin, obedience in architecture means learning, mastering, and building upon pre-existing forms—he also uses similar words such as grammar, statute, law, and precept. At first glance, his argument seems excessively conservative: innovation is not necessary, he claims, because the "forms of architecture already known to us are good enough for us" (205), and "originality" is not something that "can ever be healthily obtained by any struggle or rebellion against common laws" (205). Not only are existing forms "good enough", he argues that all the possible forms have already been established. He claims "the chords of music, the harmonies of colour, the general principals of the arrangement of sculptural masses, have been determined long ago, and, in all probability, cannot be added to any more than they can be altered" (203). Given this premise, the architect's task is to master these forms until "our sight is once accustomed to the grammatical forms and arrangements, and our thoughts familiar with the expression of them all; … [until] we can speak this dead language naturally, and apply it to whatever ideas we have to render… to every practical purpose of life" (207). Architectural design, like all forms of artistic expression, means learning a grammar well enough to speak the language fluently, not inventing a new language.

Little Dorrit is also interested in forms— Ferdinand Barnacle reminds Clennam that the Circumlocution Office is "nothing but forms" (721), Mrs. General instructs Fanny and Amy in the "formation of a surface" (470) and in using words that give a "pretty form to the lips" (469), Mr. Casby is the very form of a patriarch, and Mrs. Clennam lives according to the forms rather than the spirit of the scripture. These

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particular forms are empty at their best and oppressive at their worst, and would therefore seem to work against the positive understanding of forms that Ruskin promotes.

However, the crucial factor in Ruskin's praise of forms is the fact that they are neither arbitrarily assigned by some ruling figure, nor are they inherent to all architecture everywhere. Instead, he envisions localized architectural and social forms, organically produced by a particular community through gradual social evolution, much the way languages develop over time. Obedience to these forms has the advantages of allowing the architect both to fully master their complexities and to communicate clearly to the rest of the community. Social cohesion and continuity come from buildings by architects who are fluent in their communal language and who endeavor to speak that language as clearly as possible. Obedience to forms ensures that meaning is possible.

Little Dorrit also acknowledges the value of forms, even while it critiques their limitations. As a small but telling example, young Mr. Sparkler, in his wooing of Fanny, unexpectedly finds himself having an "exquisitely bold and original thought" but "for want of a form of words in which to express the idea, it returned to the skies" (494). Forms make it possible to capture and pin down ideas and express them to others. Of course, Edmund Sparkler is most notable for constantly repeating that Fanny or any other woman has "no nonsense about her"—a form of praise that comes to epitomize Fanny's contempt for him. But we also have the example of young John Chivery, who demonstrates that such forms are useful when they are used with flexibility. Chivery's comic, but also poignant response to each disappointment in his attempts to win Amy's love is to articulate his disappointment through the form of an imaginary epitaph on his future gravestone. Chivery uses this form to find significance in his own experiences.

Although the formal conventions remain the same, the sentiments he expresses gradually evolve from utter despair in his first epitaph to magnanimous love by the end. Not only does this form allow him to articulate his feelings, the act of interpreting his young life from an imagined distanced perspective at its end allows him to construct a meaningful framework through which to process those feelings. When characters or institutions obey forms mechanically and mindlessly, the forms become oppressive; however, as Ruskin would also agree, when forms are used with mastery and flexibility, they become generative and productive.

Enclosed Spaces, Porous Borders: Pushing Against the Walls

Ruskin's thesis throughout *Seven Lamps* rests on the assumption that the buildings under investigation manifest the epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic values of an integrated culture—what Herbert calls the emerging idea that an "array of disparate-seeming elements of social life composes a significant whole, each factor of which is in some sense a corollary of, consubstantial with, implied by, immanent in, all the others" (Herbert 5). This sense of integration relies on some system of delineation. As Buzard describes, in an understanding of culture where everything is potentially relevant to an understanding of interconnected cultural manifestations, boundaries— insidedness and outsidedness—are necessary to limit what counts as culture and what does not. He claims that "[t]o do any work, either epistemologically or affectively, 'culture' cannot tolerate a porous border" (Buzard 32). The only way culture becomes legible is if we can figuratively draw a circle around it.

The question then becomes, if artistic and social meaning is produced and communicated through obedience to culturally constructed forms, what counts as part of that culture and what does not? In the architectural terms I've been using, what determines the wall between inside and outside? These questions are crucial to understanding the novel's use of walls as a thematic and formal structure. While the distinction between inside and outside is certainly important in the novel, the answers to these questions are ambiguous because walls and borders are very often porous and contested sites. Moreover, while boundaries delineating inside and outside can enable knowledge, they can also obscure the possibility of knowing. The novel's critique of institutions such as the debtor's prison and the government bureaucracy is embodied by the failures and concealments produced by walls, especially those of the physical Marshalsea prison and Circumlocution office.

The first description of the Marshalsea debtor's prison in Chapter 6 begins with squalid rows of barracks, "hemmed in by high walls duly spiked at top." Within this "close and confined prison for debtors" was "a much closer and more confined jail for smugglers…[who] were supposed to be incarcerated behind an iron-plated door, closing up a second prison, consisting of a strong cell or two, and a blind alley some yard and a half wide" (69). This description initially suggests that the Marshalsea's enclosing walls can define meaning; debtors are theoretically identifiable because the high and "duly spiked" walls separate them out from the rest of the population, while yet another level of enclosure within those walls distinguishes regular debtors from smugglers.

However, if we continue on with the description of the Marshalsea, we soon discover that these identifying enclosures are less stable than they initially appeared because

> the smugglers habitually consorted with the debtors, except at certain constitutional moments when somebody came from some Office, to go through some form of overlooking something…On those truly British occasions, the smugglers, if any, made a feint of walking into the strong cells and the blind alley, while this somebody pretended to do his something; and made a reality of walking out again as soon as he hadn't done it. (69)

The outer and inner walls of the Marshalsea are meant to distinguish citizens from debtors and debtors from smugglers, but in practice there is a great deal of movement across those boundaries, as visitors from the outside are free to come in and out of the prison, and most of the debtors leave eventually. Moreover, not only does the inner enclosure fail to contain the smugglers, but the distinction between debtors and smugglers only becomes significant during a ritualized social form where an outsider "somebody" walks into the enclosed space, prompting the inmates to occupy their pre-assigned areas. These spaces become meaningful when the bureaucrat's visit triggers the inmates to enact that meaning—the prison walls do not deterministically define identity; rather, obedience to social forms reinforces identity. In a typically critical and satirical tone, the description credits this social ritual with "neatly epitomizing the administration of most of the public affairs in our right little, tight little island" (69), excoriating a government that is more interested in re-enacting and reinforcing social forms than in producing solutions to problems.

Ruskin assumes that the statutes that require obedience are delimited by a bounded nation-space; national institutions, laws, language, currency, and customs create the structure within which artistic expression and social interaction can be meaningful. In

an oft-quoted passage from "The Nature of the Gothic" in *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin

brings his readers on an imaginary flight over the "variegated mosaic of the world's

surface which a bird sees in its migration," taking in all the regions of Western Europe

from the northern Alpine to the southern Apennine. Ruskin hopes that this bird's-eye

perspective will help us understand and appreciate the artistic and architectural

productions of these varied regions, and that we will "not condemn, but rejoice in the

expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth"

("Nature of the Gothic" 157).

This stratospheric perspective from "The Nature of the Gothic" crystallizes

Ruskin's assumptions about national and spatial boundedness that underlie the principles

he sets out in "The Lamp of Obedience." From above, we can see Europe as part of the

"gradation of the zoned iris of the earth," (The Nature of the Gothic 157) with national

and regional borders as clearly visible as if they had been drawn on a map. Crucial to

Ruskin's theorizing of these enclosed spaces is his assumption that everything within

their boundaries operates according to a set of inherent natural laws; great architecture is

produced by "submissively acknowledging the great laws by which the earth and all that

it bears are ruled throughout their being." ("The Nature of the Gothic" 157) Thus, the

bejeweled Italian cathedral and the more savage English version is each is in its own way

"the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth"

("The Nature of the Gothic" 157) and should be appreciated according to the unique set

of laws that enabled its production. Furthermore, while Ruskin makes it clear that the

natural environment of a region partly determines the organic development of these

statutes, he also assumes that architecture has significance "as an index, not of climate,

but of religious principle," ("The Nature of Gothic" 157) and other social and political values. Everything about a particular cathedral or castle, from its materials, to its shape, to its proportions, represents a fully integrated manifestation of not just the aesthetic, but also the social, epistemological, and ethical laws of the space it occupies.

Similarly, "The Lamp of Obedience" emphasizes the necessity of deliberate obedience to these nationally and spatially determined laws, so that all forms of architectural expression, from the "the cottage to the palace, and from the chapel to the basilica, and from the garden fence to the fortress wall," (202) will conform to an agreed-upon set of stylistic principles. Without adherence to architectural standards as "strict and as minutely authoritative as the laws which regulate religion, policy, and social relations" (202), Ruskin argues, British architects will continue to produce forgettable, substandard work. However, as Ruskin understands them, these principles are not universal: there is no inherently appropriate form of architectural expression. Instead, Ruskin associates architecture with nationalism and national identity— architecture is "the embodiment of the Polity, Life, History, and Religious Faith of nations" (199), and is only successful when "every member and feature of the architecture of the nation shall be as commonly current, as frankly accepted, as its language or its coin" (202). While there may be some regional "dialects," in this national language, the forms of architecture, from the "depth of a cavetto, or the breadth of a fillet" constitute "grammatical forms and arrangements" (207).

How then do Ruskin's assumptions about national identity help us understand the status of boundaries in what is often considered Dickens's most cosmopolitan novel?[21] As Jonathan Grossman maps out, *Little Dorrit* is not only a novel about characters trapped within literal and figurative prisons or within the boundaries of the "right little, tight little island"(69) , but also a novel of characters in transnational motion—returning from the far-flung limits of the empire, touring the continent, escaping a past, and searching for home. The force of this movement pushes against the boundaries that define nationhood, creating tension as the limits of definition are stretched. It is a novel where the murderer Rigaud can describe himself as a "cosmopolitan gentleman" who "own[s] no particular country" and as "a citizen of the world" (24), and where characters as diverse as Arthur Clennam, John Baptist Cavalletto, and Henry Gowan are similarly citizens of the world, difficult to characterize as strictly English, French, Italian, or Swiss. At the same time, there are characters for whom Englishness is inviolable—Mr. Meagles, for example, travels globally without ever accommodating foreign customs and languages or losing his practical English can-do spirit. Furthermore, the novel attends to the multitude of intra-national spaces that enclose their own unique cultural systems, emphasizing that the nation does not necessarily represent homogeneity.

The architecture in the novel reflects this instability; for example, as early as its second paragraph, Marseilles is described as a place where "Hindoos, Russians, Chinese,

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[21] See, for example, Grossman's discussion of the novel's juxtaposition of carceral metaphors with cosmopolitan perspective in the chapter "International Connections" in *Charles Dickens's Networks*. See also James Buzard's contrast of the national focus of *Bleak House* to the "markedly opposed tendency" in *Little Dorrit*, "in which the advantages of certain cosmopolitan perspectives are inquired into and recommended" (Buzard 109), and Amanda Anderson's chapter, "Cosmopolitanism in Different Voices" in *The Powers of Distance* (2001).

Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchman, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendents from all the builders of Babel, come to trade" (15). The reference to the tower of Babel—a building that epitomizes a chaotic jumble of nations and tongues—suggests from the beginning that the nation does not necessarily function as a culturally delimiting space. Individuals can move freely from nation to nation, and as Amy discovers, habits and customs can travel across national borders. As she moves throughout Switzerland and Italy with her family she notices that the "society in which they lived, greatly resembled a superior sort of Marshalsea" (503). It is not necessary to live within the walls of the Marshalsea to experience a Marshalsean community; such communities seem to spring up in every nation they visit. Similarly, while the Circumlocution Office and the Barnacle family generally epitomize the very English notion of "How not to do it," we also find out that "wherever there was a square yard of ground in British occupation, under sun or moon, with a public post upon it, sticking to that post was a Barnacle…. Thus, the Barnacles were all over the world" (397). If the official Englishness of the Barnacle family is a chief export of the imperial nation, the definitiveness of national borders seems less stable.

While I don't wish to specifically focus on the novel's deep engagement with nationalism and internationalism, I am interested in interrogating how Ruskin's sense that the bounded nation delimits the cultural space within which coherent meaning can be produced lines up with the model of culture the novel puts forward, and the boundaries of the novel itself. Buzard argues that the Victorian novel seeks meaning within the established bounds of the nation and that it "sets processes of knowing and desiring in motion in order to contain them within the national frame" (Buzard 45). The nation, as a

bounded yet porous space, illustrates the novel's literal and figurative spaces that enclose and exclude meaningful community. *Little Dorrit's* buildings and the social systems within them both reinforce and challenge Ruskin's assumptions about the necessity, plausibility, and desirability of obedience to unified, coherent, and bounded spaces. The walls of buildings may make communities legible, but they may also defer and obscure knowledge. And when these delimited social spaces do produce knowledge—especially by creating a sense of what "everybody knows"—it exposes the potential and the limits inherent in communally-produced knowledge. *Little Dorrit* does indeed set "processes of knowing and desiring [and, I would add, especially processes of desiring to know] in motion," but ultimately does not stay contained.

Buildings have insides and outsides, and to be inside can mean to be "in the know." Throughout the novel we see that those who are inside—whether the Marshalsea, the Circumlocution Office, or the Meagles's house in Twickingham—can communicate with a common sense of meaning. As I've suggested, the physical walls in *Little Dorrit* enclose spaces that contain unique social systems. For example, within the prison walls of the Marshalsea exists a tribe of "collegians" with its own set of customs, codes, vocabulary, and habits. New inductees quickly learn the "tradition…handed down from generation to generation—a Marshalsea generation might be calculated as about three months—that the shabby old debtor… was the Father of the Marshalsea" (76). To be a collegian of the Marshalsea means to understand Mr. Dorrit's status as its father, and to accordingly provide him the proper respect and testimonials. Similarly, those who live in Bleeding Hearts Yard, or work in the Circumlocution Office are insiders; those who come in from the outside must learn a new set of terms and meanings. This insider

knowledge not only promotes collegiality, it can also be essential for survival, as Arthur

learns quickly when he is accidentally locked in the Marshalsea on his first visit. Without

help understanding the official rules and unofficial practices, he would not have found

food or shelter for the night.

But while there is community and coherence within the novel's enclosed spaces,

they can also be stultifying. J. Hillis Miller describes *Little Dorrit* as a novel where "we

never lose for more than a moment the sense of shadowed, suffocating enclosure which

oppresses us from the beginning" and where the houses are "'stuffed and close' and

smelly" (Miller, *The World* 227). Light and air may stagnate in the prison cell

underground in Marseille where "the imprisoned air, the imprisoned light, the imprisoned

damps, the imprisoned men, were all deteriorated by confinement. As the captive men

were faded and haggard, so the iron was rusty, the stone was slimy, the wood was rotten,

the air was faint, the light was dim…[the prison] would have kept its polluted atmosphere

intact, in one of the spice islands of the Indian Ocean" (16-17), and "the light of

yesterday week, the light of six months ago, the light of six years ago. So slack and

dead!" (22). Furthermore, it is not only prison spaces that are close and stuffy, as the

description of the respectable Tite Barnacle home demonstrates. Arthur finds it is "like a

sort of bottle filled with a strong distillation of mews; and when the footman opened the

door, he seemed to take the stopper out." (118) The inner chambers are a second bottle

containing "extract of Sink from the pantry" (118). When Arthur waits in the parlor, "he

had the opportunity of refreshing himself with both the bottles at once" (119). At its most

extreme, the effect of these suffocating closed spaces is that they efface the individual.

The description of Mrs. Plornish's father, Old Nandy, is a particularly vivid example of

this effacement; within the walls of the workhouse they "shut him up closer than ever, in a grove of two score and nineteen more old men, every one of whom smells of all the others… he was and was resolved to remain, one of these little old men in a grove of little old men with a community of flavor" (363-4). Without free circulation of air and light, and without free movement of inhabitants in and out, those enclosed within the workhouse congeal into an amorphous mass.

Furthermore, enclosure does not necessarily ensure knowledge; in fact, it can defer knowledge indefinitely. For Ruskin, social and artistic cohesion require common understanding, like language or currency, but language, currency, and text are endlessly circulated without meaning within the walls of the Circumlocution Office. Arthur moves from room to room, through the labyrinthine halls, repeating his mantra "I want to know," to which Barnacle Junior responds "Upon my SOUL you mustn't come into the place, saying you want to know, you know" (121). As one Barnacle explains to Arthur, he can watch the progress of his business as "we shall have to refer it right and left; and when we refer it anywhere, then you'll have to look it up. When it comes back to us at any time, then you had better look us up. When it sticks anywhere, you'll have to try to give it a jog" (124). Piles of a paper forms are physically moved from one office to another, without ever producing any knowledge. Arthur wanders through hallways from one door to the next, until he comes to a room where

> he found three gentlemen; number one doing nothing particular, number two doing nothing particular, number three doing nothing particular….there was an awful inner apartment with a double door, in which the Circumlocution Sages appeared to be assembled in council, and out of which there was an imposing coming of papers, and into which there was an imposing going of papers, almost constantly. (123)

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The labyrinthine design of the Circumlocution building reinforces this sense of meaningless movement from right to left without any forward progression, and plenty of full stops along the way. Arthur enters into the building seeking knowledge, but the construction of both the physical space and the institutional structure defer and obstruct his desire.

The Intermental Social Mind: Within the Walls

Many of the novel's buildings reflect an important synthesis of individual pieces into a cohesive unit, signaling an emphasis on a communal, often unspoken, understanding. These descriptions of architecture strategically allow the narrator's individual point of view to balance with what narratologist Alan Palmer alternately calls "externalist perspective" (80), "intermental thought" (82), or "the social mind" (80). The narrator repeatedly draws our attention to the social mind of the characters – to what "everyone knows without being told" (112) and also extends this sense of collective meaning-making to the community of people reading the novel. What "everyone knows" becomes in itself a kind of wall that encloses, or a field of knowledge that is supposed to encompass everyone within it.

Little Dorrit balances individual perspectives with a sense of collective understanding and knowledge, in, for example, the Society that offers a common approval or disapproval, in the tourists in Venice and Rome who can only experience art through a common "prunes and prisms" lens, or in the Yard's initial response to foreigners when Cavalletto becomes one of their number. Chapter 10 of *Little Dorrit* begins by informing us that "[t]he Circumlocution Office was (as everyone knows without being told) the most important Department under government" (112). The

narrator's seemingly insignificant parenthetical observation—"(as everyone knows

without being told)"—is actually quite telling in terms of the way the novel explores the

collective social mind of the characters who populate its pages, and the readers who are

following their experiences. First, the comment suggests that the department has such

great importance that its presence and effects are taken for granted. This sense of

common understanding emphasizes that members of a community operate through, or,

perhaps more accurately, are defined by, their shared knowledge. Palmer defines this as

"*intermental thought*, which is joint, group, shared, or collective thought," and argues

that although it has been "taken little account of in traditional narrative theory" this

perspective is "a crucially important component of fictional narrative because much of

the mental functioning that occurs in novels is done by large organizations, small groups,

work colleagues, friends, families, couples and other intermental units" and, moreover, "a

large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development, maintenance,

and breakdown of these intermental systems" (Palmer 82-3).

The novel's architecture often reflects what Palmer calls "intermental units," so

that not only do the people who live or work within a building share a common

understanding, but the buildings themselves reproduce the shared consciousness of the

community within. The Meagles house in Twickenham usefully illustrates this pattern.

As Palmer identifies, the Meagles as a family unit display the kind of unspoken

assumptions and knowledge under consideration here. Their cottage represents a pleasant

isolation and withdrawal from the city, a feeling reinforced by its adjacency to the river.

The family is, as Mr. Meagles describes, "boxed up…within our own home-limits, as if

we were never going to expand" (197), at least when they are not on their frequent

travels. Within this enclosed space, the Meagles exhibit a common social mind. Mr.

Meagles demonstrates this when, trying to account for why he is searching for

Tattycoram in a particular neighborhood, he explains to Arthur "There is one of those

odd impressions in my house which do mysteriously get into houses sometimes, which

nobody seems to have picked up in a distinct form from anybody, and yet which

everybody seems to have got hold of loosely from somebody and let go again" (323-4).

Within an intermental unit, knowledge seems to arise spontaneously. But not only does

the Meagles cottage provide an enclosure within which a common understanding can

emerge and flourish, it also recreates the way individuals are constructed into a larger

social unit. The cottage is described as being "just what the residence of the Meagles

family ought to be" because

> It stood in a garden, no doubt as fresh and beautiful in the May of the year,
> as Pet now was in the May of her life; and it was defended by a goodly
> show of handsome trees and spreading evergreens, as Pet was by Mr. and
> Mrs. Meagles. It was made out of an old brick house, of which a part had
> been altogether pulled down, and another part had been changed into the
> present cottage; so there was a hale elderly portion, to represent Mr. and
> Mrs. Meagles, and a young picturesque, very pretty portion to represent
> Pet. There was even the later addition of a conservatory sheltering itself
> against it, uncertain of hue in its deep stained glass, and in its more
> transparent portions flashing into the sun's rays, now like fire and now
> like harmless water drops; which might have been said to stand for
> Tattycoram. (197)

As the example of the Meagles house suggests, the unspoken assumption that everyone

knows the same thing may actually occlude the limits of this knowledge. While at first

glance the description of the house indicates a very positive synthesis of individual pieces

into a harmonious whole, it is telling that the conservatory "which might have been said

to stand for Tattycoram" is described as a "later addition" that is "sheltering itself

against" the main house, and that it is "uncertain of hue."[22] Like the conservatory that stands for her, Tattycoram is not fully integrated into the Meagles family. Although she is ostensibly part of this intermental unit, she does not share its vision of the world and her place in it. As a result, the Meagles are shocked when she runs away because she can no longer bear their treatment. The Meagles are generally well-meaning, "practical" (as they define themselves) people; even so, the pervasiveness of their sense of shared understanding creates complacency that blinds them to Tattycoram's contradictory experience. Thus, the social mind presents dangers: the diffusion of authority, the contagion of false knowledge, and the potential for individual oppression by imposed definitions. While for Ruskin, belonging to a "fold" promotes the health of the nation and the individual, in *Little Dorrit* the social mind can also take more troubling forms.

The description of the wedding party for Pet and Henry Gowan presents another potential danger of the intermental social mind. Even though Henry's financial problems and unpromising career prospects make him a poor match for Pet, his mother and the rest of her social circle persist in believing that the Meagles set out to "catch" him and they are getting the better end of the bargain. At the wedding, "[t]he fiction that it was not Mr. Meagles who had stood in the way, but that it was the Family greatness, and that the Family greatness had made a concession, and there was now a soothing unanimity, pervaded the affair, though it was never openly expressed"(404). This example emphasizes that intermental thought can be pervasive, even when it is not "openly expressed," but it also reminds us that this sense of "soothing unanimity" is very often a "fiction."

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[22] Tattycoram is also "uncertain of hue"—the descriptions of her dark skin and hair make her race ambiguous.

If we return to the narrator's off-hand comment that "everyone knows without being told" about the importance of the Circumlocution Office, we can see that the limits of the social mind and its moral consequences are also evident in this statement. Arthur Clennam's conversation with Mr. Plornish about the nature of poverty in Bleeding Hearts Yard, and for the working poor more generally, emphasizes that although the Circumlocution office is described as an all-encompassing agency with its finger "in the largest public pie, and the smallest public tart" (112), there are limits to what "everyone knows without being told" about its influence. Although Arthur can see a connection between the "many thousand Plornishes there might be within a day or two's journey of the Circumlocution Office" (149) and the incompetence of that office,[23] Mr. Plornish can only recognize that he and his neighbors were "uncommon hard up," but he "didn't know as anybody *could* say how it was; all he knowed was, that so it was" (148) and that "it wasn't put right by them what undertook that line of business, and that it didn't come right of itself" (149). In this context, the idea that "everyone knows" about the Circumlocution Office becomes bitterly ironic: "everyone" really means everyone of an elite class, while the disenfranchised poor know nothing about the forces that impact their lives.

Furthermore, if we were to take at face value that "everyone knows without being told" that the Circumlocution Office is the most important branch of government, we would have to confront the potential danger this kind of knowledge presents. In the world

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[23] The novel emphasizes the interconnection for the reader as well, by following the chapter introducing the Circumlocution Office with the chapter introducing Bleeding Hearts Yard, and by repeating the image of the labyrinthine halls of the Office with the Yard's "maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again" (141-2).

of this novel, it is indeed an all-important department because of its entrenched nature

and its undue influence, but because this importance is too obvious to even merit

discussion, there is no room to question or criticize. Society, made up of unnamed

generic Bar, Bishop, and Physician, can only mindlessly repeat the gossip and rumor that

ruins lives and leads to financial collapse. Within this enclosed field, the spread of

communal knowledge can take on the characteristics of a contagious disease. In the

chapter "The Progress of an Epidemic," the wild speculation leading up to the collapse is

called a "moral infection," "the Plague," and "contagion" (560). Even seemingly

"healthy" people who should know better are infected by this disease. It is also compared

to a rapidly spreading fire:

> …the sacred flame which the mighty Barnacles had fanned caused the air
> to resound more and more, with the name of Merdle. It was deposited on
> every lip, and carried into every ear. There never was, there never had
> been, there never again should be, such a man as Mr. Merdle. Nobody, as
> aforesaid, knew what he had done; but everybody knew him to be the
> greatest that had appeared. (560)

This is one of the most vivid examples of how what "everybody knew" can occlude what,

in fact, "nobody…knew". I will return momentarily to the novel's concern with social

structures built upon such fictional foundations, but for now, it is sufficient to notice that

when the consensus of the social mind is pervasive enough, it creates a sense of certainty

that cannot be shaken. Thus Pancks can tell himself and Arthur with great confidence that

investing with Merdle is a sure bet, and as to the potential for losses, Pancks replies that it

"[c]an't be done…. Name up, everywhere—immense resources—enormous capital—

great position—high connexion [sic]—government influence. Can't be done!" (574).

Pancks describes factors that are an accurate representation of what everyone contained

within this field of knowledge knows about Merdle, but he comes to a very mistaken conclusion, because these factors conceal exactly what everyone does not know.

Perhaps the most important implication of the social mind in the novel is that it allows for the diffusion of knowledge and responsibility. In other words, if it is important to notice in *Bleak House* that "anywhere is nowhere," (*Bleak House* 65) then we might just as easily claim that for *Little Dorrit*, "everyone" is no one. The social mind can diffuse all sense of agency or authority, so that no one need have an opinion or take any responsibility for anything. For example, the tourists in Italy, the "hosts of tongue-tied and blindfolded moderns," see all the sights according to the "received form," to the extent that they "seemed to be a collection of voluntary human sacrifices, bound hand and foot" to the received wisdom of the guidebooks. Most significantly, "Nobody had an opinion" (504).

Questions of authority and agency become even more complicated in the way the country is run through the Circumlocution Office. The Barnacle family pervades every corner of civil government and the aristocracy—they are in charge, but no one is in charge, as suggested by the novel's original title, "Nobody's Fault." The novel's harshest critique is for the way authority can circulate endlessly so that no one in the government has to take responsibility for anything. When the authority of the government and aristocracy is circular and diffuse, an innovator like Daniel Doyce cannot find a place for his inventions, and important social problems are not solvable because they are always someone else's concern.

However, while there are potential dangers in the intermental mind's diffusion of knowledge and authority, those who operate outside of this perspective generally do not

speak intelligibly or with authoritative voices. The most extreme example of this is Mr.

F's Aunt, whose "major characteristic" is her

> propensity to offer remarks…which, being totally uncalled for by anything said by anybody, and traceable to no association of ideas, confounded and terrified the mind…[she] may have thrown in these observations on some system of her own, and it may have been ingenious, or even subtle, but the key to it was wanting. (162)

Mr. F's Aunt speaks according to her own system of associations and meanings, but

without a "key" to decipher what she says, no one can understand her and she is a

marginalized figure. Although somewhat more comprehensible than her charge, Flora's

propensity to interpret and communicate through her own lens of past associations also

diminishes her capacity to participate in any of the novel's intermental units. And those

who willfully disrupt and dispute intermentally-produced ways of knowing, especially

Rigaud and Miss Wade, only offer dangerous alternatives.

Constructing Fictions

One of the most important means for constructing the social mind is through the

stories communities and individuals tell about themselves. These narratives become

frames through which the novel's characters understand their common experience.

Whether it is Mr. Dorrit's legendary status as the "Father of the Marshalsea," Mrs.

Gowan's fiction that the Meagles are getting the better end of their family alliance, or the

pervasive narrative that Mr. Merdle is a financial genius, social fictions provide the basis

for coherent social meanings. But while there seems to be value in the coherence and

continuity these fictions offer, an examination of the relationship of fictional and

architectural structures highlights that a fictional structure disguises the truth, and more

importantly, is ultimately a shaky foundation. Buildings in the novel can erect screens so

that the stories they tell are meant to conceal or mislead, as is the case in the barely

preserved gentility of Mrs. Gowan's apartments, where carefully placed screens try to

conceal the evidence of her fallen status. The Circumlocution Office presents an image of

productivity and importance by literally keeping the public in a state of deferral with its

labyrinthine halls and offices. And structures erected upon fictional foundations, whether

Mr. Merdle's financial scam, or Mrs. Clennam's family secrets, can quite spectacularly

collapse.

Fictions can be harmless, and can even promote unity and make life more

pleasant. In Bleeding Hearts Yard, for example, there are three competing narratives

about the origin of the neighborhood's unusual name. The antiquaries from outside of the

neighborhood could demonstrate that the Bleeding Heart had been the heraldic sign of the

old family who had once owned the property, but the residents prefer to believe it came

from a murder, or most popularly, from the song of a young woman kept from her lover.

While the heraldic explanation is undoubtedly the correct one, the narrator emphasizes

the value of the legends for the poor residents of the neighborhood, arguing that

"considering that the hour-glass they turned from year to year was filled with the earthiest

and coarsest sand, the Bleeding Heart Yarders had reason enough for objecting to be

despoiled of the one little golden grain of poetry that sparkled in it" (142).

But more often in the novel, these fictional structures promote hypocrisy and

prevent substantive reforms. The social, political, and economic institutions—formal and

informal—are constructed and often, in fact, understood to be constructed, but are not the

less binding and oppressive for that. In his visit to Arthur in the Marshalsea, Ferdinand

Barnacle sums up the fictitious nature of the Circumlocution Office:

It [the Circumlocution Office] is there with the express intention that everything shall be left alone. That is what it's for. No doubt there's a certain form to be kept up that it's for something else, but it's only a form.... It's like a limited game of cricket. A field of outsiders are always going in to bowl at the Public Service, and we block the balls… our place is not a wicked Giant to be charged at full tilt; but, only a windmill showing you, as it grinds immense quantities of chaff, which way the country wind blows…. We must have humbug, we all like humbug, we couldn't get on without humbug. A little humbug, and a groove, and everything goes on admirably, if you leave it alone. (722-723)

Ferdinand's description suggests that social fictions are harmless enough, and even beneficial for keeping society functioning smoothly; however, the novel demonstrates that they have tangible detrimental consequences. For example, Arthur recognizes that the social fictions Mrs. Gowan and her ilk engage in to preserve their own sense of superiority result in narrow-mindedness. Mr. Dorrit's little fictions about his status, whether inside or outside of the Marshalsea, lead to false pride that injures other people. And, of course, society's willingness to believe Mr. Merdle's fictions leads to financial ruin for many.

However, while it can be easy to fall into a false dichotomy, criticizing fiction-tellers on one side and praising truth-tellers on the other, Janice Carlisle reminds us that "*Little Dorrit* is an inquiry into the moral status of fiction" (Carlisle 195), because it defies such unambiguous categorization. Carlisle points out that Amy frequently employs fictions and deceptions of all sorts: she deceives her father about her work and even tells him she is going to a party; she pretends to eat her food from work and brings it back to her father, she conceals her feelings for Arthur, and she hides what she finds out about Arthur's family from him. Thus, "she is not at all the conventional heroine; the equivocal nature of her actions qualifies her for the title role in a novel replete with deceptions" (Carlisle 196).

The novel makes a moral distinction between various forms of fictions based on whether they ultimately erect screens and walls to conceal anything unpleasant or uncomfortable. The description of Mrs. Gowan's rather shabby apartments is a good example of how the novel's architecture parallels this kind of fiction. In the rooms at Hampton Court

> Genteel blinds and make-shifts were more or less observable as soon as their doors were opened; screens not half high enough, which made dining rooms out of arched passages, and warded off obscure corners where footboys slept at night with their heads among the knives and forks; curtains which called upon you to believe that they didn't hide anything; panes of glass which requested you not to see them; many objects of various forms, feigning to have no connexion [sic] with their guilty secret, a bed; disguised traps in walls which were clearly coal-cellars; affectations of no thoroughfares which were evidently doors to little kitchens. (312)

What is most striking about this description is not that the rooms conceal the true state of Mrs. Gowan's poverty, but that they do such a poor job of it. The people who participate are not fooled by these social fictions, they are actively choosing to believe them. This becomes explicit in the narrator's description of Mrs. Gowan's visit to Mrs. Merdle to receive Society's blessing for her son's marriage. Mrs. Gowan "who of course saw through her own threadbare blind perfectly, and who knew that Mrs. Merdle saw through it perfectly, and who knew that Society would see through it perfectly, came out of this form, notwithstanding, as she had gone into it, with immense complacency and gravity"(392).

Like the apartments at Hampton Court, the Marshalsea is filled with residents who expect their residency to be temporary, and like Mrs. Gowan, Mr. Dorrit requires a fictional structure to support his sense of importance, despite the reality of his situation. Thus he can tell himself that being the Father of the Marshalsea gives him real status, that the handouts he solicits from the other poor residents are testimonials, and that his

daughter doesn't work and starve herself in order to make him comfortable. Frederick

Dorrit warns Arthur on his first visit to the Marshalsea not to mention Amy's work, and

to "say nothing that goes on beyond what is said among us. If you keep within our

bounds, you cannot well be wrong" (90). The walls of the prison become a kind of

fictional cocoon that protects him from reality. But as with Mrs. Gowan and her society,

Mr. Dorrit must willfully choose to believe these fictions—he is, as the narrator

describes, "an illustration of the axiom that there are no such stone-blind men as those

who will not see" (281).

Like Mr. Dorrit, Mrs. Clennam also chooses not to know what happens outside of

her "prison." When Flintwinch asks her if she knows the truth of Amy's circumstances

(which she could relieve by admitting to her family secret), she asks him "if it is any

compensation to me for my long confinement to this room, that while I am shut up from

all pleasant change, I am also shut up from the knowledge of some things that I may

prefer to avoid knowing, why should you, of all men, grudge me that relief?" (189). This

philosophy finds its most extreme proponent in Mrs. General who tells Amy that

> vagrants… should not be looked at. Nothing disagreeable should ever be
> looked at. Apart from such a habit standing in the way of that graceful
> equanimity of surface which is so expressive of good breeding, it hardly
> seems compatible with refinement of mind. A truly refined mind will seem
> to be ignorant of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper,
> placid, and pleasant (470).

Amy does see the vagrants in Italy—she sees them because she refuses to accommodate

her father's violent desire that they should "sweep that accursed experience off the face

of the earth" (472); because, as he accuses her, she "systematically reproduces what the

rest of us blot out" (473).

The novel also wants to "systematically reproduce what the rest of us blot out;" in part, this is accomplished by acknowledging the limits of what it can know. Its refusal to present a fully enclosed, coherent cultural system draws us to what it wants us to see. In this way, the novel's central structural tension between the uncontrollable sprawl of characters, many with irreconcilable narratives of their experiences, pushing against the limiting functions of plot becomes its own moral indictment of the interrelated institutional and fictional structures that seem to produce knowledge and cohesion. On the one hand, the novel invites us in so that we may come to know the inner workings of its various cultural systems. We become privy to the unique codes of behavior and language enclosed within the walls of a debtor's prison, a government agency, or a working class neighborhood, and it is surely one important goal of Dickens and his fellow realist novelists to make known the lives of other people in order to promote connection and understanding. Ruskin argues that architecture and art in general is capable of effecting such changes in the society, and that commitment to a consistent architectural style could ameliorate many of the social ills that plague the nation. Unified buildings would create a unified nation by solving problems of class warfare, religious division, and political controversy (209).

However, unlike the consistent, coherent language that Ruskin advocates, *Little Dorrit* is multi-vocal and heteroglossic, and it is ultimately not possible to reconcile its various individual and intermental perspectives into a unified, knowable whole. Rigaud's account of his wife's death, Miss Wade's memoir of her experiences as a "self-tormentor," and Mrs. Clennam's interpretation of her treatment of Arthur's biological mother do not fit neatly into the framework of the novel's main narrative structure. David

Suchoff argues for "reading against plot" (Suchoff 83) and a radical reconsideration of these narrative strands. He suggests, for example, that Dickens did not intend us to "discount [Miss Wade's] indictment of happy middle-class beneficence" but instead asks us to "see that it is often accurate, and that her 'self-torment' is grounded in the British system of class" (Suchoff 82); he similarly rehabilitates Mrs. Clennam by reading her as the aggrieved party in her relationship with her unfaithful husband. While I find much of Suchoff's reading of the novel too speculative to be convincing, I do agree that the inclusion of these competing narratives draws attention to the epistemological limits of the novel. This novel argues that it cannot ultimately offer a bounded cultural or narrative system where complete knowledge is possible. Arthur makes a name for himself in the Circumlocution Office as the man who says "I want to know," but by the end of the novel he has not learned anything about his family secrets, nor is he likely to since the house collapses, his mother loses her power of speech, and Amy burns the codicil to the will that names her as an heir. Similarly, as Carlisle points out, there is much that we as readers do not know by the novel's conclusion. Carlisle claims that this inconclusive ending demonstrates that "fiction is principally defined by what it cannot do: it cannot divulge secrets; it cannot provide an all-encompassing pattern of meaning; it cannot create connection between people in a world which precludes such connection" (Carlisle 211).

To be clear, Carlisle's argument, and mine as well, is not that *Little Dorrit* falls short as a work of art because it fails to present coherent and conclusive knowledge; rather, I argue that it pushes back against a model of art that requires such closed systems of knowledge. One example of how it does this is by using lists to resist an inside/outside

dichotomy and draw attention to the fictionality of cultural and narrative boundaries.

Many of the lists in *Little Dorrit* are exaggeratedly long—even comically long,

suggesting that no matter how long the list, or the novel, for that matter, it can never

include everything. The lists create a sense of overflowing, uncontainable details that

parallels the narrative structure's centrifugal push against the defining limits of the plot.

There are a great many lists in the novel to choose from, but the following two examples

will illustrate the point:

This first list describes the reach of the Circumlocution Office:

> [It had] something to do with everything. Mechanicians, natural
> philosophers, soldiers, sailors, petitioners, memorialists, people with
> grievances, people who wanted to prevent grievances, people who wanted
> to redress grievances, jobbing people, jobbed people, people who couldn't
> get rewarded for merit, people who couldn't get punished for demerit,
> were all indiscriminately tucked up under the foolscap paper of the
> Circumlocution Office. (114)

Undoubtedly, this list powerfully evokes the institution it describes, but it also suggests

an endless cataloguing of data that both Herbert and Buzard argue opposes novelistic

form. It is quite long, and the repetitive word play—i.e. "people with grievances, people

who wanted to prevent grievances, people who wanted to redress grievances"—

overwhelms the reader. The fact that these various types of people can be "tucked up

under the foolscap paper" suggests that the office can enclose them all under a kind of

paper tent, but this list by no means represents everyone entangled with the

Circumlocution Office. Where, for example, are people (like Arthur) who "want to

know"? Moreover, these kinds of omissions are significant, because the sense that the list

is complete and all-encompassing disguises what we are missing. Just as the Meagles's

sense of pervasive Meaglesness in their home allows them to overlook Tattycoram's

unhappiness, the picture of completeness this list presents can lull us into believing that everything is accounted for.

A second example describes Tip's succession of failed jobs outside of the Marshalsea. Amy's efforts

> got him into a warehouse, into a market garden, into the hop trade, into the law again, into an auctioneer's, into a brewery, into a stock brokers, into the law again, into a coach office, into a waggon [sic] office, into the law again, into a general dealers, into a distillery, into the law again, into a wool house, into a dry goods house, into the Billingsgate trade, into the foreign fruit trade, and into the docks. (82)

Leaving aside the fact that this is an extraordinarily extensive work history for a young man in his late twenties, the effect of this list is to emphasize the iterative rhythm of Tip's experience. While we can read this list as a literal succession of jobs from his first to his last, the repetition in the sentence structure ("into a warehouse, into a market garden…") and in each return to the law, makes it read more like a perpetual cycle than a linear narrative. The beginning and end of this list, as with the beginnings and ends of novels that purport to represent the iterative rhythms of daily life, can therefore seem somewhat arbitrary. Again, there is significance to this arbitrariness—because Tip's experience resists narrative progression in favor of a repetitive cycle, it emphasizes the entrenched nature of poverty. For the vast class of unskilled, uneducated workers like Tip, there is no clear narrative progression from unemployment, to work, to financial security, but a cycle of failure at one job after another.

Herbert and Buzard both argue that the emergence of the historically situated concept of culture as an enclosing structure and the development of realist novel forms that reproduce this structure represented an opposing trend to a concurrent proliferation of lists. The nineteenth century saw in many emerging branches of human knowledge—

natural and social sciences, public health, political economy, and urban design, just to name a few—an increasing reliance on gathering data and statistics, with the assumption that an accumulation of information produces understanding. The concept of culture, on the other hand, posits that understanding comes not from looking at accumulated bits of data, but from discerning the structural relationship that connects individual bits into a "complex whole." According to Herbert, "culture is not… a society's beliefs, customs, moral values, and so forth, added together [in other words, not a list!]: it is the wholeness that their coexistence somehow makes manifest…. A whole is not the sum of its parts but a 'new entity'" (Herbert 5). Herbert points out that this is not "self-evident truth but a potentially contestable hypothesis," but one which prevents "the science of human society" from becoming "an intellectually sterile activity of endlessly cataloguing data unable ever to cohere in a meaningful way" (6).

According to Buzard, this emergent understanding of culture is reflected in "the increasingly more coherent, less episodic novels of the later 1840's and after" which begin "very self-consciously to assert a form of textual organization sharply distinguished from that of the catalogue, the list, the encyclopedia, the state-sponsored blue book or statistical table" (Buzard 44). These "positivistic forms" present "that anticultural scenario of mere adjacency, placing fact next to fact, event after event, but never making available the underlying connection among them" (Buzard 45).

Given Herbert's and Buzard's strict opposition of list-making to the emerging sense of cultural structures and especially novel forms meant to reproduce those structures, it is striking that within its tightly interconnected world this novel is bursting

at the seams with lists of all sorts. Why is this novel crammed full of lists that are

crammed full of everything? Miller argues that Dickens

> sought an ever closer approach to the truth hidden behind the surface
> appearance of things….not so much by going behind the surface as by
> giving an exhaustive inventory of the surface itself. For the truth behind
> appearance is unavailable by any direct approach…. [Dickens assumes] he
> can get behind the surface by describing all of it bit by bit…. when enough
> of the isolated parts are described, and their relations discovered, the truth
> behind each… will be liberated…. Then Dickens' novels will no longer be
> merely a collection of 'odd unlikenesses,' but a true likeness, an authentic
> image of the world. (Miller, *The World* xvi)

Miller is proposing that Dickens's lists, or his manner of describing the surface "bit by

bit," effectively do what lists are not supposed to do—they reveal the truth hidden behind

the surface. I would argue instead that these lists suggest the limitations of the enclosing

structure and its failure to ultimately contain everything. The length and incompleteness

of these lists paradoxically serves as a reminder that they could, in fact, go on piling up

data without ever including everything. This then draws attention to the fictionality of the

enclosed cultural space of the bordered nation or the plotted novel.

When Amy and Maggy spend a weary night locked out of the Marshalsea, they

eventually find refuge in a nearby church. The sexton shows them a burial volume and

points out some of the names they would recognize, but acknowledges "what makes these

books interesting to most people is—not who's in 'em, but who isn't—who's coming,

you know, and when. That's the interesting question" (183). A burial volume lists the

dead, but it is a list that cannot be completed, and its interest lies in what it cannot

include. The list is contained within a bounded text, but that text is just a volume; when

that list becomes too long, it is followed by another volume. A novel is contained within

the pages of its text, as its narrative is limited by its beginning and end. But *Little Dorrit*

refuses to stay contained within temporal and spatial enclosures. Beginnings and endings

are haphazard and the nation is just one space of many. At the end of their quarantine

ordeal, Mrs. Meagles asks her husband to, "say no more about it, now it's over," but, as

Mr. Meagles replies "why should I say no more about it because it's over!" (29).

But even while the novel uses lists to challenge these temporal and spatial

enclosures, it also offers an alternative possibility for what lists and novels can do. This

last list describes Amy's walk through Covent Garden:

> Courtly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place with famous coffee houses,
> where gentlemen wearing gold-laced coats and swords had quarreled and
> fought duels; costly ideas of Covent Garden as a place where there were
> flowers in winter at guineas a-piece, pine-apples at guineas a pound, and
> peas at guineas a pint; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place
> where there was a mighty theater, showing wonderful and beautiful sights
> to richly dressed ladies and gentlemen, and which was for ever far beyond
> the reach of poor Fanny or poor uncle; desolate ideas of Covent Garden, as
> having all those arches in it, where the miserable children in rags among
> whom she had just now passed, like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on
> offal, huddled together for warmth, and were hunted about … teeming
> ideas of Covent Garden, as a place of past and present mystery, romance,
> abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street
> gutters, all confused together (171)

While this list initially seems like yet another endless cataloguing of data, a closer look

reveals an important difference. The narrator precedes this list by claiming that "this

history must sometimes see with Little Dorrit's eyes" (171). The list does not simply pile

up data or details; rather, it allows us to see Covent Garden "with Little Dorrit's eyes"

(171). The theater is not only a place where rich people go, but a place "for ever far

beyond the reach of poor Fanny or poor Uncle" (171). The flowers, pine-apples, and peas

are not simply decadent treats but understood in terms of guineas-per, by someone who

knows better than most the value of guineas. The salient point is not that we should

acknowledge the value of subjectivity—as I argue above, individual experiences such as

Miss Wade's or Riguad's undermine the reliability of subjective understanding.

Furthermore, despite her attempts to contextualize what she sees with her own experiences, Amy's walk through Covent Garden leaves her with a set of images that are "all confused together" (171), rather than a coherent understanding. However, Amy frames this experience as a set of ideas—courtly ideas, costly ideas, picturesque ideas, desolate ideas, teeming ideas—that may not enable her to fully *know* Covent Garden, but do allow her to *see* Covent Garden and make meaningful connections. She sees that a luxury like a pine-apple comes with a cost, she sees that the elite theatrical experience rich people enjoy masks the miserable lives of most performers, and she sees that children starve and shiver in the midst of this affluence. These ideas are "confused together" because, at least in a moral sense, they cannot be made to fit together into a coherent whole.

Amy, like everyone in the novel, is limited by her own small perspective and her inability to fully know the world around her. The narrator describes her in her childhood within the Marshalsea, wondering "[w]hat her pitiful look saw, at that early time, in her father, in her sister, in her brother, in the jail; how much, or how little of the wretched truth it pleased God to make visible to her; lies hidden with many mysteries"(82). However, Amy is the novel's primary example, along with Arthur and several others, of characters who can move in and out of enclosed spaces, and therefore provide a model of how individuals work to make connections. These characters do not tear down existing walls, nor do they stay enclosed within them. Instead, they find ways to move freely from one space to another, connecting disparate parts in new ways. For example, Pancks solves the mystery of the Dorrit family's missing fortune, not by circling around inside the Circumlocution Office, as Arthur does, but by moving from place to place. He begins

with a stack of cards, each representing a different event or character with no clear connection to each other. He reconstitutes this jumble into a coherent narrative, not by enclosing everything within a single frame, but by creating a more open network of connections.

Narrative Forms: Connecting the Walls

Thus, even while most of the novel's characters experience their world through the social and fictional walls of their own and others' making, there are characters who model more flexible possibilities. Similarly, while the narrative structure of the novel reenacts the limits of closed systems of knowledge, it simultaneously provides an alternative paradigm more capable of balancing the unifying benefits of social and narrative forms with the freedom of individual variation. Not incidentally, this formal effect echoes Ruskin's architectural principle that flexible and masterful obedience to forms produces open, living, and communicative architecture while mindless reproduction of forms creates closed and sterile work. In fact, this principle fundamentally shapes Ruskin's preference for gothic instead of classical style: he argues in "The Nature of the Gothic" that the absolute symmetry and repetition of classical architecture is closed off to the community, to nature, and to God. The best gothic architecture, on the other hand, builds variation into its patterns, because "great art, whether expressing itself in words, colors, or stones, does *not* say the same thing over and over again" ("The Nature of the Gothic" 174). The forms of Gothic architecture are ideal because

> they were *capable of perpetual novelty*. The pointed arch was not merely a
> bold variation from the round, but it admitted of millions of variations in

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itself; for the proportions of a pointed arch are changeable to infinity, while a circular arch is always the same. The grouped shaft was not merely a bold variation from the single one, but it admitted of millions of variations in its grouping, and in the proportions resultant from its grouping. ("The Nature of the Gothic" 174)

Ruskin deeply believes this flexibility of form more accurately reflects universal truths, especially his belief that only God represents completed perfection. The openness of gothic repetition suggests mankind's continual striving towards God's perfection, and a sense of structure as process. *Little Dorrit* works along a similar gothic principle; its variation within repetition reflects a sense that a novel is not ultimately a completely closed system.[24]

So even while the formal narrative self-consciously reenacts a sense of arbitrary enclosure that echoes the social systems it represents, it also uses repeated patterns of images, language, and especially relationships to connect disparate parts into a whole. To begin with the one of the novel's most significant relationship patterns, we have the daughter and father relationship of Amy and Mr. Dorrit repeated in Pet and Mr. Meagles, Mrs. Plornish and her father Old Nandy, Flora and Mr. Casby, as well as reference to the tale of the Roman daughter who nursed her father to keep him alive. There are also patterns in the way fatherhood is institutionalized: Mr. Dorrit is not only the father of three adult children, but also the "Father of the Marshalsea"; similarly, Mr. Casby is Flora's father, but also the "patriarch" of his tenants in Bleeding Hearts Yard. There is even an echo of this dynamic in Old Nandy's decision to commit himself to the institutionalized care of the poor house, rather than become a drain on his daughter's

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[24] This epistemological understanding is, of course, more widespread than Ruskin and Dickens—the most obvious example might be Darwin's sketches of the finches he observed on his expedition to the Galapagos Islands. Darwin's evolutionary theory is predicated on his understanding of the significance of slight variations in form, which also reinforces a sense of structure as an open process, rather than a fixed system.

resources. Also important are the patterns of mother and son relationships, which includes Arthur and Mrs. Clennam, Henry and Mrs. Gowan, and Edmund Sparkler and his mother, society darling Mrs. Merdle. These forms of relationships are culturally familiar and well-understood, but also, like the pointed arch or the grouped shaft that Ruskin describes, are "changeable to infinity" ("Nature of the Gothic" 177).

The elaboration of the variations of familiar forms produces what I think of as Dickens's kaleidoscope effect—each new variation of an image, character, or relationship is like a marvelous twist of the kaleidoscope where the pattern of colored shapes becomes free for a moment and then rearranges itself in a slightly different configuration. Within the enclosed viewing space of the kaleidoscope, each repetition of forms offers a new variation in an infinite array of possible arrangements; in the novel, this is analogous to the balance struck by the novel's use of patterns to demonstrate the variation possible within knowable forms. Amy and Mr. Dorrit are very like Pet and Mr. Meagles; in turn, they are both like Flora and Mr. Casby or Mrs. Plornish and Old Nandy. In each of these relationships there are complex layers of dependency, affection, pride, disappointment, and concealment, but each also has a unique set of circumstances, personalities, and dynamics. These characters and their relationships are knowable because we can balance our understanding of the form of the relationship—what it means to be a daughter of a father or a father of a daughter—with the more particular details of an individual example.

If we return to the comparison of the row of houses with the party guests from Chapter 21, we can see how the novel also builds on forms in its architectural descriptions, beginning with a pattern that seems repetitive and then revealing the

individual deviations. The narrator continues describing types of Society characters and types of houses, asking us to recognize:

> The house so drearily out of repair, the occasional bow-window, the stuccoed house, the newly-fronted house, the corner house with nothing but angular rooms, the house with the blinds always down, the house with the hatchment always up, the house where the collector has called for one quarter of an Idea and found nobody at home… The house that nobody will take and is to be had for a bargain—who does not know her? The showy house that was taken for life by the disappointed gentleman, and which doesn't suit him at all—who isn't familiar with that haunted habitation? (250)

The initial look at the row of houses locked into place like guests at a party locked around a table emphasizes the oppressive sameness of the houses and the guests, but a closer examination reveals the telling distinctions. Each turn of the kaleidoscope reveals a different set of possibilities. Thus, these formal patterns do epistemological work, emphasizing that our ways of knowing are built upon our capacity to synthesize communally constructed forms with individual variations.

Ruskin argues that "though restraint, utter and unrelaxing, can never be comely, this is not because it is in itself an evil, but only because, when too great, it overpowers the nature of the thing restrained" (201). *Little Dorrit* exposes the potential for physical, social, and narrative walls to indeed "overpower the nature of the thing restrained," as well as the frequent failure of walls to provide meaningful and knowable space. However, it also seeks new kinds of walls that can, as Ruskin advocates, balance "the laws of life and being" with "the laws of general sway" (201)—what the individual sees with what everyone knows.

CHAPTER 3
ADAM BEDE, "THE LAMP OF POWER," AND "THE LAMP OF BEAUTY"
CONSTRUCTING NOVEL TIME IN ORDINARY TIME:
THE ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE OF ELIOT'S REALISM

Rural artisan Adam Bede, the title character of George Eliot's first full-length novel (1858), is notable for his facility with mathematics and particularly with measurement. His prized possession, the "two feet ruler which he always carried in his pocket" (225), is emblematic of his philosophy that proper building can only be based on accurate measurements. In his simple way he has "no theories about setting the world to rights, but he saw there was a great deal of damage done by building with ill-seasoned timber—by ignorant men in fine clothes making plans for outhouses and workshops and the like, without knowing the bearings of things" (226). Adam's grounding in mathematical principles is crucial to his success; it is the reason why his superiors take notice of him and promote him to increasingly responsible positions, and why everyone in Hayslope expects a bright future for him, despite his humble beginnings. Furthermore, Adam's attention to accurate measurement and proportion is not only important to his own achievement, but to the future of his community as well. As the narrator explains, the lives of humble, competent men like Adam

> have no discernible echo beyond the neighborhood where they dwelt, but
> you are almost sure to find there some good piece of road, some building,
> some application of mineral produce, some improvement in farming
> practice, some reform of parish abuses, with which their names are
> associated by one or two generations after them…. the work of their hands
> has worn well, and the work of their brains has guided well the hands of
> other men. (275)

Because it is properly planned and executed, the work that Adam does will help his community in the present and endure into the future.

Adam's faith in measurement is fundamental to his character, as well as to the

emotional education he undergoes by the end of his story. This emphasis on careful

building also has implications for how we read the novel's own sense of the work it sets

out to do. *Adam Bede* uses its familiar story to push the aesthetic boundaries of the realist

novel; as Sue Zemka argues, "Eliot made no secret of her desire to take the novel genre in

new directions" in her first work of full-length fiction (Zemka 122). Thus, even while we

follow the unfolding consequences of each of its character's decisions, and consider the

significance of its social, historical, and religious themes, we should also attend to the

question implied just beneath the novel's surface: how does one construct a novel so that

it has a real and lasting effect on its readers? I choose the word "construct" deliberately,

for just as its titular character is concerned with building structures out of the proper

materials, measurements, and proportions, the novel itself seeks to build a narrative

structure that works on the sensibilities and sympathies of a reader.

Ruskin's two related chapters, "The Lamp of Power," and "The Lamp of Beauty"

similarly discuss both the process of constructing powerful and beautiful art and the

effect it has on those who experience it. Ruskin claims that power and beauty in

architecture come from the way an artist balances imitation of nature, which he calls

gathering, with creative arrangement, or governing. He argues that these two forces are

inseparable, and that because all art "shows man either as gathering or governing" the

"secrets of his success are his knowing what to gather, and how to rule," making beauty

and power the "two great intellectual Lamps" (72). Artistic creation is thus a two-phase

process: the artist "gathers" colors, shapes, patterns, and images from the surrounding

environment, and then carefully "governs" the parts into an aesthetically pleasing and

coherent whole. Ruskin's vision of architectural design is analogous to Adam's process of first taking stock of "the bearings of things" and then meticulously constructing his project according to the data he has gathered in; this gathering and governing is also a model for the structural process the novel enacts. Eliot's goal is to create organic narrative forms that grow out of the rhythms of lived experience, rather than force a set of characters and situations into a preconceived shape. In "Notes on Form in Art" Eliot uses the image of a mollusk to illustrate her sense of form as something living and flexible rather than fixed and rigid.[25] Artistic form is not

> begotten by thinking it out or framing it as a shell which should hold
> emotional expression, any more than the shell of an animal arises before
> the living creature; but emotion, by its tendency to repetition,… creates a
> form by the recurrence of its elements in adjustment with certain given
> conditions of sound, language, action, or environment. Just as the beautiful
> expanding curves of a bivalve shell are not first made for the reception of
> the unstable inhabitant, but grow and are limited by the simple rhythmic
> conditions of its growing life. (*Critical Writings* 359)

Eliot's comparison explains that artists do not pour emotions into pre-existing molds; rather, emotions have their own rhythmic patterns of expression that emerge over time in response to the surrounding environment. The novelist's task is to enact these living rhythms in the formal patterns of a novel. Like the mollusk that builds its shell out of the minerals it draws in from the water that surrounds it, *Adam Bede* demonstrates a process

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[25] The question of form in Eliot's work has a contentious history: after Eliot's death, and especially with the emergence of a modernist aesthetic that positions itself in opposition to nineteenth-century realism, Eliot's novels seemed to lack literary form. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was the "received opinion that George Eliot's novels, in common with most Victorian fiction, were too long and rambling" (Waldron 44); it was not until the mid-twentieth century that critics began to push back against this assessment. For example, Barbara Hardy's *The Novels of George Eliot* (1959) specifically disputes Henry James's famous characterization of Victorian novels as "loose baggy monsters" and *Middlemarch* in particular as "a treasure house of detail, but an indifferent whole" (qtd. Hardy 2), arguing instead that "the novels of George Eliot depend on the emphasis of formal relations…the formal element binds, unifies, and makes a moral emphasis" (Hardy 10).

of drawing in, especially in the way it draws from the past and future to construct the present moment.

Both Eliot and Ruskin frame their discussions of aesthetic principles in terms of the effect that powerful and beautiful art can have on its audience. Ruskin's claim that architecture can create a sense of sympathy with the viewer through its forms has relevance to Eliot's artistic and ethical goals for the novel. His analysis of the specific qualities of architectural power and beauty rests upon the fundamental assumption that the physical arrangement of the building's parts, including their relations to each other, the viewer, and the surrounding environment, will have an emotional effect on the viewer. Like Eliot, Ruskin thinks of this impact in terms of creating sympathy, claiming that "the impression [a building] receives from human power" is "attributable to a sympathy with the effort and trouble of human life" (103). Ruskin takes quite literally the analogy of light and shadow to happiness and sadness as a reflection of the human condition, claiming that the

> power of architecture may be said to depend on the quantity … of its
> shadow…the reality of its works, and the use and influence they have in
> the daily life of men… require of it that it should express a kind of human
> sympathy, by a measure of darkness as great as there is in human life: and
> that as the great poem and great fiction generally affect us most by the
> majesty of their masses of shade… so there must be, in this magnificently
> human art of architecture, some equivalent expression for the trouble and
> wrath of life, for its sorrow and its mystery: and this it can only give by
> depth or diffusion of gloom, by the frown upon its front, and the shadow
> of its recess. (84-5)

For Ruskin, as well as for Eliot, these questions of aesthetic effect have important social and ethical implications because they both believe that art—especially realist art—has the potential to produce change. As Raymond Williams claims in *Culture and Society*, "Ruskin's social criticism would not have taken the same form if it had not arisen, as it

did inevitably, from his kind of thinking about the purposes of art" (Williams 135). Eliot makes this connection explicit in her 1856 review of *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, agreeing with Ruskin that "in making it clear to ourselves what is best and noblest in art, we are making it clear to ourselves what is best and noblest in morals; … we are widening our sympathy and deepening the basis of our tolerance and charity" (*Critical Writings* 248). Moreover, Eliot finds common ground with Ruskin by locating this potential for increased sympathy, tolerance, and charity specifically in the aesthetics of realism. The review celebrates "the truth of infinite value that [Ruskin] teaches is *realism*—the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality" (*Critical Writings* 248). When the work of architecture or the novel faithfully studies nature—when it gathers in the forms and patterns of the real—it will connect with the viewer or reader and provoke change.

In this chapter, I argue that Eliot's and Ruskin's aesthetic and ethical interest in the power and beauty of forms is ultimately a temporal concern. Realism requires engagement with the entirety of human experience, and not an isolated moment. First, if, as Ruskin claims, power and beauty are "the grounds of the deepest impressions with which architecture could affect the human mind" (145), it achieves this effect to the extent that it can draw upon past associations to create an immediate reaction that will last into the future. Furthermore, the interconnection of past, present, and future is also thematically and formally important in the way *Adam Bede* emphasizes the future implications of present choices and the irrevocable results of past actions.

To make this argument, I examine *Adam Bede* through the lens of its architecture. First, the various descriptions of houses, farms, churches, and workshops, demonstrate the ways these buildings are constructed, refurbished, and repurposed, which has significance for the novel's thematic treatment of individual and historical change. Just as importantly, these descriptions also self-consciously parallel the exploration of narrative structure, so that the physical language of proportions, contrasts, perspectives, and scale illuminates the temporal construction of the novel. *Adam Bede* explicitly invites us to evaluate the realism of its representation of characters, communities, and situations; the narrator frequently engages us directly to justify an artistic choice on the basis of its fidelity to nature. The novel also deploys architectural descriptions to signal that its narrative construction enacts the lived experience of moving through a present moment while remembering the past and anticipating the future.

Thus, aligning architecture, a largely non-representational art form, with narrative structure opens up a conversation about the aesthetics of realism in structure and form alongside of representation and subject. Ruskin claims that architecture, and the "questions of proportion and arrangement connected with its discussion," require unique formal sympathy with nature, because more than other art forms, architecture can reproduce nature's magnitude and power (72). While painting and sculpture create their effects by abstracting nature's beauty and power, architecture works on a much larger scale and can therefore produce the same effects as nature itself; this can be a model for thinking through the temporal construction of *Adam Bede*. Because a realist novel also works on a large scale, it may also reproduce nature through its formal arrangements. In other words, while many literary forms must condense and distill nature, a lengthy novel

may more substantially recreate the temporality of lived experience. The temporal

processes of engaging with a novelistic world, including the literal time it takes us to read

a novel from beginning to end, as well as the way we continually reposition ourselves

along a narrative timeline according to the semiotic and syntactic temporal markers we

encounter, allow novel reading to create a sense of living in and through time. Just as

Ruskin argues architecture should do, *Adam Bede* uses its formal parallels with nature—

in this case its temporal processes—as a source of its powerful and beautiful effects.

Temporality of Forms, Forms of Temporality

Just as Eliot claims that aesthetic forms must organically grow in response to their

environment, Ruskin argues that buildings cannot be designed simply in terms of flat

lines and proportions. The architect must consider depth, sensory experience, and

temporal experience—essentially how the building "lives" in its natural environment and

how nature lives in it. An architect should learn the habit of

> not looking at a design in its miserable liny skeleton; but conceiving it as it
> will be when the dawn lights it, and the dusk leaves it; when its stones will
> be hot, and its crannies cool; when the lizards will bask on the one and the
> birds build in the other….His paper lines and proportions are of no value:
> all that he has to do must be done by spaces of light and darkness; and his
> business is to see that the one is broad and bold enough not to be
> swallowed up by the twilight, and the other deep enough not to be dried
> like a shallow pool by a noon-day sun. (85)

Ruskin is arguing that the outlines of the building frame organic patterns of warming and

cooling, lightening and darkening, and basking and building; Eliot similarly uses the

novel as a frame, drawing in the life-rhythms of working and resting, sowing and reaping,

and planning and building.

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Understanding form as something that can live and breathe in the way both

Ruskin and Eliot describe requires a way of accounting for its existence in and through

time. This is difficult, because examining the form of the novel seems to require

flattening out the experience of events unfolding in time. As Catherine Gallagher argues,

traditional "[f]ormalist analyses seem bent on showing that, although a novel represents

temporal sequence by means of temporal sequence, it nevertheless has, or should have, a

form that can be made apprehensible all at once, in a picture or a fractal" (Gallagher

"Formalism and Time" 230). This is the case, she claims, at both a macro and micro level

of analysis—either the structural examination which condenses narrative temporality into

one apprehensible moment, or the detailed sentence-level approach which freezes time to

allow extensive scrutiny.

Nicholas Dames argues that such formalist analyses are anachronistic because

"the sense of the novel as a process rather than a structure was a fundamental part of

Victorian novel theory" (Dames 11). At any rate, these formalist approaches seem

insufficient for a novel such as *Adam Bede* which is invested in recreating a lived

temporal experience in the complex interconnectedness of past, present, and future, as

well as in the intricate ways in which individuals and communities position themselves in

relation to time. The past, present, and future in *Adam Bede* are not discrete elements, but

are inextricably interwoven. The novel unfolds in a present moment that juxtaposes the

tangible presence of the past in a community bound by history and tradition, with an

equally insistent focus on anticipation and anxiety for what the future may bring. The

narrative follows a trajectory in which the past informs the present actions that determine

what the future will be, and future possibilities quickly and irrevocably turn into regrets for the past.

The capacity for a novel to enact temporal experience is important, because *Adam Bede* challenges the value of any understanding that can be reached through the apprehensible moment, frozen in time. For example, the narrator's famous mirror, described in Chapter 17, comes to seem an inadequate tool to accommodate a multiplicity of temporal perspectives. The mirror, as our narrator freely admits, is "doubtless defective" (238), in part because the events she describes happened sixty years ago, and time warps the reflection. George Levine explains that Eliot understands that such reflections are "always unstable … [and] subject to historical transformation of the culture's understanding of the way things are" (Levine 188-9). The narrator similarly points out that "no story is the same to us after a lapse of time; or rather we who read are no longer the same interpreters" (565). A more important deficiency, however, is the fact that even a completely undistorted mirror would also only capture a partial truth, because a mirror only reflects the immediate present and not progression through time. Time can change the mirror—it can warp the glass, or allow those "numerous dim blotches" (211) that annoy Hetty so much to accumulate. But the flat surface of a mirror, held up to nature, will only reflect back the immediate present without accounting for what has come before or predicting what is likely to follow. The narrator values the clear and direct observation the mirror offers, as opposed to idealized or didactic generalities. However, it cannot represent an equally necessary sense of progression. This further means that a mirror cannot access emotional truths because, as the narrator explains, "the

secret of our emotions never lies in the bare object, but in its subtle relations to our own past" (262).

Levine vividly explains that realism understands that "there are limits to where finite consciousness can take us…the world comes to us soaked in memories of how it has been to us before, how it is not like the before we know" (Levine 7). The need to understand an unreliable history and uncertain future complicates our understanding of the present moment. Realism demands multiple perspectives, including temporal perspectives, in order to present a fuller picture of the world. The novel's task is to acknowledge and represent this multiplicity.

In "The Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin encapsulates a realist aesthetic that embraces imperfection and temporal change:

> …imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent. The foxglove blossom, a third part bud, a third part past, a third part in full bloom, is a type of the life of this world. And in all things that live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. ("The Nature of the Gothic")

Within one tripartite blossom we can see the foxglove blossom's past, present, and future. As Ruskin explains, this "imperfection" signifies life—to be alive is to be progressing and changing—and furthermore, it is the source of the blossom's aesthetic value. Beauty comes from reflecting life, which is always imperfect and in process; this is important because, as Ruskin and Eliot would agree, it is through its beauty that art has the potential to create sympathy and effect change.

Dames argues for "nuanced and evenhanded accounts of… the *social norms of cognition* of given historical moments, and how various artistic forms (like the novel) enter into social history by inflecting and revising those norms" (Dames 19, emphasis

original). One source for this could be "ossified in the very form of texts themselves, in the genetic code… of genre itself, which evolves in a reciprocal relation with the reading modes they determine and are determined by" (Dames 29). Dames's suggestion here is similar to Eliot's description of form as a mollusk that builds its shell in reciprocal relation with the biological rhythms of its environment. He is asking us to begin analysis with the shell and work backwards, using the final form a novel takes as way of reading the social/cognitive conditions that produced it. Using this methodology, if we read *Adam Bede,* in part, as a forum for Eliot to work out how the novel genre functions on and through the cognitive processes of its readers, what kind of reading experience does this particular novel project?

The Architecture of Ordinary Time

Dames uses the temporality of musical form as a model, suggesting that Eliot's understanding of "physiological musicology…served to bridge novels like *Daniel Deronda*, and music drama, as parallel temporal experiences" (Dames 21). This is a very satisfying strategy, but one that nevertheless maintains the opposition of spatial and temporal form.[26] I want to follow Dames in finding parallels between the novel and other kinds of structure, but use architectural instead of musical form to put pressure on the

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[26] For example, in his 1968 study *The Form of Victorian Fiction*, J. Hillis Miller argues that although we can think of novels as "generating a space," ultimately, "time is a more important dimension in fiction than space" (Miller 6). Miller explores novelistic temporality using the same musical analogy as Dames, claiming that "the structure of a novel is a musical design made up of the constant changing interplay between mind and mind which constitutes the action. Any given passage…is a moment…[which] draws its meaning from its multiple temporal relations to what comes before and after, just as in music a given note or chord has meaning only in relation to what precedes and follows" (Miller 6).

assumption that physical structure is temporally stable. By drawing out the ways the novel's architecture exemplifies the contradictions of structure that can be fixed or fluid, and form that can be vague or distinct, we can see parallel contradictions in the ways individuals and communities use narrative structures to impose meaning—often changeable and contingent meaning—on experience. These contradictions are important to the narrative structure of *Adam Bede* as well, which juxtaposes the sensations of ordinary and extraordinary temporality through its pacing, divisions, and perspectives.

Because descriptions of architecture in the novel emphasize the temporality of physical structures, they offer a useful template for understanding the temporality of its narrative structures. These descriptions call attention to the way we experience a building through time: the process of planning and construction, the recognition of physical changes over time, and the act of perceiving by moving around or through. For example, our first look at the Hall Farm, the Poyser family home, demonstrates the temporal experience of architecture by emphasizing both the way the house manifests its own history and the impossibility of seeing this complete history in a single glance. The initial peek reveals only a rusted gate, choked with weeds, but the narrator suggests that by looking through we can "see the house well enough" (133). We see a once impressive-looking house with boarded up windows and a door that "like the gate…is never opened" (133). As it happens, from this position we cannot see the house "well enough" at all, we can only see what it once was. It seems as though that grand door that never opens "must once have been in the habit of shutting with a sonorous bang behind a liveried lackey, who had just seen his master and mistress off the grounds in a carriage and pair" (133). In the past, this must have been the home of nobility, but "at present, one might fancy the

house in the early stage of a chancery suit" (133). Everything about the house from this

point of view—from the decrepit classical stone pillars to the "great wooden doll, which,

so far as mutilation is concerned, bears a strong resemblance to the finest Greek

sculpture" (134)—suggests the ruins of an older civilization. It is only when we begin to

combine this image of the house with contradictory clues, first in the form of the farm

animals, and then the human family and workers, that finally "the history of the house is

plain" (134). The house is not deserted, but bustling with life and activity. It once

belonged to an aristocratic family that has died out; the Donnithorne family absorbed the

land and the house, and now leases it to tenant farmers. As the narrator explains, it is only

the focus of the house that has shifted, from the parlour to the farmyard and the kitchen.

As this description makes clear, the Hall Farm has a past and a present (and a future as

well, which comes into question later in the novel), and all are part of its story and

therefore relevant to our understanding. Because the front of the house only tells part of

the story, our more complete understanding requires an adjustment to our spatial

perspective. Distance and field of vision affect what we can know about the object we are

observing, but in this description, we do not gain a more extensive field of vision

effortlessly or instantly. Even though it is our "imagination" that is the "licensed

trespasser," the narrator emphasizes the physical exertion and time required to move from

one side of the house to the other, as we "climb over walls and peep in at windows"

(133).

By highlighting the inadequacy of any isolated moment to reveal a complete

picture, this description of the Hall Farm offers an architectural version of the experience

of moving through the temporal structure of the novel. Just as our imagination travels

from front to side to back to learn the more complete story of the house, it also must

move through the experiences of the novel's various characters to learn who they have

been and what they will become. The narrator repeatedly warns us against forming

judgments based on an isolated moment, arguing that "until we know what has been or

what will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a

man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character"

(369). Only through knowing the past and the future—the "what has been" or the "what

will be"—can we begin to "think ourselves wise." Because narrative, and the realist

novel genre in particular, is capable of moving us around and through a sense of a lived

experience, it can aspire to offer the more holistic picture that realism and true sympathy

requires.

However, the realist novel's reliance on progression or a sense of movement

through lived experience is only one part of its temporal toolbox. The "antinomies"

Frederic Jameson describes in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013) are the coexisting

temporal contradictions he claims are inherent to realism as a genre. He argues the

> definitive formulation for the discursive opposition [that characterizes
> realism]… can be articulated not as recit versus roman, nor even telling
> versus showing; but rather destiny versus the eternal present… realism lies
> at their intersection. Realism is a consequence of the tension between
> these two terms; to resolve the opposition either way would destroy it.
> (Jameson 26)[27]

Jameson describes a narrative or recit temporality "in terms of what cannot be changed,

what lies beyond the reach of repetition or reification, which now comes to be seen as the

time of everyday life or of routine…. [resulting in] a marked time brutally differentiating

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[27] Jameson approaches this understanding of fundamental temporal oppositions from
various angles, using different sets of antimonies: diachronic and synchronic; narrative
impulse and affect; transcendence and immanence.

itself from ordinary existence" (Jameson 20). Similarly, Gallagher explains that "we commonly find novelists handling the special temporal resources of their form in ways that at once reference our lived experience of time and create an experience apart from and even antithetical to lived time" (Gallagher "Time" 3). *Adam Bede* marshals these resources in order to juxtapose a sense of lived time, especially the rhythms of the ordinary, against competing chronotopes of the extra-ordinary experiences that destabilize the perception of lived time. This juxtaposition is essential to the novel's realist aspirations: the commitment to represent the real necessitates establishing the experience of ordinary time; however, the need for a plot means that we are always pulled outside of the ordinary—in fiction, after all, we expect that something will happen. We understand the full significance of what does happen to the extent that we can compare it to a baseline of usual experience. This is the key narrative tension of the novel—the extraordinary moments that pull the characters and us outside of ordinary experience are always counterbalanced by a centripetal return to everyday life.

Moreover, this juxtaposition also emphasizes the subjectivity of our experience of time; although the passage of time, measured in seconds, hours, or years, would seem to be the most empirically measurable phenomenon, the novel uses fast-running clocks and variable pacing to remind us of time's constructedness and contingency. *Adam Bede* self-consciously examines its own temporal procedures, and uses its architecture as an important site of this examination. The temporal experience of ordinary time must first be structured so that it may then be destabilized and reconstructed.

As Zemka points out, one of the more noticeable features of *Adam Bede* is its "relentless time marking" whereby "years, seasons, diurnal rhythms, hours, quarter-

hours, and moment—all are enlisted, tried out, the first time novelist practicing her chronotopic skills like a pianist practicing scales" (Zemka 123). The first paragraph of the first chapter ends by locating us precisely on "the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799" (61), and most of the chapters throughout the novel offer very specific details about the date, day of the week, and even the time of day. Moreover, the novel often marks the passage of time, so that we know, for example that "less than an hour from that time Seth Bede was walking by Dinah's side" (91) or that "ten minutes later, Hetty reached the turning of the lane that led to the farmyard gate" (203). Zemka argues that one effect of this "persistent marking of time" is that it "serves to promote the realist illusion, both at empirical and psychological levels" (Zemka 133). These temporal cues keep us situated within the simulated world of the novel so that we feel as though we are experiencing progression through time, and also give verisimilitude to our sense of the spatial layout of Hayslope and the surrounding communities. The setting feels real, partly because we know how long it takes to get from one place to the next; indeed, Hetty's difficulties in her journey to find Arthur derive from her unrealistic understanding of how long it will take to travel to her destination.

Ordinary time literally pulls us inside, as the novel's projection of ordinary time is tightly connected to its description of houses and workspaces. First, these buildings are associated with everyday experience; for example, the narrator encourages us to follow Mr. Irwine into his home because it is there that we will see his "thoughtful care for the everyday wants of everyday companions, who take all [his] kindness as a matter of course" (132). The real world of real experiences is aligned with solid construction, as when Hetty begins to receive attentions from Arthur, and she feels "as if she were living

not in this solid world of brick and stone, but in a beatified world, such as the sun lights

up for us in the waters" (162). This feeling is temporal because it reorients Hetty from her

ordinary experience of looking back at the past towards envisioning a possible future; in

her solid world of "brick and stone," Hetty "had never looked farther into the future than

to the next time Captain Donnithorne would come to the farm" but when her imagination

wanders outside of that brick and stone world, "instead of retracing the past, [her

imagination] was busy fashioning what would happen tomorrow" (163). In both these

examples, physical walls represent the solidity of real and ordinary experience—not the

performance of a public persona, and not the imagined possibility of a different

experience.

Furthermore, the houses, farms, churches, and workshops are physical structures

that signify the ordinary temporal structures of the people who inhabit them; the

schedules that order their daily and weekly routines are reinforced by the way they

occupy these physical spaces. Church is the place to go on Sundays, even when, as

Martin Poyser remarks, "It a'most makes your fingers itch to be at the hay now the sun

shines so" (255). Even so, no one enters into the building until it is time for the service to

begin, because "they saw no reason for that premature entrance,—what could they do in

church, if they were there before the service began?" (256). The carpenters who work for

Jonathan Burges inhabit his workshop according to a similarly rigid schedule. To Adam's

annoyance, when "the church clock began to strike six" all the workers immediately stop

work and prepare to leave, "[b]efore the first stroke had died away" (67).

The alignment of a well-ordered schedule and a well-ordered house becomes most

obvious when something disrupts them both. For example, Mrs. Poyser comments on

feeling out of sorts when the family closes up the house for the day (Mr. and Mrs. Poyser disagree about the extent of security necessary in their absence) to attend Arthur's mid-summer birthday fête. Away from her house and her usual routine, Mrs. Poyser complains that she would "sooner ha' brewin' day and washin' day together than one o' these pleasurin' days. There's no work so tirin' as danglin' about an' starin' an' not rightly knowin' what you're goin' to do next" (347-8). Her usual responsibilities for the house and dairy structure her time in meaningful ways so that she is discomfited by her time away.

Lisbeth's disorientation after the death of her husband is an even more striking example of this association of home with the usual experience of time. In her weariness after laying out the body, she sits in a chair "that stood out of its place… where in ordinary times she never have consented to sit." The kitchen is uncharacteristically "soiled… and untidy with clothes and other objects out of place." But while such disorder is normally "intolerable" to her, under the circumstances she feels "it was right that things should look strange and disordered and wretched" along with the confused sense of "not knowing whether it is the growing or the dying day" (167). The disordered house, and the disordered sense of time, signifies that these are not "ordinary times," which is appropriate to the occasion. Lisbeth performs the work of "cleaning to the strictest purity every object in the sacred chamber [where Thias's body lay], and removing from it every trace of common daily occupation" (166). She makes this particular moment sacred by banishing any association with ordinary, common time.

This distinction between ordinary and extraordinary time is significant to one of the novel's recurring thematic debates about the best ways to structure and experience

time, a controversy with religious and social implications. The example of Lisbeth keeping watch over Thias's body has resonance with the religious connotations of "ordinary time": the church structures its calendar with periods of ordinary and sacred times.[28] When Dinah preaches to the people of Hayslope, it is important that it happens out of doors, not only because, as she says in her sermon, "Jesus preached out of doors" (84), but also because it signifies "an unusual appearance of excitement" that the villagers "had been drawn out of their houses by something more than the pleasure of lounging in the evening sunshine" (70). Dinah's sermon is an event because it pulls people outside of their homes and outside of their ordinary routines. This is important to her goals because it seems possible that in these extraordinary moments, outside of ordinary time, she might successfully win new converts. The effect of this special moment can last beyond the present; she can only know for sure that someone's heart has been touched if the impact carries into the future. Furthermore, it is the future itself that is at stake for Dinah—it is the reason she pulls her listeners out of their homes. Her sermon offers them a different way to anticipate the future by promising eternal salvation beyond the timeframe of ordinary experience.

The religious concept of ordinary and extraordinary time structures non-religious experience as well; for example, Arthur's celebration, a secular "holy" day complete with church bells "ringing so this morning in honour of the Captain's twenty-first birthday" (312), similarly calls the community out of their homes and out of their routines, with the

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[28] See *George Eliot and the Landscape of Time* (1986), where Mary Wilson Carpenter reads *Adam Bede* within the hermeneutic framework of the church calendar of readings, arguing that Eliot's "carefully plotted chronology provides the nexus for a scheme of hidden hermeneutics that repeatedly undermines and interrogates the assumptions of conventional history" (Carpenter 30).

similar hope that the event will create a moment that will last long into the future. One of Arthur's cherished intentions for his party is to "make a regular family thing of it" because he "shall be 'the old squire' to those little lads and lasses some day" and he wants them to remember the event and "tell their own children what a much finer young fellow [he] was than [his] own son" (317). In the same way, in the brief chapter when Hetty and Dinah ride the "fatal cart" to Hetty's planned execution, "All Stoniton" turns out to witness an event that would become "a sight that some people remembered better than their own sorrows" (502); in this example we see, once again, that the entire community coming outside of their homes marks a departure from the everyday with an impact that will last far into the future, when the present becomes the past.

This attention to the potential for extraordinary moments to produce a lasting impact has parallels to Ruskin's beliefs about the force of powerful and beautiful art. Effective aesthetic arrangements break down the barriers that prevent individuals from connecting with God and each other. Ruskin advocates for grand and bold architectural design, because, as he explains,

> there is a crust about the impressible part of men's minds, which must be pierced through before they can be touched to the quick; and though we may prick at it and scratch it in a thousand separate places, we might as well have let it alone if we do not come through somewhere with a deep thrust: and if we can give such a thrust anywhere, there is no need of another. (74)

Dinah uses similar language when she is trying to reach through Hetty's despair in prison, praying that Jesus will "Pierce the darkness…and melt her hard heart" (493), an image that is repeated in the description of the jail cell itself. The magistrate gives Dinah permission to enter into the cell because she has "a key to unlock hearts," just as the jailer turns "the harsh key in the lock and open[s] the door wide enough to admit Dinah" (489).

She penetrates the dark and closed cell along with the "jet of light" (489) from the jailer's lantern, just as she is able to "pierce" what Ruskin would call the "crust" protecting Hetty's "impressible" emotions. Ruskin's and Dinah's use of "pierce," has religious resonance with the sword that pierced Jesus' side at the crucifixion, emphasizing that for Ruskin, as for Eliot, art can serve a quasi-religious purpose by pushing into the protected depths of human sympathy.

However, the novel does not necessarily use a powerful thrust to pierce the reader's crust of indifference to produce a sympathetic response. While *Adam Bede* has its share of intense dramatic moments, it also challenges the effectiveness of the quick "deep thrust" as a means to connect with people and create sympathy. Dinah is extraordinarily effective at connecting with people and touching their hearts—whether it is Lisbeth who becomes less querulous under Dinah's influence, or Bartle Massey who grants her to be an exception to his usual misogynistic characterization of women, or indeed, Hetty, who softens and confesses with Dinah's help. However, it is not the moments that Dinah draws people outside of their homes and routines that prove transformative; although her sermon on the green succeeds in frightening Bessy to the point that she throws off her jewelry, before long Bessy "take[s] to her earrings again [after] Dinah's departure" (334). Dinah does succeed in piercing Bessy's "crust" of vanity, but her influence soon dissipates. Similarly, when Dinah tries to warn Hetty about difficulties she may face in the future, Hetty's fretful response only reflects irritation and not, as Dinah hopes, "the stirring of a divine impulse" (223). Rather, it is when Dinah enters into people's homes and participates in their routines that she makes connections in smaller but more lasting ways.

In contrast with Dinah's more extraordinary approach, the novel also offers a vision of religion more in keeping with the rhythms of ordinary time. It opens with Adam Bede singing a hymn as he works: "Awake my soul, and with the sun/ Thy daily stage of duty run;/ Shake off dull sloth…/Let all thy converse be sincere,/ Thy conscience as the noonday clear" (61-2). This hymn introduces Adam's sense of the religious structure of daily life; for Adam, worship comes through the exercise of his ordinary duties. His clear conscience is associated with a particular time of the day, as the hymn asks for a conscience that can withstand the scrutiny of the bright noonday sun. Adam reinforces this understanding a few minutes later when defends his workaday religious practices, arguing that God's spirit is present in the daily labor that produces quality workmanship, as for the "workmen as built the tabernacle." He claims that "there's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times—week-day as well as Sunday—and in the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics" (66). This attitude is in keeping with Mr. Irwine's beliefs about the best form of pastoral care for his rural and largely uneducated congregation; he feels that "the only healthy form religion could take in such minds was that of certain dim but strong emotions, suffusing themselves as a hallowing influence over the family affections and neighborly duties" (131).

Adam and Mr. Irwine feel the need to articulate this approach to religion in contrast with their perceptions of Methodism, represented by Dinah and Seth. Part of what many of the traditionalist characters object to about Methodism is that it seems to ask them to reorient the way they think about the present and the future. Lisbeth argues with Seth that he would "gi' away all thy earnings, an' niver be unaisy as thee'st nothin' laid up again' a rainy day…Take no thought for the morrow—take no thought—that's

what thee't allays sayin'; an' what comes on't?" (105). Mrs. Poyser similarly warns

Dinah of the folly of her religious approach, complaining that if everyone were like her,

they would be "running after everybody else to preach to 'em, instead o' bringing up their

families, and laying by against a bad harvest. It stands to sense as that can't be the right

religion" (141). Both Seth and Dinah protest against this oversimplified characterization

of their religion, but the fact that this objection is widespread emphasizes the temporal

structure through which most of the Hayslope community live and the way they

distinguish it from Methodism. The present seems to be of little concern to Seth and

Dinah because their beliefs promise them a radically different future. By contrast, while

the traditional believers have some hope for improvements in the future (especially when

Arthur becomes the squire), their overarching approach is conservative. Their concern

with "laying by against a bad harvest" in the present reflects their desire to conserve their

present state and protect against negative changes in the future. While both the Methodist

and traditionalist members of the community are concerned for the future, each group has

a very different vision of what that future should look like.

The way characters experience and position themselves in time is also important

to the way we interpret our own temporal movement through the novel. The novel

establishes a structure of ordinary time in contrast to its temporal "special effects." It

structures the reader's experience of ordinary time in alignment with the agricultural

model that frames the lives and labor of the Hayslope community. This model is both

repetitively cyclical and anxiously oriented towards the future harvest of present efforts.

Most of the non-farming members of the community live this way as well—Adam's

work as a carpenter similarly rests upon the fundamental assumption that planning and

measurement in the present produce positive results in the future, while Arthur's approaching manhood is expected to yield a bountiful harvest for everyone. The arrangement of the novel's chapters reflects the repeating cycles of everyday experience, the significance of the present moment, and the anxious expectation for what comes next.

As I have already noted, many of the novel's chapters pull us into the homes of the important characters. These chapters go beyond furthering the plot because they dwell on the meticulous details of the everyday routines of eating, sleeping, working, and cleaning. While we travel across fields and through woods with Adam, and across much of the region with Hetty, there is a pattern throughout the novel of returning us to the homes of the Irwines, the Bedes, and especially the Poysers. These chapters not only return us to these domestic settings, but they repeat their patterns of action. Dinah's visit to the Bede house in chapter ten, "Dinah Visits Lisbeth," repeats when she returns two years later in chapter 50, "In the Cottage," and in both scenes we follow her movement through the cottage as she performs domestic duties for Lisbeth. Often these repetitive scenes can demonstrate the passage of time by drawing attention to the small but significant changes; for example, Dinah's second visit to the Bede cottage two years later dramatizes her growing attraction to Adam, as their physical proximity creates more tension than in the earlier scene. Similarly, when we return to the Poyser household nearly two years after the trial, we see changes wrought by the passage of time; although "there is little outward change" in the house or its inhabitants (and even the conversation between Mrs. Poyser and Dinah about Dinah's plans to return to her religious work treads well-worn ground), we do find out that "Totty is larger by more than two years' growth

than when we first saw her, and she has a black frock on under her pinafore" (512),

indicating a death in the family since we last saw her.

However, another important effect of this pattern of repeated scenes throughout

the novel is that it creates a cycle of return to stasis. This is especially the case with each

return to the Poyser home, where each return to a scene of daily labor or communal

supper suggests a return to the established rhythms of ordinary time—not only for the

Poysers but for all of Hayslope. Although the stability of the Poyser way of life at Hall

Farm is threatened, by the fear that Squire Donnithorne will end their lease, or by their

shame at Hetty's disgrace, ultimately the Poysers continue on as before, as does

Hayslope.

Thus, the novel's structure asks us to simultaneously accommodate competing

chronotopes,[29] including a cycle of return to ordinary time that seems familiar, even

comfortable, alongside of more unsettling temporal disorientation. Another important

example of competing chronotopes is what Jameson describes as the realist aesthetic

strategy that juxtaposes narrative temporality, "a temporality of the past and the preterite,

a temporality of the chronological…[of] 'linear time'" (Jameson 26), with what he calls

"affect," which he associates with "bodily sensation" and the "perpetual present/ eternity"

(Jameson 44).[30] *Adam Bede* explicitly draws our attention to its use of this strategy,

especially when it steps outside of the forward momentum of the narrative into an

atemporal space. For example, the chapter-long pause of Chapter 17, "In Which the Story

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[29] The term comes from Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in
The Dialogic Imagination (1984).

[30] Jameson traces similar antimonies in contemporary art forms, especially impressionist
painting and Wagnerian opera. See chapter 2 in *The Antimonies of Realism*, "The Twin
Sources of Realism: Affect, or, the Body's Present."

Pauses A Little," is an unusually sustained, but by no means unique, digression from the

narrative's temporal progression. Many of these pauses offer space for the narrator's

philosophical reflections, but there are also descriptive pauses that also draw us into a

sensory experience—Jameson's "affect." One particularly intense example comes when

Mrs. Poyser invites Adam to drink whey in the dairy. The narrator comments

> Ah! I think I taste that whey now—with a flavour so delicate that one can
> hardly distinguish it from an odour, and with that soft gliding warmth that
> fills one's imagination with a still, happy dreaminess. And the light music
> of the dropping whey is in my ears, mingling with the twittering of a bird
> outside the wire network window—the window overlooking the garden,
> and shaded by tall gueldre roses. (279)

This pause has temporal overlapping as a description of a memory, used to describe an

event in the present (Adam drinking whey), but also flattens out everything to a present

moment of sensory pleasure—both the remembered pleasure of the narrator and the

present sensory pleasure of the reader. The smells and tastes of the whey and the summer

flowers, the coolness of the shady garden and the dairy, and the mingled sounds of

dripping whey and twittering birds are perceived and experienced by the reader in a

moment of suspended present.

Zemka points out a similar effect when the narrator drops the usual literary

preterite mode and shifts momentarily to the present tense, especially to describe Hetty's

hopeless wandering after she gives up finding Arthur and is almost out of money:

> My heart bleeds for her as I see her toiling along on her weary feet, or
> seated on a cart, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the road before her, never
> thinking or caring whither it tends, till hunger comes and makes her desire
> that a village may be near. (438)

Zemka argues that this moment "lifts Hetty out of the story and places her on a kinetic

tableau of wandering…. [it is not] a moment, not a memory; it is *now*—a presentification

of Hetty" (Zemka 140). One effect of this tableau of eternal suffering is that it

momentarily refuses to allow the reader to relegate Hetty's suffering to something that has concluded in the past. Within this pause—this moment of "presentification"—our hearts, and the narrator's, bleed for a present and eternal suffering. The pauses that make us feel a present moment of sensory pleasure with Adam drinking whey, or hunger and exhaustion with Hetty wandering like a "hunted wounded brute"(438) override our rational sense of the differences between us and them and allow us to share in their emotional state.

As I suggested in the beginning, *Adam Bede* and Ruskin's lamps of power and beauty are concerned with how art may connect and communicate in a present moment; both suggest that this kind of connection requires this kind of aesthetic pause, in part because ordinary time leaves no space for experiencing beauty. As Ruskin argues in the "Lamp of Beauty," beauty can only be perceived and appreciated when the audience has the leisure to receive it—something that is becoming increasing difficult due to the distractions and fast pace of modern life. For "every form of definite thought: If you violently present its expression to the senses at times when the mind is otherwise engaged, that expression will be ineffective at the time, and will have its sharpness and clearness destroyed for ever [sic]" (118). The "expression will be ineffective" in the present moment, and it will lose the possibility of having a sharp and clear impact in the future. In the novel and in *Seven Lamps*, homes and workplaces are associated with the structured labor of everyday life while the outdoors functions as a separate space for unstructured leisure and reflection. Therefore, Ruskin advises "not to decorate things belonging to purposes of active and occupied life. Wherever you can rest, there decorate;

where rest is forbidden, so is beauty" (119). He advocates constructing physical spaces that allow for brief respites from daily labor. For example, he believes that

> there is no subject of street ornament so wisely chosen as the fountain, where it is a fountain of use; for it is just there that perhaps the happiest pause takes place in the labour of the day, when the pitcher is rested on the edge of it, and the breath of the bearer is drawn deeply, and the hair swept from the forehead, and the uprightness of the form declined against the marble ledge, and the sound of the kind word or light laugh mixes with the trickle of the falling water, heard shriller and shriller as the pitcher fills. (123)

Not only is Ruskin describing a pause in the work of the day, but the description itself becomes a refreshing break in the midst of the chapter. Similarly to the way the narrator of *Adam Bede* pauses to recreate the sensation of drinking whey, Ruskin's rhetoric momentarily shifts from his usual style to briefly indulge in a sensual experience, appealing to a cool sense of touch as a light breeze sweeps the hair from the forehead and the skin leans against the marble, and to the enjoyment of the sound of pleasant voices mixed with the trickle of water. Ruskin claims this sensory experience makes the water-drawer more receptive to the visual beauty of the ornamented fountain, and presumably he hopes it will makes his reader more receptive to his vision of how artistic spaces should work.

However, the novel complicates this understanding of the aesthetic and sympathetic value of its pauses by frequently reminding us that these seemingly isolated moments are never truly as separated from ordinary time as they appear. More importantly, the moral impact of the realist genre derives partly from its capacity for sustained representation of causal processes. For example, *Adam Bede's* famous passage celebrating the leisure of a Sunday afternoon walk makes a claim very similar to Ruskin's about the distractions of fast-paced modern life, but the passage does not necessarily

advocate literature or the novel genre in particular as an antidote to the onslaught of

"eager thoughts;" instead, "excursion trains, art-museums, periodical literature, and

exciting novels" (550) are all symptomatic of modern demand for distracting

amusements. And even a less "exciting," or at least less sensational, novel such as *Adam*

Bede seems incompatible with Old Leisure's "quiet perceptions…happy in his inability to

know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves" (550). The leisure that

requires a moment of suspended animation is isolated from "the causes of things," while

this novel repeatedly emphasizes the importance of understanding "what has been" and

"what will be" (369). The narrator expresses a nostalgic fondness for "Fine old Leisure!"

but his complacency as he "fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and

slept the sleep of the irresponsible" (550) suggests a kind of leisure enabled by a willful

disconnection from everyday life; by contrast, the novel's brief pauses are balanced by

full engagement with ordinary time.

Furthermore, pauses in the novel can also be moments fraught with anxiety about

the uncertain future. The day of Arthur's birthday feast on the thirtieth of July is

described as

> Perfect weather for an out-door July merrymaking, yet surely not the best
> time of the year to be born in. Nature seems to make a hot pause just
> then—all the loveliest flowers are gone; the sweet time of early growth
> and vague hope is past; and yet the time of harvest and ingathering is not
> come, and we tremble at the possible storms that may ruin the precious
> fruit in the moment of its ripeness… the lambs and calves have lost all
> traces of their innocent frisky prettiness and have become stupid young
> sheep and cows. (309)

There is something menacing about the uncertainty of this pause—"we tremble" at all

that can go wrong just as our efforts are about to produce fruit. This inauspicious day for

Arthur's birthday mirrors his uncertain stage of life when we don't know if he will

successfully navigate the potential dangers ahead. Similarly, this description ominously echoes Hetty's transition during this pause, especially as she is often described in terms akin to the "frisky prettiness" of lambs and calves.

Constructing the Architecture of the Past

At first glance, the portrayal of ordinary time seems to perform the kind of ethnographic work that Eliot advocates as a "model for some future or actual student of our own people" (*Critical Writings* 266) in her 1856 review of Riehl's study of the German peasantry. The scenes that describe the daily rhythms of a particular people in a particular time and place can preserve a way of life that has already disappeared for the novel's mid-century readers. Critics who read the novel this way see these domestic scenes—especially those in the Poyser household—as set pieces that give verisimilitude to the main action. Eliot does seem to value this potential for her portrayals of daily life, especially of the less than idyllic lives of the rural laborers, to give readers a truer picture of these people than pastoral art usually provides. As she argues in her review of Riehl, "[w]e want to be taught to feel, not for the heroic artisan or the sentimental peasant, but for the peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the artisan in all his suspicious selfishness" (*Critical Writings* 264). The narrator of *Adam Bede* similarly finds a moral necessity to find a place for the common experiences of common people in the realm of art, arguing

> it is so needful that we should remember their existence, else we may
> happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame
> lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes…let us always have men
> ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of
> commonplace things—men who see beauty in these common place things,
> and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven shines on them.
> (241-2)

Michael Carnigan argues that Eliot's historical fiction assumes "essential continuity between [her] own and [her] contemporaries' mental states and those of people in any other time period. This continuity enabled analogizing between historical periods" (Carignan 458). Similarly, Eliot's review of *Modern Painters* makes it clear that realist art's capacity to allow such analogizing is one of its most important ethical purposes, because "in learning how to estimate the artistic products of a particular age according to the mental attitude of external life of that age, we are widening our sympathy and deepening the basis of our tolerance and charity" (*Critical Writings* 248).

However, Eliot's realist agenda reaches beyond faithfully and lovingly reproducing the common beauties of everyday life or even engendering a sympathetic response from the reader; Eliot's realism also illuminates the processes by which both communities and novels construct their experiences. The novel's pattern of repetitions is a good example—as I suggested above, while these repetitions can serve to reinforce the lived experience of ordinary time, they can also work to disrupt and destabilize that experience, by pulling the reader outside of ordinary temporality. Gallagher explains how repetition in a novel can become atemporal:

> novelistic plots in general… redeem time as a 'medium of meaning'
> through the patterning activity of repetition. The first time an event occurs
> it may seem locked in its context, but its recurrence both brings the earlier
> incidences back to mind, thereby unbinding them from their initial
> placement, and also creates the resonances we perceive as the work's
> themes and meanings. (Gallagher, "Time" 4)

One example of this thematic resonance is the repetition of Arthur's attempt to confess his growing attraction to Hetty to Mr. Irwine in chapter 16 "Links," in the scene when Adam comes to the Irwine house to tell the story of Hetty's disappearance in chapter 39, "The Tidings." Despite an unexpectedly cold reception from Mr. Irwine, Adam follows

through with his resolve to talk to him because "when Adam had made up his mind to a measure, he was not the man to renounce it for any but imperative reasons" (453). We cannot help but compare this to Arthur, the man who does renounce measures he has made up his mind to, including his resolve to confess to Mr. Irwine in the very room where Adam sits in the later scene. This repetition seems to flatten the time between the two scenes—an effect not lost on Mr. Irwine, even as we experience it as readers. After listening to Adam's story about Arthur's relationship with Hetty, Mr. Irwine "saw the whole history now by that terrible illumination which the present sheds back upon the past" (454). As Gallagher suggests, this kind of repetition produces our sense of thematic resonance; as the novel emphasizes again and again, the present is constantly revising the past. This thematic understanding is further reinforced by our experience of reading the novel when new information forces us to go back to reconsider previous scenes with "that terrible illumination."

This important understanding that the past is not fixed is also reinforced by the novel's buildings. As we have seen, the Poyser house used to belong to an aristocratic family, but its focus has shifted and it is now a working farmhouse. Other buildings show similar evidence of repurposing and refurbishing, including the Broxton parsonage, with its jumble of new walls and windows and old stone staircases, and Donnithorne Abby, where the original religious structure was reconfigured as an aristocratic estate, and the rooms of the estate are temporarily repurposed as banquet halls and ballrooms for Arthur's birthday celebration. Perhaps in these descriptions Eliot was also thinking of Riehl's German peasants who literally repurpose the local architecture by dismantling and reassembling the ruins of castles and cathedrals. Eliot describes that

> towards the ruins of the old castle that overlooks his village [the German peasant] has no piety at all, and carries off its stones to make a fence for his garden, or tears down the gothic carving of the old monastic church, which is 'nothing to him', to mark off a foot-path through his field.
> (*Critical Writings* 271)

In all of these examples we see how repurposing architectural structures in the present parallels the ways in which the novel's characters reconstruct the pieces of the past to create their own histories, until the new version of the story replaces an older version in the collective memory. Repurposing a building does not literally change its past, but it allows its inhabitants to experience its past differently. The position of the Poysers in their home and in Hayslope is a good example: their attachment to their home is not simply emotional or habitual, but stands for a continuation of a way of life and a right way of doing things (and the Poysers know better than their neighbors the best ways of managing a dairy and a farm). When it looks like Squire Donnithorne may turn them out, Mr. Poyser says he would be "loath to leave th' old place…We should leave our roots behind us, I doubt, and niver thrive again" (402). And the need for the family to remain rooted to this history is not only Mr. Poyser's personal wish, but a kind of communal principle. Everyone seems to agree with Mr. Irwine that "such old parishioners as they are must not go" (404); the fact that Hetty's disgrace leads the Poysers to contemplate moving is generally felt as a tragic disruption to the community's continuity. Arthur will leave town himself rather than allow that to happen. The pervasive influence of these collective structures means that individual memories and plans are formed and constrained by the community's traditions and values. For example, when Hetty is stranded and destitute after finding that Arthur's regiment has left Windsor, her only option would seem to be to seek assistance. But it is hardly even possible for her to imagine such a plan, given that she was "brought up among people who were somewhat

hard in their feelings even towards poverty… 'the parish' was next to the prison in obloquy" (428). The family she comes from and the community they belong to have such fixed traditions that it makes a certain kind of vision of the future inconceivable.

However, the novel repeatedly undermines the permanence of these very traditions. First, as would be especially clear to readers in Eliot's time, the fixity of Hayslope's traditions requires that the conditions that enable them remain the same. From a vantage point sixty years after the events of the novel—a distance the narrator repeatedly reminds us of—it is obvious that Hayslope's traditional agrarian lifestyle will not last long past the timeframe of the novel. The war that kept grain prices inflated will end, and encroaching industrialization will inevitably change the way farming is done. But not only are these traditions about to change, the novel demonstrates that they were never really permanent to begin with. If the Poyser family home is the novel's representation of rootedness, of generations of connection to the land, then looking once again at the narrator's description of the Hall Farm is a reminder that those roots do not run quite as deep as they believe. When the Hall Farm was the Hall Manor it belonged to an aristocratic family, not the Poysers. By challenging the assumed stasis of physical structure, this initial description of Hall Farm reminds us that proper measurements require a stable starting point and the narratives that structure our experiences can limit our perceptions. Individuals and communities create their own narratives of the past— useful and meaningful narratives, but constructed nonetheless—that can change from generation to generation. The structures that inform their experiences are not fixed, but always in process, always under construction.

The novel's characters reconstruct the past in response to the conditions of the present, much as Eliot's mollusk forms its shell in response to its environment. Levine explains that Eliot understands that memories of the past are "always unstable … [and] subject to historical transformation of the culture's understanding of the way things are" (Levine 188-9). The narrator similarly points out that "no story is the same to us after a lapse of time; or rather we who read are no longer the same interpreters" (565) Even when the details of a memory remain the same, their emotional resonance often changes with time. Adam finds that even though his trip to Snowfield to meet Dinah reminds him of his earlier painful journey to find Hetty, he "brought with him new thoughts through that grey country—thoughts which gave an altered significance to its story of the past" (565).

The novel demonstrates that reconfiguring and reinterpreting the past is an ongoing process that never settles on a fixed conclusion. This is especially the case when narratives of the past are informed by feelings of remorse; according to Gillian Beer, Eliot's novels demonstrate that remorse is "one of the human passions she most fully understood:"

> the obsessive reliving of the spent moment in an attempt to make it change its shape, to escape its shame and regret. Remorse is one of the most engrossing emotions for narrative, since it strives to recuperate a bearable reading, its obsessional repetition seeking to be rid of the need yet again to retell the same fixed story. (Beer 87)

Beer makes an important distinction here: the events of the summer—Arthur's seduction of Hetty and Hetty's abandonment of their infant—are a "fixed story," and as much as Hetty, Arthur, and Adam would, if they could, "have had the past undone" (418), it is not possible to undo what has happened; however, it is the ongoing need to "recuperate a bearable reading" that keeps the narrative in process. Furthermore, this emphasis on the

paradoxical flexibility and fixity of the past is both thematically and formally significant.

The literary preterite tense used in this and most other realist novels constructs for the

reader a contradictory sense of experiencing as present something that has ostensibly

already happened, suggesting that the novel's events are already fixed in the past. As

Jameson describes it, narrative temporality is "the time of the preterite, of events

completed… [it seems to be] an inauthentic and reified temporality: it necessarily blocks

out the freshness of the event happening, along with the agony of decision of its

protagonists… and turns the future into a 'dead future'" (Jameson 20). *Adam Bede'*s

narrator often underlines this phenomenon by pointing to the particular moments of great

emotion or change that will prove to have been of importance in retrospect. For example,

Adam will remember his evening with Hetty picking currants as

> the time a man can least forget in after-life—the time when he believes
> that the first woman he has ever loved betrays by a slight something… that
> she is at least beginning to love him in return…. Adam remembered it all
> to the last moment of his life. (282)

At first glance, this passage seems to confirm Jameson's characterization of the

"dead future" effect of the literary preterite. By acknowledging the significance of this

moment in the future, the narrator reminds us that the experiences we are sharing with the

characters are fixed in the past. And, as Jameson argues, this reification would seem to be

inherent to a literary, textual form that sets down in print what has "happened" at a past

moment. However, this passage, like many similar ones throughout the novel, also

contradicts Jameson's claims about the temporal structure of realist fiction.[31] This

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[31] Jameson argues that the "dead future" of the realist novel is addressed by Sartre and the
existential novel because Sartre wants novels to use "the open present of freedom, the
present of an open, undecided future, where the die has not yet been cast…. The aesthetic
of the existential novel will then bend its narrative instruments to the recreation of this

particular moment in the novel is significant because it demonstrates Adam's

misperception; it will be soon be clear to him that Hetty was not feeling anything for him,

and by the "last moment of his life," Adam's memory of this moment would be colored

by subsequent events. When he realizes he's been misinterpreting Hetty's behavior, he

feels "as if I'd been measuring my work from a false line, and had got it to measure all

over again" (372). Our experience as readers parallels Adam's: although we understand

more than he does about Hetty's state of mind, subsequent events will continue to

restructure our interpretation of this moment and, more importantly, our understanding of

Adam's memory of its significance. As we read through the novel, our experience of the

narrative past stays in process.

Constructing Perceptions of the Present

By focusing on the limits of perception and following what happens when

perception goes wrong, the novel defamiliarizes this automatic process. As Ruskin

explains in "The Lamp of Power,"

> The traveler who desires to correct the errors of his judgment, necessitated
> by the inequalities of temper, infelicities of circumstance, and accidents of
> association, has no other resource than to wait for the calm verdict of
> interposing years; and to watch for the new arrangements of eminence and
> shape in the images which remain latest in his memory. (70)

Narratologist Uri Margolin argues for the value of attending to misperception in

literature, claiming that

> If the portrayal of the mind in action and of experientiality is one of the
> main goals of all narrative, then the presentation of perceptual missteps
> has a major role to play in it. Failures can among other things make us

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open present, in which not even the past is set in stone, insofar as our acts in the present
rewrite and modify it" (Jameson 18).

aware of the situationally conditioned and tenuous nature of all perception [and] of its inherently complex and multi-stage nature. (Margolin 60)

Margolin approaches this first from a scientific understanding of the cognitive processes through which "our perceptual system does not simply record information about the external world but actually organizes and interprets it." Sensing, organizing, and recognizing this information "is both a temporal and a logical hierarchical order" (Margolin 65). Usually this process happens automatically, but in literature, "the near instantaneous process is slowed down considerably, becoming durative rather than punctual" (Margolin 67). Margolin's approach emphasizes that perception requires a temporal process of construction through hierarchical organization and interpretation. This is useful for thinking about the novel because it takes us beyond questions of objectivity and subjectivity to the active processes through which individuals and communities build their perceptions.

Margolin's up-to-date understanding of cognitive processes has much in common with the cognitive theories of the novel popular among Victorian intellectuals. In *Principles of Success in Literature*, George Lewes also describes misperception in terms of its temporal process, and the need for all the parts of the series to be in order:

Correct reasoning is the ideal assemblage of objects in their actual order of co-existence and succession. It is seeing with the mind's eye. False reasoning is owing to some misplacement of the order of objects, or to the omission of some links in the chain, or to the introduction of objects not properly belonging to the series. (Lewes 44)

Perception requires a serial experience, so that when links in the chain are faulty or missing, correct perception is impossible; in an unfolding narrative, this is especially obvious when the reader's and character's understandings do not match. For example, when Adam discovers Hetty's locket after she accidentally drops it, the narrator

painstakingly walks us through Adam's cognitive processes as he tries to fit this visual evidence into a narrative schema that makes sense to him, to the extent that he becomes "lost in the utter impossibility of finding any person for his fears to alight on" (346). He finally settles on the interpretation most favorable to his own interests, choosing to believe that Hetty was embarrassed that he saw her love of finery. Adam is "comforted, having woven for himself an ingenious web of probabilities—the surest screen a wise man can place between himself and the truth" (347). However, the "ingenious web" Adam has assembled is easily dismantled when new information becomes available; when Adam happens upon Arthur and Hetty in the woods a few days later, it is as if "a terrible scorching light showed him the hidden letters that changed the meaning of the past" (354). When Adam perceives the locket at the party, he must construct a reasonable narrative based on the information available, but because he is missing the "hidden letters" that explain the process through which Hetty obtained the locket, he comes to a faulty conclusion.

If, as Lewes describes, perception involves a series of "links in a chain," and misperception occurs when any one of those links is missing or erroneous, then each individual moment becomes immensely important. Chapter 27, "The Crisis," in which Adam discovers Hetty and Arthur in the woods illustrates this principle. For the several pages prior to the encounter, the narrative pace becomes like slow motion. Every trivial detail of Adam's journey from his job at Chase Farm through the Grove on his way home—from his late arrival at work, to his conversation with Mr. Craig, to his decision to take the shortest path home—is given precise attention. Every pause is accounted for, even his pause to pet his dog Gyp. If Adam had not stopped to pick up Seth's basket, or

to pet Gyp, or to speak with Mr. Craig, if he had worked somewhere else or chosen a different path he would not have encountered Hetty and Arthur. Again, we see the thematic significance of the present, because Adam's walk home through the woods emphasizes that the present creates the future, whether through a steady accumulation of small chances and insignificant choices, or through more momentous disasters and decisions.

As Mr. Irwine teaches his congregation in his sermon at Thias's funeral, "the present moment is all we can call our own for works of mercy, of righteous dealing, and of family tenderness" (265). The decisions of the present have moral weight precisely because the present is not an isolated moment that can be separated from the past or future. But while the present is vitally important in the way it shapes the future, it is also impossible to fully know in the moment. The novel reinforces this lesson through narrative structures that leave both characters and readers to discover important events after they have already happened, so that the characters' processes of perceiving and misperceiving mirror our own reading experience, as we continually reevaluate our understanding of what has already past. Both Lisbeth and Adam are unsettled to think that Thias was dying at the very moment Lisbeth was sleeping, and Adam was thinking unforgiving thoughts about him. This use of overlapping timelines recurs later in the novel, although without the characters commenting on it as Lisbeth and Adam do. Hetty is looking for Arthur for ten days without the Poysers or Adam being aware of it. And Arthur travels back to Hayslope with great excitement at his grandfather's death, unaware of Hetty's crime, or that he has become a pariah in the community. In both of these situations, we can see the irony of Adam's and Arthur's complacency about the present

and their future expectations; similarly, as readers we are often not able to fully know the present as it unfolds. Although we experience the present as it is happening throughout much of the novel, we only learn of the extent of Hetty's and Arthur's relationship and Hetty's abandonment of her baby –arguably the two most consequential actions of the novel—after they have happened, and then only gradually. This structure emphasizes that we share with the characters a common human inability to understand what is happening as it is happening.

The complicated and contingent nature of this relationship between past, present, and future in the novel makes for an ambiguous ethical stance. Circumstances do affect outcomes, sometimes in ways that are impossible to control or predict. For example, even while recognizing that Hetty's character is more flawed then he had understood, Adam believes that "if he'd [Arthur] never come near her, and I'd married her, and been loving to her, and took care of her, she might never ha' done anything bad" (500). Without the opportunity to get involved with Arthur, Hetty would not likely have made such tragic mistakes. On the one hand, the fact that chance and circumstances outside of an individual's control can affect the present does not relieve him of responsibility for future consequences; indeed, this only puts more importance on proper actions. When Arthur suggests that "one may be betrayed into doing things by a combination of circumstances, which one might never have done otherwise," Mr. Irwine insists that "our deeds carry their terrible consequences… and it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us" (235). But, on the other hand, it is often quite difficult for characters to anticipate what proper actions will be. The extent

to which a person can foresee the consequences of present decisions becomes a vexed

question. Mr. Irwine argues with Adam that

> the problem how far a man is to be held responsible for the unforeseen
> consequences of his own deed, is one that might well make us tremble to
> look into it. The evil consequences that may lie folded in a single act of
> selfish indulgence, is a thought so awful that it ought surely to awaken
> some feeling less presumptuous than a rash desire to punish. (468)

It is a striking image that gets to the heart of this complex issue—the present moment

draws in the future, but that future is tightly folded, and thus impossible to read. Adam

argues that even if Arthur could not have anticipated the precise consequences of his

involvement with Hetty, "he foresaw enough; he'd no right t' expect anything but harm

and shame to her" (469). It is easy to sympathize with Adam's argument here, especially

since it seems that Arthur deliberately ignores the possible future consequences of his

actions, shaking off "with the force of youth and hope" (370) whatever forebodings he

might have had. Because he feels that he "did not deserve that things should turn out

badly—he had never meant beforehand to do anything his conscience disapproved"

(370), he refuses to acknowledge that his dalliance with Hetty could lead to pregnancy.

This is infuriating logic, and we are surely meant to feel some of Adam's disgust at

Arthur's weakness. Adam, with his head for figuring and measurement, expects exact

correspondences between cause and effect. The secret to his hardness, as the narrator

explains, is that "he had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of

foreseen consequences" (272).

However, Adam's eventual growth as a character can only come with the

realization that that present is related to the past and the future in complicated and

contingent ways. His lesson—and perhaps ours as readers as well—is that narratives are

not quite so straightforward and exact measurements do not always produce predictable

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results. Sometimes it is impossible to know the implications of a present action until it becomes too late to change it; as Adam comes to realize, "nothing 'ud be a lesson if it didn't come too late" (264). This conflict between the need to act in the present on the one hand, and the inability to know the present on the other, is at the heart of Eliot's uncompromising realism. It is uncompromising because it offers no formulaic method for seeing the future consequences of present actions; humans will sometimes make mistakes and choose the wrong paths.

Constructing "The Natur o' Things"

The instability of physical and temporal structures in *Adam Bede* challenges what Jameson calls the "usual point about the structural and inherent conservatism and anti-politicality of the realist novel as such," namely that

> [a]n ontological realism, absolutely committed to the density and solidity of what is—whether in the realm of psychology and feelings, institutions, objects or space—cannot but be threatened in the very nature of the form by any suggestion that these things are changeable and not ontologically immutable: the very choice of the form itself is a professional endorsement of the status quo. (Jameson 215)

Jameson finds contradictions to this understanding in the satirical and political content of realist novels. Similarly, this first novel by one of realism's most important theorizers and practitioners helps demonstrate the emergence of a genre capable of reproducing conservative structures, but also of revealing the processes through which those structures are constructed and maintained. The realist aesthetic that Eliot begins to develop in *Adam Bede* is not as concerned with reflecting "the density and solidity of what is" (Jameson 215), as it is with how "what is" has come to be constructed. In her journal entry, "Recollections at Ilfracombe, 1856," Eliot writes:

> [W]hen one sees a house stuck on the side of a great hill, and still more a number of houses looking like a few barnacles clustered on the side of a great rock, we begin to think of the strong family likeness between ourselves and all other building, burrowing house-appropriating and shell-secreting animals. The difference between a man with his house and a molusc [sic] with its shell lies in the number of steps or phenomena interposed between the fact of individual existence and the completion of the building. (qtd in Carignan 450-51)

This difference between man and mollusk—the "the number of steps or phenomena interposed between the fact of individual existence and the completion of the building"—is precisely the concern of Eliot's realism. Humans continuously gather in from their environment to build and rebuild their experience; they draw in from the past and future to construct the present.

Chapter 2, "The Preaching," encapsulates this process: it opens with a panoramic view of the lovely and peaceful village of Hayslope as it appears to a traveler who pauses to take in the "beauty of the view" (73). At first, this pause and the view it affords would seem to suggest that the Hayslope community of *Adam Bede* exists in a kind of stasis. The hills that surround the village are unchanging, "wooed from day to day by the changing hours, but responding with no change in themselves" (74-5). Furthermore, the village's arrangement of a "fine old country-seat" (74), a local church, farms, and cottages attests to the stability of the hierarchical relationship of aristocracy, religion, and agricultural labor in the community. And yet, the view also includes a "broken line of thatched cottages" that "continued nearly to the churchyard gate" (74), an image that echoes Eliot's comparison of mollusks and human habitations, and reminds us that a momentary vision of the landscape represents a process of building over time. As with the sheep that "visibly specked" the surrounding hills, and whose "motion was only

revealed by memory, not detected by sight" (74), we know that what the traveler sees in his pause only appears to be still.

Ruskin explains that our constructions shape our experience of the world around us; although he argues that nature has its own objective, God-created truth, he writes that we also perceive nature through our associations with manmade objects. This is partly a visual association, as we cannot help but notice the physical similarities between natural and built structures—cliffs, rocks, and mountains remind us of "mural stone," "fortress towers," "nameless tumuli," and "chambered cities" (73). As Ruskin describes it, it is also a temporal construction; he argues "that sublimity in the masses built up by [man's] coralline-like energy… [is] honorable, even when transferred by association to the dateless hills" (73). In other words, we perceive, describe, and understand the "dateless" landscape through analogies with our own "coralline-like" (another shell-secreting organism!) building over time. A work of art, whether architectural or literary, imposes a temporal framework onto atemporal nature.

Adam thinks to himself after his father's death that "the natur o' things doesn't change, though it seems as if one's own life was nothing but change" (177). It seems perhaps that in Hayslope things do not really change—the nation is prosperous, war and industrialization seem very far off. However, the novel's constant reiteration of the interconnection of past, present, and future argues that our ability to position ourselves in time is always tenuous and contingent. In the present moment we are always harvesting the consequences of past actions and planting the seeds of the future. *Adam Bede* sustains a self-conscious interrogation throughout about the various ways that narrative can represent and make sense of time; it is an approach to telling the present moment that

belies the apparent stability of its fictional community. The homes, farms, and workshops

that at first seem to offer a concrete manifestation of the unchanging "natur o' things"

instead teach us to recognize the ongoing construction of temporality and experience.

CHAPTER 4
THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE AND "THE LAMP OF MEMORY"
"AS WE LAY STONE ON STONE":
MEDIATING THE PAST IN *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

Thomas Hardy's novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) begins with its protagonist Michael Henchard drunkenly auctioning his wife and baby to a passing sailor at a county fair. There is a fleeting quality to Henchard's rash, impromptu decision: the narrator focuses in on this one moment as a vivid frozen tableau, complete with "a lurid colour" that "seemed to fill the tent, and change the aspect of all therein" (8), and open-mouthed spectators, fixed on the scene in front of them; then, just as suddenly, the moment has passed, and Susan and Elizabeth-Jane have disappeared with the unknown sailor. The scene's setting in a fair tent—a temporary structure in an unknown community— also contributes to its ephemeral, dream-like feeling. When Henchard wakes up in the empty tent the next morning, all the props and characters from the previous night have disappeared, and it is only after he finds his wife's discarded wedding ring and the sailor's cash that he can be sure the event really happened. He looks around the deserted scene, prodding his memory to reconstruct the events leading up to the sale. He recollects, "with the air of one who could not catch his thoughts without pronouncing them... 'We walked here, and I had the furmity, and the rum in it—and sold her. Yes, that's what happened, and here I am" (17). In this example, memory is something to be caught and pinned down, then ordered into a meaningful sequence. It would seem that without deliberate effort, events would quickly turn from present to past, and perhaps disappear forever.

However, this fleeting moment proves to be the defining event of Henchard's life. The repentant young man drastically changes his life, vows to stop drinking for the next twenty-one years, and achieves great success in the town of Casterbridge, but the ghosts of the past continually reappear –Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, Lucetta, the furmity woman, and Newson—ultimately with tragic results. The tension between the transience and persistence of this experience is crucial to the novel's exploration of memory and history. On the one hand, Henchard and the other characters find it is impossible to reclaim the past—the moment of decision or action cannot be reversed or repaired. On the other hand, they also find that the past will not stay in the past, but returns to trouble the present. When Lucetta wishes to renounce her early romantic entanglement in favor of a new love, she boldly declares that she "won't be a slave to the past" (166), but she finds, as does Henchard, that the past leaves marks that never quite disappear. Henchard declares in his final will his wish "that no man remember me" (309), but memory is more complex. In the grand sweep of history, Henchard's bones will surely join those of Casterbridge's earlier, unremembered inhabitants; as Mother Cuxsom observes after Susan's death, in the future "her wishes and ways will all be as nothing" (113). Yet fragments remain, and sometimes they exert an unexplainable force.

While the question of how individuals and communities remember the past runs through all of Hardy's work, *Mayor* is especially concerned with investigating the ways in which both the span of human history and an individual's personal past can persist into the present. Although the more distant past seems alien to the everyday lives of the novel's characters, the physical reminders of older civilizations draw our attention to history's presence. The town of Casterbridge is built upon the site of an ancient Roman

settlement, and as readers and critics have long noticed, *Mayor* is a novel where the past, in the form of ruins and artifacts, as well as of communal memory enacted through superstition and custom, pervades present experience.

Because *Mayor* uses its architecture to investigate the relationship of memory and history to the present, Ruskin's sixth chapter of *Seven Lamps*, "The Lamp of Memory," speaks especially well to its thematic concerns. Even more so than the other six lamps, "The Lamp of Memory" draws on all Ruskin's considerable rhetorical skills and stylistic flourishes, revealing his intense emotional investment in its key principles: first, the importance of historical continuity across generations; and second, the crucial role that architecture plays in maintaining that continuity. If it is worthwhile to remember the past—and clearly Ruskin believes that it is, because he claims that "it is well to have, not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life" (178) —then architecture is the means through which it will be possible. This is because, as he describes it, there are "but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture, and the latter in some sort includes the former, and is mightier in its reality" (178). Poetry and architecture are both preservers of the past, but architecture is more powerful because it has a solid reality that physically connects the present to the past. Ruskin exclaims "[h]ow cold is all history, how lifeless all imagery, compared to that which the living nation writes, and the uncorrupted marble bears!—how many pages of doubtful record might we not often spare, for a few stones left one upon the other!" (178). This suggests that architecture tells us much more than the "cold" history that "doubtful" textual records and "lifeless" imagery offer, because architecture is "written" by a "living

nation"—it is built and carved by the hands of people living in a particular moment—and writes its history in "uncorrupted marble"—its materials are strong and therefore capable of keeping its message uncorrupted.

In keeping with Ruskin's claims, it is *Mayor'*s array of architectural structures, including the remains of prehistoric tumuli, Roman ruins, and medieval monasteries, as well as continuously-used inns and homes of every class, that best demonstrates the way the past can manifest its palpable presence. For example, one of the most vivid images in the novel is of the ancient Roman amphitheater that sits on the outskirts of town. According to the narrator, the "ring" "was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude" (67). As with the Coliseum in modern Rome, because of its magnitude and its location, the ring's pastness physically encroaches upon the present, embodying the tangible presence of the past in the everyday life of 1840's Casterbridge. Just as importantly, the description of the ring encapsulates the novel's thematic concern with how and why we remember the past, as well as my methodology and argument in the chapter that follows.

My first premise is that the buildings of Casterbridge physically display their own histories, as an accretion of temporal layers. In *Excavating Victorians*, Virginia Zimmerman adapts Paul Ricoeur's concept of a "trace" to describe the multi-temporality of an excavated artifact; her explanation can explicate *Mayor's* descriptions of architecture as well. As she defines it, the trace is "not merely a lingering object from an earlier era—it is also a function of time's passage…As a trace, it offers information about the past but also about the time passed between past and present, and even about the present itself" (Zimmerman 10). In the description of the ring, we see that one discrete

structure, standing in one particular present moment, physically displays an accretion of temporal layers, bearing witness not only to its origins, but also to the "time passed between." The ring is a place in the present where Henchard can arrange to secretly meet Susan. It also shows us its Roman past—it "was still smooth and circular, as if used for its original purposes not so very long ago. The sloping pathways by which spectators had ascended to their seats were pathways yet." However, when we look at it, we understand that centuries have passed because the stones are worn down and "the whole was grown over with grass" (69). Thus, the architectural "trace" simultaneously occupies multiple timeframes, making visible the temporal layers between the original Roman use and the meeting between Susan and Henchard. However, while Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" makes an impassioned plea for the importance of architecture as a source of legible, coherent cultural continuity, as the description of the ring suggests, the historical narrative a work of architecture offers is more complex. *Mayor'*s fragmented, repurposed, and overgrown buildings are palimpsests that suggest that the novel is skeptical about the value, or even the possibility, of knowing the past.

My second premise is that the physical accretion of the past displayed by the novel's architecture models the accumulation of temporal layers in the cultural interactions of the Casterbridge community. Just as the ring's physical structure shows the passage of time, traces of its historical usage persist, even while new purposes evolve. The description leads us through this evolution: first, the ring was used by the Romans for "sanguinary" sports, evidenced by the fact that "that there still remained under the south entrance excavated cells for the reception of the wild animals and athletes who took part in the games" (68); it was also the site of the town gallows for "scores of years," (68)

and famously saw the public strangulation and burning of a woman convicted of murdering her husband; in more "recent dates," there were "pugilistic encounters almost to the death" (68); and finally, "the historic circle" was still in regular use, especially for "appointments of a furtive kind. Intrigues were arranged there; tentative meetings were there experimented after divisions and feuds" (67). And while its uses have changed over time, the description makes clear that the ring has a kind of associative power, so that one bloody, violent use is replaced by yet another sinister purpose. As one generation replaces the next, the original purposes of the ring are forgotten, but fragments remain in the collective memory, unexamined, but coercive nonetheless. The ring is not, and has never been, a place for lovers' assignations or children's games.

In *Primitive Culture* (1871), nineteenth-century anthropologist E.B. Tylor calls these residues of past culture within our present lives "survivals," which he defines as "processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved" (Tylor 16). Thus, any culture, no matter how "advanced," contains customs and beliefs that have not grown out of the immediate environmental conditions, but have been unthinkingly retained through generations. And while Hardy never simply uncritically integrates Tylor's anthropology into his work, Tylor's sense of the way a culture evolves over time informs Hardy's descriptions of Casterbridge life, especially the way cultural survivals are assimilated into everyday experience. As with the architectural ruins that allow the past to physically invade the present, survivals disrupt

our sense of history's progression, and undermine the clear divisions between past and present.

Finally, the ring, like all architecture, or indeed, all works of art, including novels, mediates the past through the frames of myth, tradition, gossip, and history. Therefore, my final premise is that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* itself displays its own temporal accretions, in its integration of myths, in its narrative structuring, and in its status as an historical textual artifact. First, still in keeping with Tylor's theories, the novel's repurposing of myths, through allusion and analogy, suggests that myth itself is a particular kind of survival.[32] Just as the description of the Casterbridge ring integrates Roman, Norse, and pagan mythology, the narrative structure of the novel itself layers ancient myths upon local tales upon contemporary realism. Primitive fertility rituals, as well as biblical and classical myths, are narrative survivals interwoven through the unfolding of the novel.

The history the amphitheater projects is not a linear narrative, nor does it speak with a coherent voice; on the contrary, just as the physical structure manifests its own changes through time, the story it tells has layers of "official" history, myth, local tradition, and interpretations. For example, the narrator describes the physical appearance of the ring through the frame of Norse mythology, suggesting that "[f]rom its sloping internal form it might have been called the spittoon of the Jotuns" (67). Evoking Norse giants to describe the shape of the ring both mythologizes the structure and serves as a

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[32] Frazer's study of comparative mythology, *The Golden Bough* (1890), followed from Tylor's theory of culture. Hardy commented in his diary that he read *The Golden Bough* on the recommendation of his friend, folklorist Edward Clodd, and that it helped him answer his question "why the superstitions of a remote Asiatic and a Dorset labourer are the same" (qtd in Fraser v). Frazer met Hardy on several occasions.

reminder of the history of the Viking occupation of Britain.[33] It is also one example of the novel's frequent use of disjointed, non-linear historical narrative, using the mythology of the ninth-century Norse invasion to comment on the physical remains of the more ancient Roman one.

This kind of juxtaposition is also evident in the way official history overlaps with local lore in the story of the woman executed in the ring. According to the story:

> in 1705 a woman who had murdered her husband was half strangled and then burnt there in the presence of ten thousand spectators. Tradition reports that at a certain stage of the burning her heart burst and leapt out of her body to the terror of them all, and that not one of those ten thousand people ever cared particularly for hot roast after that. (68)

As the precise date suggests, this was a real event—Hardy probably found records of the execution of Mary Channing during his research in the local newspaper archives.[34] However, the description goes on to overlay this historical event with new layers of narrative—the supernatural heart leaping out of the body that "tradition reports," followed by the homely detail of avoiding roasts ever after.

The ring also invites specifically generational associations, as "old people said that" people have "beheld the slopes lined with a gazing legion of Hadrian's soldiery as if watching the gladiatorial combat" (68). And finally, there are ways of knowing the ring that have no discernable source; the passive voice construction of parts of the description (i.e. "It was reported…") emphasizes the ambiguity and incoherence of the history the ring can tell.

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[33] More specifically, it can also remind us of King Alfred of Wessex's resistance against the Viking invasion—interesting because this is the period from which Hardy resurrected the name "Wessex" to describe the fictionalized geography of his novels.

[34] See Andrew Radford's article "Excavating an Empire of Dust in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*" for a thorough description of the execution of Mary Channing, and Hardy's use of the event in the novel.

This aggregation of historical, traditional, local, mythological, and untraceable sources also emphasizes the long perspective of the narrator. The narrator can stand outside of the ring and outside of history, to assemble a linear narrative out of fragments while simultaneously highlighting atemporal patterns of repetition. However, this is a privilege of the narrator's perspective; by contrast we are told that "Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome" (67), but despite this proximity, the people of the town see no connection between their lives and the lives of past civilizations. Modern residents came across Roman bones frequently but "were quite unmoved by these hoary shapes. They had lived so long ago, their time was so unlike the present, their hopes and motives were so widely removed from ours, that between them and the living there seemed to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass" (67). The people of Casterbridge cannot "remember" the ancient Roman past, and the accretion of ancient architecture and artifacts in the landscape does not present an inherently coherent historical text.

When we turn to the novel's exploration of remembering the past through the creative mediation of architecture, myth-making, and narrative, we find that the coherence of historical memory is suspect. The architecture in the novel suggests a model for understanding the temporal construction of its narrative. Bharat Tandon argues that *Mayor* is "the novel in which Hardy makes the most substantial formal parallel between his historical and philological curiosity, and in which he perfects a narrative style which itself seeks connections and explanations across time" (Tandon 472). As Tandon argues, just as the novel's various architectural descriptions juxtapose historical periods in

physical space, its narrative structures require the reader to accommodate disjointed and disproportioned temporal experiences, both by moving between the historical and contemporary framework, and by varying the rhythms through which the story emerges. This anisochrony, [35] as well as the doubling of characters and the repetition of scenes, parallels the novel's sense of fragmented, incoherent history. The novel uses the temporal tools of narrative to highlight the ways individual memories and cultural histories can reconfigure the past, creating new patterns of meaning, but also new gaps and erasures.

Ultimately, we are left with an approach to remembering the past where the accretion of temporal layers in the landscape mirrors the layers of mediation in the narrative structure. As Ruskin argues, without active human intervention we lose our connection to the generations that preceded us. Yet that very intervention inherently changes the past, leaving questions of what it means to restore or preserve history. One of Ruskin's most important concerns in "The Lamp of Memory" is to argue vehemently against the irresponsible architectural restoration projects of the time; he believed restoration was nothing short of "the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with a false description of the thing destroyed" (194). Hardy also argued against restoring decaying architecture and *Mayor* reflects the belief that the past can never be fully restored. Ruskin argued instead for a preservationist approach that retains the original materials and the effects of time. However, as *Mayor* demonstrates, preserving the works

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[35] In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette calls this kind of variable rhythm "anisochrony"—he claims that there is no way to measure the speed of narration, but that it is more useful to measure steadiness, or variations in in the temporal to spatial relationship (time to read vs. lines or pages of text).

of the past also presents problems when it conflicts with the need for progress and change.

This is as true for the novel itself as it is for the inhabitants of Casterbridge; *Mayor* serves as a textual artifact that functions much like architecture does, as a repository for cultural memory. As with all of Hardy's Wessex novels, *Mayor* self-consciously preserves a fading way of life by recording disappearing local customs and beliefs, mapping out a changing landscape, and drawing attention to these changes through the narrator's descriptions and footnotes. However, the novel's emphasis on the fragmented nature of history and the destructive effects of restoration calls into question its own procedures for remembering the past.

"…A Curious Imperfection in Nature's Powers of Continuity":

The Continuity of Generational Memory

Ruskin claims that architecture's importance for remembering the past is such that "[w]e may live without her [architecture], and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her" (178). Why should this be so? Why do we need architecture to remember? Ruskin conceptualizes architecture as a repository of memory that mediates what he sees as the atemporality of the natural world. He lays out the principle with an example of how this works in his individual memory: "The Lamp of Memory" opens with a particularly lovely passage of Wordsworthian recollection of a natural scene, near a French village in the Jura Mountains. The description emphasizes the untouched nature of the scene where, "under the dark quietness of the undisturbed pines, there spring up, year by year, such company of joyful flowers as I know not the like of among all the

blessings of the earth" (176). The entire passage seems to describe a scene of pure natural beauty—as Ruskin says, "It would be difficult to conceive a scene less dependent on any other interest than that of its own secluded and serious beauty" (177). And yet, surprisingly, he follows this assertion with an opposing claim. It is only when he tries to remember the flowers, trees, rivers, and birds that he realizes

> how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs…. Those ever springing flowers, and ever flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron wall of Joux, and the four-square keep of Granson. (177)

Nature only stays in an individual's memory in context with man's creation—without the association with "human endurance, valour, and virtue," the "ever springing," "ever flowing" profusion of flowers and streams become an undisciplined mass that is nearly impossible to remember. Thus, Ruskin establishes architecture as the means through which nature can be fixed into memory.

In the contrast Ruskin establishes, nature is atemporal because it seems unchanging—or, at least, its changes are part of an endlessly repeating cycle. Nature takes on this quality in *Mayor* as well; for example, Egdon Heath is an "ancient country whose surface had never been stirred to a finger's depth, save by the scratchings of rabbits, since brushed by the feet of the earliest tribes" (306). In the many centuries since those "earliest tribes" left evidence of their presence with their burial mounds, no human has significantly marked the surface of the heath, making it seem to be a timeless space. Since this timeless natural cycle extends beyond an individual lifespan, memory must extend beyond individual experience to include a succession of generations. In "The Lamp of Memory," Ruskin quickly moves from the value of architecture for helping him

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fix his individual memory of a natural scene, to its even greater power to preserve the continuity of cultural memory across generations. As the ancient ruins saturating the landscape of Casterbridge can attest, architecture may last a very long time, making it ideally suited to this responsibility.

The novel's opening scene of a man, woman, and child walking along a road demonstrates the atemporality of unmediated nature; it takes place in a landscape undistinguished by any distinctive marks— a setting that "might have been matched at almost any spot in England at this time of year: a road neither straight nor crooked, neither level nor hilly, bordered by hedges, trees, and other vegetation" (6). Moreover, the only sound is "the voice of a weak bird singing a trite old evening song that might doubtless have been heard on the same hill at the same hour, and with the self-same trills, quavers, and breves, at any sunset of that season for centuries untold" (6). Not only does this description of a bird's unchanging song emphasize the repetitive cycles of nature, but the language of the description also highlights the impossibility of remembering nature without human mediation. The oxymoronic construction of "might doubtless" suggests that although it seems certain that this song must be the same, since it was never recorded there is really no way to know; meanwhile, the passive voice "have been heard" removes the possibility of a subject to do the hearing in the first place. The idea that this song has been repeated for "centuries untold" is precisely the point—because it is untold, it is unremembered.

Ruskin argues that architectural productions are freighted with great responsibility because there is a duty to build with past and future generations in mind:

> When we build, let us think we build for ever…. Let it be such work as
> our descendants will thank us for, and let us think as we lay stone on

> stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because
> our hands have touched them, and that men will say… 'See! This our
> fathers did for us. (186)

At the core of Ruskin's plea in this chapter to preserve and build with history in mind is the assumption that maintaining generational continuity serves the greatest individual and public good. Both individual families and the nation suffer when they lose connection with what came before.

These questions of generational continuity and responsibility are central to a novel that derives much of its emotional impact from Henchard's shifting understanding of parental love and duty and Elizabeth-Jane's final, irrevocable rejection of her stepfather. First, as with Ruskin, *Mayor* makes clear that nature alone is not capable of transferring memory from parent to child; nature can make physical copies (although Darwin's findings trouble that assumption as well), but it cannot pass along knowledge of the past. As Susan and Elizabeth-Jane are making their way to Casterbridge eighteen years after the dissolution of the Henchard family, the narrator remarks that it seems strange that although the two women are physically similar, the mother may know things that the daughter does not:

> While life's middle summer had set its hardening mark on the mother's
> face, her former spring-like specialities were transferred so dexterously by
> Time to the second figure her child that the absence of certain facts within
> her mother's knowledge from the girl's mind would have seemed for the
> moment, to one reflecting on those facts, to be a curious imperfection in
> Nature's powers of continuity. (20)

As the novel gradually reveals, this is more than just a philosophical observation about continuity in generational memory—in the case of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, this "curious imperfection" is quite significant, because the "certain facts" Susan has not transferred to her daughter are not innocuous. Elizabeth-Jane does not know that her

mother was once married to the man they are seeking, that he assumes she is his daughter, and that she is not, in fact, his daughter after all. Nature does not take care of this transfer —it requires active human intervention. Humans produce stories and build architecture as a way of ensuring that the next generation will know what came before.

Ruskin also argues that at a local, individual level, the transfer of memories from parent to child requires that a family stay rooted in its home. Not only do buildings become an enduring physical record of past times, they also provide a space where the proximity of parents and children to each other and to their ancestors allows memory to survive. As Ruskin watches old houses being torn down and replaced by cheaper, less permanent structures, and younger generations migrating from their ancestral homes to seek opportunity elsewhere, he fears that such continuity is becoming increasingly rare. Ruskin believes that all people would find it tragic

> to think that the place of their earthly abode, which had seen, and almost seemed to sympathise in, all their honour, their gladness, or their suffering,—that this, with all the record it bare [sic] of them, and all of material things that they had loved and ruled over, and set the stamp of themselves upon—was to be swept away, as soon as there was room made for them in the grave. (179)

He thinks this creates a psychic disturbance that sets one generation against another; he notices that "there must be a strange dissolution of natural affection, a strange unthankfulness for all that homes have given and parents taught… when each man would fain build to himself, and build for the little revolution of his own life only" (180). *Mayor* seems to echo this understanding, especially by connecting the violent disintegration of the Henchard family with their unhoused state. The wife-selling incident occurs at the end of a long day of traveling from one undisclosed location to another. When the family arrives at Weydon-Priors, the scene of the fair, Henchard asks a local resident "is there

any house to let—a little small new cottage just a builded or such like?" but the man replies "Pulling down is more the nater of Weydon. There were five houses cleared away last year, and three this; and the volk nowhere to go—no not so much as a thatched hurdle" (7). Soon after, Henchard gets drunk in the furmity tent and sends his wife and child away, disrupting the continuity of generational memory, which in turn allows for the significant gaps, erasures, and deflections in the family record.

Connecting "Forgotten and Following Ages with Each Other":

The Mayor of Casterbridge's Disorderly History

Throughout *Seven Lamps*, as in most of his work, Ruskin rails against modern technologies and shifting social hierarchies. "The Lamp of Memory" hits these notes with great force, as his concern for the stability of individual families and the nation demonstrates. Most would describe his attitudes about our relationship to the past as conservative—even excessively so. Even so, while Ruskin's analysis leads him to conservative conclusions, there is something much more revolutionary about his materialist interpretation of history. As J.B. Bullen points out, Ruskin's architectural writings can be "described as a very early kind of cultural history" (Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents* 145),[36] in contrast with more traditional forms of nineteenth-century historiography. Bullen argues that Ruskin's work goes "against what was accepted as a more orthodox form of historical writing…[which focuses on] politics…. They rarely

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[36] Bullen's argument in this chapter (**"Ruskin's Venice and Victor Hugo's Paris"**) is based on his interpretation of *The Stones of Venice*, but it is just as applicable to *Lamps* and Ruskin's body of work as a whole.

touch on domestic life or the arts; … the arts are treated as a curious by-product of political or economic factors" (Bullen 146).

As Bullen claims, Ruskin's focus on architecture as history offers a way of understanding historical change apart from the political power struggles of individual leaders. Ruskin argues that architecture provide a valuable source of history because its permanence stands in contrast to the ever-shifting power dynamics of political actors. We should look to architectural structures for our history because,

> It is in their lasting witness against men, in their quiet contrast with the transitional character of all things, in the strength which, through the lapse of seasons and times, and the decline and birth of dynasties, and the changing face of the earth, and the limits of the sea, maintains its sculptured shapeliness for a time insuperable, connects forgotten and following ages with each other, and half constitutes the identity, as it concentrates the sympathy, of nations. (187)

This contrast aligns the "decline and birth of dynasties" with the seasons and tides, suggesting that political history is cyclical rather than a linear progression. New leaders rise and fall, but one period bears no relation to the next. By contrast, the kind of history offered by architecture is a connective tissue that binds historical ages together. Such history even "half constitutes the identity… of nations"; in other words, architecture's continuity provides a stable sense of identity or selfhood for the nation across generations and periods.

However, while architecture in the novel does display its own passage through time, as the description of the Casterbridge ring shows us, the connective force of its record is not as powerful as Ruskin believes. Like the geological strata of the earth, the buildings of Casterbridge have one temporal layer only half obscuring another and never in neatly discernable striations. Architecture in the novel does not always allow the past to fall into a neatly ordered sequence, or connect one age to the next. Elizabeth-Jane's

less-than-linear progress down the main street on her first morning in Casterbridge is a good example: As she walks past the quaint, old-fashioned homes with "front doors left open at this warm autumn time" she observes that "through the long, straight, entrance passages thus enclosed could be seen, as through tunnels" gardens "backed by crusted grey stone-work remaining from a yet remoter Casterbridge than the venerable one visible in the street"; the open corridors between "[t]he old-fashioned fronts of these houses" and their "older than old-fashioned backs" (57) are like time-tunnels that overlap the old with the ancient. What is more, the "time-pressed pedestrian" who walks along this street finds her path obstructed by bow-windows and other architectural impediments, as well as the "overhanging angles of walls which, originally unobtrusive, had become bow-legged and knock-kneed" causing her to dance "a pleasing *chassez-dechassez* movement" along with "other Terpsichorean figures" (57). Thus, the pedestrian is both "time-pressed" in the usual sense of being in a hurry, but also "pressed," obstructed, and intruded upon by time's physical presence.

According to Zimmerman, nineteenth-century archeological finds revealed a paradoxical sense of the past as something both recoverable and uncontrollable. On the one hand, "excavation became a powerful epistemological trope for the Victorians: it brings together notions of time as spatial and of a person's ability to stand outside the layers of the past… to plumb the depths and produce narrative accounts of what is uncovered within the rock and dust." (Zimmerman 8) However, the existence of the trace also suggests that "despite the many histories that neatly divide time, no period or epoch is really discrete. Simultaneously making the past legible and eroding temporal boundaries, the trace invites both empirical study and imaginative interpretation"

(Zimmerman 8). The novel also reveals this paradox: the accumulation of architectural traces makes the past visible, but also incoherent. For example, Susan Henchard is buried in a continuously used Roman cemetery where her "dust mingled with the dust of women who lay ornamented with glass hairpins and amber necklaces, and men who held in their mouths coins of Hadrian, Posthumus, and the Constantines" (125). According to Tylor, such quotidian artifacts "are things which each express the state of a people as to one particular point of culture" (Tylor 12), but in the novel there seems to be little difference between the coins buried with Susan Henchard and those in the mouths of the Roman corpses, except the names imprinted on them. The jewelry and coins are evidence of a past culture, but they mingle with everything that has come since, and it all turns to dust eventually, leaving, at best, a fragmented narrative.

The descriptions of the mingled artifacts in Susan's final resting place, as well as of the mix of historical periods Elizabeth-Jane encounters on her walk through town, draw attention to the way time overlaps throughout the novel. The town's clocks that ring the curfew at eight o'clock each night are not synchronized, "so that chronologists of the advanced school were appreciably on their way to the next hour before the whole business of the old one was satisfactorily wound up" (29). These unsynchronized clocks hint at the social divisions just under the surface in the town; the expression of these divisions is also described as being "just as the west end of a church is sometimes persistently found to sing out of time and tune with the leading spirits in the chancel" (35). These descriptions of temporal overlap also speak to the novel's undisciplined juxtaposition of past and present, exemplified by the description of Casterbridge's past narrated by Buzzford, the town "historian":

> 'Tis recorded in history that we rebelled against the king one or two
> hundred years ago in the time of the Romans, and that lots of us was
> hanged on Gallows-Hill, and quartered, and our different jints sent about
> the country like butcher's meat. (50)

This colorful account conflates Monmouth's rebellion of 1685 with the more ancient history of the Roman occupation of England. Throughout the novel, the community of Casterbridge demonstrates this kind of flattened perspective of history that erases distinctions between eras, so that there is no difference between Celts, Romans, Saxons, or Protestant rebels in the landscape or in the minds of the community.

Survivals

However, despite the incoherence of Buzzford's narrative, it survives because it has explanatory power—Buzzford tells Farfrae the story on his first night in town to account for the fact that "Casterbridge is an old hoary place o' wickedness"(50), where Christopher Coney claims "we be bruckle folks here—the best o' us hardly honest sometimes" (50). As we saw with the description of the Casterbridge ring, the incoherent fragments of the original purpose or event remain as an unexamined influence in the collective memory.

Thus, in *Mayor* the past—even if incoherent and fragmented—can exist in the present; this is evident in the cultural survivals as much as in the physical ruins and artifacts. The emerging field of anthropology influenced Hardy's observations of the rural, old-fashioned Dorsetshire community where he grew up and returned to live as he was writing *Mayor*, and his fictionalized recreation of this community in his Wessex novels. As Radford suggests, "E.B. Tylor's concept of the untutored rural masses as a limitless archive of cultural antiquities… had a profound effect on Hardy's imaginative

reconstruction of Wessex village life" (Radford *Survivals of Time* 8). Tylor calls culture a

"branch" of history—he defines it as "the history, not of tribes or nations, but of the

condition of knowledge, religion, art, custom, and the like among them" (Tylor 5).

Tylor's anthropology does not look at the past as something contained within history, but

rather sees the past in the present-day conditions of "primitive" cultures. Importantly for

Hardy, Tylor suggests that even "civilized" societies are influenced by their history

through their unexamined assumptions, customs, and systems.[37] Culture, in this sense,

becomes a kind of stratified representation of the past; it is a gradual accumulation of

knowledge and beliefs, with its various layers visible in its persistent practices and

rituals.

As with most of Hardy's novels, *Mayor* is filled with references to survivals in the

form of superstitions, folk sayings, and traditions, including the skimmington or

"skimmity" ride, Mr. Fall, the surreptitiously-visited weather prophet that no one admits

to believing in, and Henchard's fear that he may be the victim of a wax doll with pins in

it. These kinds of obvious survivals are curiosities, but also point to the novel's portrayal

of the deeply ingrained rituals that form the basis of daily experience and reinforce social

hierarchies.

In *Mayor*, survivals are built into its architectural structures. The town's deeply

embedded ritualistic survivals are most evident in its communal spaces, especially its

three inns: the high-end King's Arms where the poorer folk stand outside the window to

watch the elite celebrate a banquet while they cannot get good bread; The Three

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[37] Thus, while Tylor's anthropology posits a progressive model that privileges Euro-
centric (and often blatantly racist) assumptions, it also "undermined these visions of
cultural dominance, since modern culture was still influenced by archaic mythical
thought" (Emden 187).

Mariners, the respectable gathering place for the middle-class artisans of the town; and Peter's Finger, the unsavory "church" for the underclass. All three of these spaces have deeply-ingrained, unexamined ritualistic functions that go beyond their ostensible purpose of providing food and drink. First, Peter's Finger is called "the church of Mixen Lane" (237), not only because it is "centrally situate [sic], as such places should be" (237), or because its name is a play on a religious name,[38] but because it is a site where the locals congregate to retell their communal stories (the conversation centers around the clever tricks poachers would play to escape capture) and to plan their ceremonial shaming of Henchard and Lucetta in the skimmity ride.

The Three Mariners serves a similar function for its clientele: its "bay window projecting into the street … was closed with shutters, in each of which appeared a heart-shaped aperture" (40), and as this image suggests, the inn is like the heart of the town where its lifeblood—the working-class artisans—all circulate through. Most significantly, inside The Three Mariners the townsfolk enact rites that are a direct extension of their weekly religious practices, going directly from their church service each Sunday to the inn for a highly ritualized communal drink. The description emphasizes the ceremonial quality of the custom:

> … the point of honour, on these sacred occasions was for each man to strictly limit himself to a half-a-pint of liquor. This scrupulosity was so well understood by the landlord, that the whole company was served in cups of that measure. They [the cups] were all exactly alike…. Forty at least might have been seen at these times in the large room, forming a ring round the margin of the great sixteen-legged oak table, like the monolithic circle at Stonehenge…. Outside and above the forty cups came a circle of forty smoke-jets from forty clay pipes; outside the pipes the countenances of forty church-goers, supported at the back by a circle of forty chairs." (213)

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[38] St. Peter-ad-Vincula or St. Peter in Chains (Kramer explanatory notes 344)

As with most survivals, the "convivial custom" is so ingrained in communal practices that it is "scarcely recognized as such, yet none the less established" (213). Moreover, not only is this "sacred" custom a reflection of Christian beliefs and practices—it takes place every Sunday after church, and it is characterized by its respectful restraint in terms of alcohol consumed and topics of conversation—but the reference to Stonehenge, with the echoes of its circles in the rings of cups, pipes, smoke, faces, and chairs, points to the more ancient pagan roots of such ritualized behaviors. This ceremony is also where Henchard comes to curse the newly-married Farfrae, and his choice of a psalm as the curse similarly emphasizes a juxtaposition of religious and superstitious practices. This sense of religious practice as a displaced pagan rite emphasizes the community's unthinking participation in Christian ritual; the custom is indeed "convivial," but the group's discussion of the sermon highlights the emptiness of their practices because "the general tendency being to regard it as a scientific feat or performance which had no relation to their own lives" (213).

Finally, the banquet at The King's Arms enacts a ceremony of class privilege where the hungry townspeople watch through the window frame as the guests eat and imbibe the "three drinks [that] seemed to be sacred to the company—port, sherry, and rum; outside which old-established trinity few or no palates ranged" (32). The reference to the "trinity" of "sacred" drinks has ironic echoes to a priest's sacramental drinking of wine in front of a congregation at mass. Radford reads the event as a "mock representation of worldly and material supremacy: a puppet show of empty poses" while the townspeople outside the window are a "'congregation,' observing a ceremonial" (Radford *Survivals of Time* 123). This ceremonial effect is intensified later in the novel

with the skimmity ride—itself a "puppet show" of stuffed figures—which originates as a ritualistic response to the kind of social injustice enacted at the banquet. The hierarchical social and political structures reinforced by the display at the King's Arms feast are challenged by the Peter's Finger ceremony designed to allow the lowest class to humiliate those above them. Thus, the social divisions and conflicts embodied by these three buildings are also ritually enacted within them.

The implication is that the institutionalized power dynamics and hierarchies of modern social and political systems are also, at their core, survivals. Radford reads *Mayor* through this lens; he suggests that the political, economic, and sexual battles for dominance between Henchard and Farfrae are mythic survivals of the kinds of primal battles Frazer describes in *The Golden Bough* (1890). Although ostensibly about who will be the mayor of the town, and head corn-factor, and husband to Lucetta, these struggles fundamentally re-enact older fertility rituals where the old fertility god loses his potency and must be replaced by the younger. Moreover, this pattern of individual conflict can be generalized to stand for larger social upheaval, as a new generation challenges the entrenched system of power.[39]

Frazer's ever-expanding collection of myths that re-enact this basic structure relies on the assumption that across cultures people will produce the ritualized expression of this fundamental power struggle. Thus, the narrative structure itself—the replacement of one generation by the next—is itself a survival. Just as the novel depicts a contemporary culture enmeshed with primitive survivals, its unfolding plot is overlaid

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[39] According to Kramer's analysis of Hardy's manuscript and revisions of the novel, "modifications of the story during the writing of the manuscript itself suggest that its principal inspiration had been a large conception of the competition between members of different generations within a stable society" (Kramer xxxviii).

with accumulated layers of this and other mythic survivals. Readers have long noticed that *Mayor* echoes multiple manifestations of this pattern in Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, and especially Old Testament stories. For example, Julian Moynahan's reading of *Mayor* from sixty years ago interprets the novel as a retelling of the Book of Samuel, finding parallels in the relationship of David and Saul to that of Farfrae and Henchard. The novel has allusions and analogies to this story, as well as to the biblical accounts of Joseph, Jacob, Cain, and Job. The common thread that runs through *Mayor* and these various primitive, classical, and biblical myths it echoes, is the persistence of generational conflict. Moynahan argues that this parallel shows that "the relationship of love and hate which exists between the older man and the younger is a permanently possible, endlessly recurrent relationship between successive generations" (Moynahan 129). More recently, Neil Sargent has argued that Hardy emphasizes the presence of survivals in his novels because it "provides a kind of inverted mirror image through which we are able to see our own cultural attitudes and beliefs reflected back at us" (Sargent 35).

To be clear, my argument here is not that *Mayor* or any other novel necessarily profits from readers peeling back the layers of mythic survivals that infuse the novel's structure in order to excavate some fundamental displaced narrative structure at the core;[40] rather, my claim is that the presence of these survivals creates a formalist critique of the impulse to mediate the past through myth. The novel's accumulation of survivals, whether in the form of superstition, religious belief, political institutions, or myth become potentially problematic when they are so integrated into our ways of knowing and being

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[40] Whether Frazer's *Golden Bough* version, or Freud's Oedipal struggle, or any other variation.

that we are unaware of their presence. The intrusion of the past into the present through the survivals of custom and belief becomes insidious because it is unrecognized, even while it influences present behavior. The survivals that permeate the Casterbridge community, whether a folk custom such as the skimmity ride, or a sublimated religious or political practice such as the ritualistic public banquet performed before the hungry townspeople, reverberate with unacknowledged violence and injustice. Similarly, the novel suggests that the deeply embedded myths that structure the plot conceal even as they allow for remembering. As Radford argues, the novel is filled with "acts of story-telling in which lingering splinters of fact have been partially concealed by an overlay of generations of fantasies" (Radford "Excavating" 53). We can read *Mayor* through a variety of biblical, classical, and pagan frames that fit, but they lull us into thinking we know everything when we do not; the mythic survivals that structure the plot create an illusion of coherent meaning that conceals the fissures underneath.

Bullen explains that for Ruskin, architecture serves memory because "the flux of human events is arrested in art; the chronicle is memorialized in stone" (Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents* 146). This is the very heart of the matter: the mediation required for memory—architectural, mythological, narrative mediation—must fix "the flux of human events." As Roland Barthes describes in *Mythologies* (1957), this is what myth does; even his language has striking similarities with Bullen's. He describes myth as "a frozen speech: at the moment of reaching me, it suspends itself, turns away and assumes the look of a generality: it stiffens, it makes itself look neutral and innocent… This is a kind of *arrest*, in both the physical and the legal sense of the term" (Barthes 124, emphasis original). As Barthes describes, when speech becomes myth, its meaning is

appropriated and restored: I will turn momentarily to the debates about architectural

restoration that both Ruskin and Hardy participated in, and as we will see, restoration

never returns us to an original state. Furthermore, when myth freezes its meaning, it

creates the illusion of meaningfulness complete unto itself, emptied of all political or

social content, absent any historically situated motivation. With mythic speech, the

"meaning is *already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a

comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" (Barthes 116). Because myth seems to offer

such completeness, it disguises its own gaps and deflections.

This phenomenon is interesting in and of itself, but it also points us to *Mayor's*

larger interest in the mediation of memory and history. A fictional novel inevitably

fictionalizes the past and uses familiar narrative structures to tell its story. However,

Mayor suggests that this process is inherent to all acts of individual and collective

remembering; the past is unruly, so in order to take hold of it, we impose order. As we

will see, the creative structuring processes through which the disorderly past becomes

graspable as memory —through architecture as well as myth and narrative—displaces,

deflects, and erases as much as it preserves.

Mediated Narratives of History

The mythic survival of intergenerational conflict that frames the novel's structure

is the basis of Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" chapter as well. The cycle of one generation

replacing the next is also a story of forgetting; as Ruskin pleads, architectural memory is

a bulwark against such loss. Ruskin's fear of sons that dismantle their fathers' homes and

legacies, and populations that disregard their ancestral legacy is his own version of the

death of the fertility king at the hand of a younger king, the death of Saul at the hand of

David, and the death of Henchard at the hand of Farfrae. This survival is

unacknowledged, but deeply entrenched in his argument nonetheless. Thus, the structures

of mythic survivals extend beyond works of fiction to inform Ruskin's analysis of social

and historical truths.

Barthes's framework allows us potentially to read any speech as myth, and

further, any expressive act as speech, including pictures, images, and, for our purposes,

architecture. Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" provides a useful example of architecture's

mythologizing potential, as well as its deceptive implications. In this example, Ruskin

envisions that all public architecture could be like the ducal palace in Venice, in which

"every capital of its arcades was filled with meaning" (184). He asks us to

> imagine our own India House adorned in this way…chased with bas-
> reliefs of our India battles, and fretted with carvings of Oriental foliage, or
> inlaid with Oriental stones; and the more important members of its
> decoration composed of groups of Indian life and landscape, and
> prominently expressing the phantasms of Hindoo worship in their
> subjection to the Cross. Would not one such work be better than a
> thousand histories? (184-5)

Ruskin imagines this imposing "massively built" (184) building would be a pure

expression of Indian history, better than what words could express in a "thousand

histories." Such a building would indeed be "filled with meaning" as Ruskin would hope,

but instead of a pure expression of historical truths, it would offer a highly mythologized

celebration of British imperialism.[41] This myth would seem to offer a full meaning of

triumph and progress, but this illusion of fullness would conceal the colonial oppression

and religious intolerance implicated in such an image. This example points to the way we

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[41] This analysis of Ruskin is similar to Barthes's analysis of mythic French imperialism in
the image of the black soldier saluting (in *Mythologies*).

mediate memory through belief—we grasp at the past by subsuming it within a framework that accords with our assumptions about narrative coherence. Ruskin believes that the history of British involvement in India is one of triumphant religious conversion.

By contrast, *Mayor's* architecture begins by presenting an image of completeness, but then reveals the fissures that challenge that narrative. As Michel Foucault says of genealogy, the history this architecture offers "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (Foucault 139)—but the documents are of stone and wood rather than parchment. High-Place Hall, the building in center of town that Lucetta inhabits when she first comes to Casterbridge, is a good example of the way a building's narrative may appear complete but be only half-coherent. At first the manor home seems to tell a consistent story; although "[i]t was not altogether aristocratic, still less consequential, yet the old-fashioned stranger instinctively said, 'Blood built it, and Wealth enjoys it'" (130). The materials and design speak to the stranger of the house's past ("Blood built it") and its present ("Wealth enjoys it") on an instinctive level. This suggests how architecture might work to preserve cultural continuity—even someone without prior knowledge would understand the house's history as the home of an "old" family of wealth and good blood. However, this instinctive reading of the house would lead the stranger astray; as it turns out, "…its occupancy had been irregular" (131) because of its inconvenient location. Thus, the history of the house is disjointed, with gaps and irregularities.

Similarly, at first the design of the house appears consistent. The style is Palladian or neo-classical, which utilizes the symmetry and proportion of classical Roman design, and therefore seems an appropriate homage to the Roman history of the town. However,

the narrator suggests that there is no longer any such thing as a "pure" style—the house "like most architecture erected since the Gothic age, was a compilation rather than a design" (130), much like Buzzford's compilation of Casterbridge history. The apparent perfection of neo-classical lines is belied by the integration of the other elements, and especially by the view from the back.

If we move from the view of the house from the main street to the view from "one of the little-used back alleys of the town," we find the back door is "arched and old—older than the house itself" (131). Over the archway of the door is a stone mask with the remains of a "comic leer…but generations of Casterbridge boys had thrown stones at the mask, aiming at its open mouth; and the blows thereon had chipped off the lips and jaws as if they had been eaten away by disease…." The diseased appearance of the back of the house is a stark contrast to the respectability of the front, and as the description makes clear, this appearance is in keeping with a sinister, secret history. As the narrator tells us:

> The position of the queer old door and the odd presence of the leering
> mask suggested one thing above all others as pertaining to the mansion's
> past history—intrigue. By the alley it had been possible to come unseen
> from all sorts of quarters in the town—the old play-house, the old bull-
> stake, the old cock-pit, the pool, wherein nameless infants had been used
> to disappear. High-Place Hall could boast of its conveniences
> undoubtedly. (131)

This description, like many of the novel's other architectural descriptions, emphasizes the layers of time from front to back—the backs of buildings are older, so that the fronts conceal the history. In this case, the concealed history is sinister, boasting of the "conveniences" that supported lewdness, violence, and infanticide, despite the house's respectable façade.

This description of High Place Hall has obvious parallels to Henchard himself; like the house, Henchard's appearance and status conceal his more disreputable history.

Moreover this history of the house mirrors Henchard's experiences with what Tandon calls "bits of the past which are supposedly dead, but will not lie down" (Tandon 472). When, for example, the town learns of Henchard's "mad freak at Weydon-Priors Fair" twenty years later, "the interspace of years was unperceived; and the black spot of his youth wore the aspect of a recent crime" (202). Past time—the "interspace of years"—can suddenly disappear, creating gaps and discontinuities.

This is true for the characters as well as for the readers. For example, Henchard's meeting with Susan at the ring repeats later when he meets Lucetta in the same location; the sight of her "strongly revive[s] in his soul the memory of another ill-used woman who had stood there and thus in bygone days" (231). Because Henchard finds meaning in the pattern, the memory of his mistreatment of Susan leads him to abandon his vindictive plan to humiliate Lucetta. However, his imposition of a pattern onto to two separate events also flattens out the distinctions between them. In reaction to Lucetta's distress, "[h]is old feeling of supercilious pity for womankind in general was intensified by this suppliant appearing here as the double of the first" (232). When Henchard makes his experience with Lucetta a continuation of his experience with Susan, it prompts him to approach Lucetta with more empathy and humanity, but it also reinforces his misogyny and allows him to generalize characteristics across individuals in different times.

Whether it is the history of High-Place Hall, or of Henchard himself, this sense of the past as something discontinuous and overlapping also points us to the novel's sharp critique of the Ruskinian assumption that effective history (in Ruskin's case, architectural history) connects one age to the next and especially that it "half constitutes the identity" (181) of the nation. This relationship between memory, history, and identity is crucial;

the assumption is that we can know what something or someone is in the present if we can reconstruct the sequence of the past. Again, Foucault's analysis of historiography is helpful; the problem with the way Ruskin uses architecture to connect one age to the next is that it assumes, as Foucault articulates, "that words had kept their meaning, that desires still pointed in a single direction, and ideas retained their logic" (Foucault 139). Ruskin's reading of history through architecture depends upon his assurance that there is a kernel of a stable, coherent "self"— whether it is an individual, a nation, or a building—that passes through time unchanged at the core, despite accumulating layers of mediation and displacement. Foucault argues instead that genealogical analysis reveals "not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault 142). History does not reveal fundamental truths, but rather ideas that come out of a particular moment for particular reasons.

Hardy would probably not articulate his understanding of history in quite this way; however, the piecemeal compilation of architectural styles in High-Place Hall's design and the piecemeal compilation of Buzzford's historical account suggest a similar mistrust of the unified self or history. In the novel, it is as Foucault suggests; the self is "an empty synthesis" and "[h]istory is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers" (Foucault 146).

To demonstrate, let us return to the back door of High-Place Hall, the door that "suggests" intrigue; the extent to which this is known history, tradition, gossip, or just conjecture, is ambiguous. As other descriptions of the town make clear, we can at least know for certain that there was once a play-house, bull-stake, and cock-pit accessible to

the back entrance, because the names of these places still remain in everyday usage, even though the spaces are now used for different purposes. To some extent, the names preserve the history of these locations. However, the more mysterious part of the sinister description includes mention of a discreet passageway to the pool "wherein nameless infants had been used to disappear" (131). It is less clear how we know what happened in this pool, especially because the infants themselves were nameless.

In *Mayor*, names are a thematically important piece of the complex relationship of identity, memory, and history. A name signifies identity, and therefore the act of naming or putting a name to something should preserve that identity. Names can function this way in the novel; for example, as many readers have noticed, there is something supremely ironic about Henchard's act of naming himself in his will. It seems at least counterproductive that he signs his name to a document devoted to erasing all traces of his existence, and ensuring that, as he requests, "no man remember me" (309). Similarly, when Farfrae takes over the mayor's house and work yards, Elizabeth-Jane discovers that a "smear of decisive lead-coloured paint had been laid on to obliterate Henchard's name, though its letters dimly loomed through like ships in a fog" (205). Henchard's name, however indistinct, preserves the history of the house by creating a record of its previous owners.[42] Indeed, when Lucetta wants to erase her history, she attempts to do so by changing her name, trusting that no one will connect the wealthy Miss Templeman of High-Place Hall with the poor and disgraced Miss Le Sueur of Jersey.

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[42] Interestingly, Ruskin suggests that all houses should integrate textual records into their design; in his vision, houses would "suit and express each man's character and occupation, and partly his history…. It would be well that blank stones should be left in places, to be inscribed with a summary of his life and of its experience, raising thus the habitation into a kind of monument" (182).

Names can also tell us something about particular places and buildings; for example, the name of the novel's most prestigious inn, The King's Arms, derived its name from the time long ago when the king changed horses there on a journey to the west. Furthermore, as Tandon points out, many of the novel's place names such as Casterbridge are hybrids that combine Latin, Saxon, and Old English etymologies (Tandon 480), so that the names are themselves traces which bear their own temporal accretions. An excavation of these names reveals the philological record of a local history of invasion and migration, as one population replaced another. Names can preserve history.

However, this is also a novel that is deeply suspicious of names, in part because it questions the coherency of the intrinsic identity that a name is supposed to represent. As with the irregular historical narratives presented by High-Place Hall or by Buzzford, names in the novel can reflect an incoherent, disjointed identity through time. The most basic example of this is in the novel's title: when we read the title *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, we assume that the mayor it refers to is Michael Henchard, but, in fact, Donald Farfrae is also the Mayor of Casterbridge for a roughly equivalent portion of the novel, and there is a third mayor, Dr. Chalkfield, who serves the term between those of Henchard and Farfrae. At one level, this does not matter at all—as readers, it does not confuse us to see that the word "mayor" could refer to Henchard or Farfrae or someone else. However, it is worth noticing that the Mayor of Casterbridge is not one person, because it undermines our assumptions about historical progress and change. We can read the shift in economic and political power from Henchard to Farfrae as an inevitable, if somewhat regrettable, effect of modernization; Farfrae's scientific practices

and more even-keeled personality can only triumph over Henchard's old-fashioned methods and blustery energy in the modern marketplace of products and ideas.[43] However, the ambiguity of the title—the title of the novel, as well as the title "mayor" assigned to a different elected official—suggests a non-progressive interpretation, where history is not an evolution towards higher states of civilization. Does it matter if Henchard lives in the mayor's house or Farfrae? The rules change—as Whittle describes, "We work harder, but we bain't made afeard now" (205)—and Farfrae brings more rigorous scientific and contractual procedures to bear, but the basic structure remains the same. Perhaps the most telling indication of this is the description of the Casterbridge slum, which emphasizes that "[s]uch was Mixen Lane at the time when Henchard and Farfrae were mayors" (236). Neither Mayor Henchard nor Mayor Farfrae has any effect on the deeply entrenched social ills that create the dismal conditions of Mixen Lane.

This question of names returns us, once again, to the nameless infants drowned in the convenient pool outside of town. This reference echoes the novel's recurring theme of intergenerational conflict and responsibility by illustrating a violent way that an older generation has avoided its duty to the next. More specifically, it echoes Henchard's original abdication of responsibility for his own daughter—he even tells Susan that in the intervening years he came to assume "that you had started out for some colony with that man, and had been drowned on the voyage out" (69). But unlike the infants drowned in the pool, his daughter has a name. He tells Elizabeth-Jane when he reveals her parentage "'Twas I that chose your name, my daughter; your mother wanted it Susan. There, don't forget 'twas I gave you your name" (115). The name, Elizabeth-Jane, seems to offer

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[43] See, for example, Pamela Dalziel's introduction to the novel for a thorough explanation of this interpretation.

complete, coherent meaning. For Henchard, and for us readers as well, the name fixes her identity and offers a complete history from the time Henchard chose her name.

But of course, it is the very completeness of this meaning that proves so deceptive; the name Elizabeth-Jane does not refer to a single, inherent identity at all. Elizabeth-Jane is not the person Henchard thought she was, nor who we assumed she was either. This example of what Tandon calls Hardy's "brilliant act of narrative bad faith" (Tandon 484) serves as a warning: our assumptions about the continuity of memory and the unity of identity may ultimately obfuscate a great deal. In *Mayor*, Tandon argues that the novel's narrative structure and its temporal disproportioning "invite the reader to equate temporal succession with causal connection…only to question so secure a belief" (Tandon 484). In other words, the scene of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leaving with Newson in the first part is quickly followed by the scene of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane walking along the road eighteen years later. So little seems to have changed in this scene in the intervening eighteen years that it might have been "the afternoon following the previously recorded episode. Change was only to be observed in the details" (20). The novel thereby encourages us to believe that the "history of Susan Henchard's adventures in the interim can be told in two or three sentences" (24). The narrator hints that he is telling all, all the while concealing the most important of those details—the fact that the child Elizabeth-Jane we saw leaving is not the same as the young woman we see returning. The effect of this trick is that it forces us to confront the unexamined beliefs – the survivals and myths—that structure our experience and create our histories.

"To Fetch it Back Entirely is Impossible; Nature Won't Stand so Much as That":

Restoration and Preservation

Therefore, the mediation that makes the past graspable as history is, as Barthes says of myth, "a relation of *deformation*" (Barthes 121), because fixing, naming, and narratizing creates an illusion of coherence. This leaves us with a paradox: without intervention, the past will disappear, but any act of intervention inevitably changes the past. This paradox is at the center of the debate about the best way to maintain the architectural ruins that filled the English landscape, just as they do in Casterbridge. Without deliberate action, the historical record Ruskin believed was embodied by these ruins would disappear; however, he argued the restoration practices that replaced old materials with new changed the architecture into something else entirely.

Nature works on and against the architectural structures that are supposed to preserve memory; with time nature overtakes human constructions, threatening to erase the past, or at least render it illegible. The Roman ring is overgrown with grass, the homes and inns of Casterbridge have walls that are "markedly out of perpendicular from the settlement of foundations" (39), while High-Place Hall has "birds' nests in its chimneys, damp nooks where fungi grew, and irregularities of surface direct from Nature's trowel" (150). The sign on the door of The Three Mariners inn is a particularly telling example of how nature may gradually make the past indecipherable: because the sign stands "on the sunny side of the street the three comrades [the mariners of the inn's name] had suffered largely from warping, splitting, fading, and shrinkage, so that they were but a half invisible film upon the reality of the grain, and knots, and nails which

composed the sign-board" (40). The original image of the three mariners has all but

disappeared, making it impossible to read in the present.

However, nature does not simply erase the past; instead, it helps create a new

narrative built upon the originating materials. Again, it helps to think of architecture from

the past as a trace artifact bearing evidence of its own passage through time. Zimmerman

points out that while, for example, "Derrida emphasizes the erasure inherent in

signification… the trace may suggest the past, but it is inevitably apart from that past and

in its very existence reveals the irretrievability of what is signified," she argues "the trace

is not the past… but it is a material connection to the past, and while it shows erasure, it

also preserves" (Zimmerman 9). Gravity, erosion, friction, and other natural forces

change the material substance of architecture, thereby creating their own records of

time's passage. Ruskin describes these effects as the gradual process through which time

creates the "rents, or fractures, or stains, or vegetation, which assimilate the architecture

with the work of Nature" (193). The architectural trace simultaneously testifies to an

irretrievable moment of origin, to a present state of material being, and to the temporal

connections in between. As Zimmerman describes, the trace "thus assumes a temporal

significance that transcends its original function" (Zimmerman 10).

Human lives also leave marks over time. The pair of bridges—one brick and one

stone—that "stood near the lower part of Casterbridge town" (207) are a good example;

in these bridges,

> every projection in each was worn down to obtuseness, partly by weather,
> more by friction from generations of loungers, whose toes and heels had
> from year to year made restless movements against these parapets….In the
> case of the more friable bricks and stones, even the flat faces were worn
> into hollows by the same mixed mechanism. The masonry of the top was
> clamped with iron at each joint; since it had been no uncommon thing for

desperate men to wrench the coping off and throw it down the river, in
reckless defiance of the magistrates. (206)

Just as with the forces of nature, over time the gradual pressures of human feet and heels
wear away the stone and brick surfaces of the bridges, while human hands have inflected
more dramatic damage to the coping. These changes wrought by human bodies over time
are rich with significance that transcends the bridges' original purpose; according to the
narrator, the "bridges had speaking countenances" (206), because the patterns of wear
attest to the history of both bridges being used as sites where desperate individuals
contemplate and occasionally commit suicide.

This understanding of the natural and human effects of time on architecture is
crucial to both Ruskin's and Hardy's impassioned arguments against the architectural
restoration practices of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. When Ruskin argues that "it is
in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and
preciousness of architecture" (187), he is referring to the kinds of physical "stains" that
the restoration of old churches and other buildings attempts to erase. Ruskin is emphatic
that restoration is "the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction
out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false
description of the thing destroyed" (194). We should read the architectural descriptions
in all of Hardy's novels in the context of the late nineteenth-century restoration vs.
preservation debate—a debate largely framed by Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" and other
writings and then taken up by William Morris, who went on to found the Society for the
Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877. As Benjamin Cannon defines the
distinction, "[r]estoration architects, imagining buildings as being in dire need of rescue
from temporal accretion, often scraped their surfaces down to smooth them and rid them

of signs of aging and accidental marks" (Cannon 208), while "[t]he preservationist position understands architecture to be irreversibly and essentially transformed by temporal processes…. Preservation (as opposed to restoration) seeks to protect not only the building itself but also its unique object history: the marks of its makers and users and the weathering process of time itself" (Cannon 207). For Hardy, these were not merely theoretical questions; as a young architect in the 1860's, much of his work was in restoring churches throughout the countryside. Later he joined SPAB and exerted his influence as a famous author to try to at least slow down the pace at which the nation's architectural heritage was being subjected to restoration efforts. In his 1906 essay "Memories of Church Restoration," Hardy reflects regretfully on his own participation in what he had come to see as destructive practices.

As Cannon argues, contextualizing his novels within the restoration debate helps clarify what can seem like Hardy's "schizophrenic approach to history," which can seem to have the contradictory aims of preserving a quickly disappearing pastoral community against encroaching modernity and of arguing against the stagnant effects of nostalgia for the past (Cannon 202). Without human intervention, the architecture of the past will succumb to the effects of nature and time, but as both Ruskin and Hardy convincingly argue, it is neither desirable nor possible to erase the accretions of time. Again, the faded state of the sign at The Three Mariners inn can illustrate the point: the fact that the sign was never repainted "was not so much owing to Stannidge, the landlord's, neglect, as from the lack of a painter in Casterbridge who would undertake to reproduce the features of men so traditional" (40). The figures of the mariners were "represented by the artist as persons of two dimensions only—in other words, flat as a shadow— [and] were standing

in a row in paralyzed attitudes" (40), a style of painting from a different era that a nineteenth-century Casterbridge sign painter would not know how to reproduce. As Ruskin argues, restoration is impossible because it would require resurrecting the aesthetics and sentiment of a past moment—"the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts" (194). Also as in Ruskin, this description focuses on the surface—the painting is a "half invisible film upon the reality" of the wooden sign. Ruskin claims that copying such a work is "palpably impossible. What copying can there be of surfaces that have worn half an inch down? The whole finish of the work was in the half inch that is gone; if you attempt to restore that finish, you do it conjecturally" (195). Returning the work to a previous state is deceptive because it requires scraping away the accumulated evidence of time's passing, and it is impossible because it requires conjecture about what is missing.

The main action of the novel begins with a community in the midst of grappling with these very questions about the feasibility and desirability of repaying, erasing, and changing the past. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane arrive in Casterbridge to find the town in crisis over the "growed" wheat (30), that Henchard, the mayor and leading corn-factor, has unwittingly sold to the community, producing "undisciplined bread" that makes "all the poor volks plim like blowed bladders" (30).[44] The citizens of the town want reparations for the bad wheat; but Henchard can only promise it will be better in the future, arguing that "[i]f anybody will tell me how to turn grown wheat into wholesome wheat, I'll take it back with pleasure. But it can't be done" (36). Farfrae introduces

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[44] According to Dale Kramer's note, "growed" wheat happens when "germination has begun owning to the high moisture content but the sprouts have not yet burst the hull of the kernels." The resulting "undisciplined" bread creates intestinal discomfort (Kramer "Explanatory Notes" 316).

Henchard to a chemical process that can reverse most of the damage; after using Farfrae's

process, Henchard judges the wheat is, "quite restored, or—well—nearly," to which

Farfrae responds, "To fetch it back entirely is impossible; Nature won't stand so much as

that" (45). Restoration can never quite return us to a moment of origin.

　　　Henchard's impulse is often to try to erase the past, or at least to restore the

present to a past state. When Susan first returns to his life after eighteen years, he sends

her a note with five guineas enclosed; as Susan understands, "the amount was significant;

it may tacitly have said to her that he bought her back again" (66). He remarries Susan to

make reparations to her for his past behavior and to restore Elizabeth-Jane to his home

and "paternal eye" (78). He even "restores" his home before bringing Susan and

Elizabeth-Jane to live with him: "Among other things, he had the iron railings, that had

smiled sadly in dull rust for the last eighty years, painted a bright green" (83); in other

words, he scrapes away the accumulations of eighty years and restores the railings to

their original state. But of course, remarrying Susan, bringing Elizabeth-Jane into his

house, and "restoring" the name Henchard to both of them, cannot erase the eighteen

years since the wife-selling incident, or even allow the family to resume its original

trajectory. This situation parallels Ruskin's critique of restoration that it "is a Lie from

beginning to end" (196). He argues that restoration is especially insidious because it tries

to erase what it does; it convinces people they are looking at the real thing, and

obfuscates the changes that have been made. Similarly, Henchard's restoration of his

family structure creates a lie—the Elizabeth-Jane who occupies the position of the baby

he sold with his wife is not the same person. In this way, Ruskin's critique of

architectural restoration is analogous to Barthes's critique of mythology that "myth is

speech *stolen and restored*. Only, speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back, it was not put exactly in its place" (Barthes 124).

Where Ruskin and Hardy seem to part ways, however, is in the question of preservation, where Hardy seems more aware of the need for compromise. He claims in "Memories of Church Restoration" that

> building is beheld in two incompatible purposes. To the incumbent, the church is a workshop, to the antiquary it is a relic. To the parish it is a utility; to the outsider a luxury… A utilitarian machine has naturally to be kept going, so that it may continue to discharge its original functions; an antiquarian specimen has to be preserved without making good even its worst deficiencies. The quaintly carved seat that even a touch will damage has to be sat in, the frameless doors with the queer old locks and hinges have to keep out draughts, the bells whose shaking endangers the graceful steeple have to be rung. ("Memories" 515)

A building cannot always be preserved against further damage, especially when the people who use the building need it to continue to serve the purpose for which it was intended. Ruskin proposes that resources should be directed towards maintaining older structures as artifacts of the past, but as *Mayor* demonstrates, Hardy sees potential dangers in the antiquarian, preservationist approach as well. Whether of a building or a particular way of life, preservation risks turning into an unhealthy nostalgia that can hinder necessary growth. The novel suggests that change is accompanied by loss—as Elizabeth-Jane says in response to the new seed drill that Farfrae introduces, "Then the romance of the sower is gone for good… How things change!" (158); however, romance is not a reasonable excuse for preventing useful improvements.

The picture of change that the novel presents shows an inevitable process of recycling and repurposing; when buildings or ideas outlive their usefulness, they are gradually reappropriated for new purposes. For example, the ruin of a medieval Franciscan priory in the gloomy outskirts of the town represents a way of life that has

long since lost its relevance and authority. Instead of preserving the priory intact as an artifact of that bygone historical moment, the pieces of the building were put to new uses, including Jopp's cottage which "itself was built of old stones from the long-dismantled Priory, scraps of tracery, moulded window-jambs, and arch labels, being mixed in with the rubble of the walls" (205). In this example, preservation has been stymied not so much by active efforts to clear away the past (although the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII was the initial impetus), but by a more general human tendency toward meeting its most immediate needs. The evidence of the novel is that Ruskin's lofty preservationist goals are doomed by simple human nature.

Furthermore, there are benefits to cutting off the past in favor of the new, as Farfrae's success introducing modern scientific and business practices to the sleepy town indicates. He moves listeners to tears singing nostalgic songs in his strongest brogue about going "hame, hame, hame to my ain countree" (49), but, as the narrator sardonically comments, he sings these songs "of his dear native country that he loved so well as to never revisit it" (301). He even recovers from Lucetta's death rather quickly because, "[t]here are men whose hearts insist on a dogged fidelity to some image or cause, thrown by chance into their keeping…and without them the band of the worthy is incomplete. But Farfrae was not of those" (280). As a character for fiction, Farfrae has none of the tragic power of Henchard,[45] and his succession to Henchard's position of

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[45] Dalziel quotes an 1886 *Spectator* review that she says anticipates "generations of readers" who find Farfrae cold and less than sympathetic: Farfrae is "the all-conquering Scotchman who fascinates everyone (except the reader) so easily" (Dalziel xix). According to Andrew Radford, "The young Scot's relaxed and easy-going temperament and lack of long term goals, the very traits that enable him to ingratiate himself with

power embodies the overall sense of loss at the passing of the old ways of life and the embarking on the new. However, there is never any question that Farfrae's flexibility and lack of rootedness to the old ways will ultimately lead him to prevail. It is therefore no surprise that his first major victory over Henchard comes with his innovative idea to host a party for the town under a "gigantic tent" that was made from old canvas rick-sacks and "ingeniously constructed without poles or ropes" (99) over the boughs of trees. The improvised, impermanent nature of the tent highlights Farfrae's most beneficial qualities—his disconnection from the more permanent structures of the past and his willingness to repurpose the materials at hand.

Tents and other temporary structures throughout the novel provide an interesting contrast to the permanence of the ancient structures that have dominated the landscape for centuries: besides Farfrae's improvised tent there are the tents of the Weydon-Priors fair, including the furmity tent, the farmers' temporary stalls erected on market day, and the bleachers built for the dignitaries of the town to welcome the royal visitor, just to name a few of the most important. The novel does not give these ephemeral structures much attention, but they are the sites of some of its most significant moments, including Farfrae's first triumph over Henchard and his subsequent firing, Henchard's auction of his wife and daughter, and the brief stop by the royal personage. The juxtaposition of these flexible spaces with the more ensconced structures highlights once again the novel's tension between the values of preservation and rootedness and those of change and mobility.

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sundry levels of Casterbridge society indicate a personality whose blandness lends Henchard's fatally passionate nature an awesome magnitude" (Radford *Survivals of Time* 131)

Ruskin uses the idea of tents to critique the modern sense of dislocation, comparing the "crowded tenements of a struggling and restless population" to the "tents of the Arab or the Gipsy" (180). As noted above, Ruskin worries that the combination of the destruction of old homes and migration away from ancestral lands, with its disregard for past or future generations, will ultimately have drastic negative consequences for the nation; he argues, for example, that he "cannot but think it an evil sign of a people when their houses are built to last for one generation only" (179) because he believes

> the roots of our national greatness must be deeply cankered when they are
> thus loosely struck in their native ground… when men build in the hope of
> leaving the places they have built, and live in the hope of forgetting the
> years that they have lived, when the comfort, the peace, the religion of
> home have ceased to be felt. (180)

Ruskin sees this attitude towards building as symptomatic of larger social unrest—people are discontented with their present lot and look to advance to a higher sphere, which troubles his ideal of a peaceful and stable society.

Hardy would probably respond that although such disruptions are indeed a source of sadness, the continuity of generational memory is not valuable when it binds people to customs or lands that are no longer relevant. *Mayor* demonstrates that migration is always a part of local history. At first, Casterbridge seems remarkable for its compactness and physical enclosure. Elizabeth-Jane's observation of the town, as she first approaches, is that "it is all huddled together; and it is shut in by a square wall of trees, like a plot of garden ground by a box-edging"; the narrator confirms that "Its squareness was, indeed, the characteristic which most struck the eye in this antiquated borough" (27). But in fact, as its name suggests, Casterbridge has numerous bridges into town that allow people to come and go with ease; furthermore, over the centuries a succession of foreign populations has made a home of the town, and although the railroad has not reached the

town yet, it is clearly coming soon. All of the major characters of the novel—Henchard, Farfrae, Susan, Lucetta, and Elizabeth-Jane—have migrated from elsewhere, and even within the boundaries of the town of Casterbridge, they move from house to house in keeping with changing social and economic status.[46] Similarly, the homes of the Mixen Street slum are inhabited not only by disreputable characters, but also by those whose economic situation has deteriorated—families of "needy respectability" who migrated from "decayed villages…copyholders and others, whose roof-trees had fallen for some reason or other, compelling them to quit the rural spot that had been their home for generations" (237).

Hardy also addresses these concerns in his 1883 essay, "The Dorsetshire Labourer," which discusses the transition of the rural Dorset community away from its traditional ways of life. Changing economic conditions lead to a new generation of workers who move yearly from farm to farm instead of staying in one location, which in turn changes the dialects and knowledge base of these laborers. Increased migration offers workers and their families a new "kind of education" that makes them "shrewder and sharper men of the world" but they have also "ceased to be so local in feeling or manner as formerly" ("Dorsetshire Labourer" 262). But while this erosion of local feeling is a source of loss, the article also emphatically states the need to balance such loss against the benefits of progress. The workers are "losing their individuality, but they are

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[46] A brief outline of the characters' movement from house to house in Casterbridge includes: Susan and Elizabeth-Jane move into a cottage and then into Henchard's house, then Elizabeth-Jane moves in with Lucetta at High-Place Hall, then into lodgings, then to the seed shop with Henchard, then back to Henchard's original house, this time as Farfrae's wife; Henchard moves from his house, to Jopp's cottage, to rooms above the seed shop, to the humble cottage where he dies; Farfrae moves from lodgings, to High-Place Hall, to Henchard's house; Lucetta moves from Jersey, to High-Place Hall, to Henchard's old house.

widening the range of their ideas, gaining freedom" ("Dorsetshire Labourer" 263). And furthermore, Hardy suggests that the extinction of picturesque local customs through the forces of modernity may be a greater loss to outside observers than to the laborers themselves. He ultimately believes that "the artistic merit of their old condition is scarcely a reason why they should have continued in it…. It is too much to expect them to remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the pleasure of romantic spectators" ("Dorsetshire Labourer" 263). The nostalgia that provides pleasure to the outside observer would sentence the observed to a stagnant and increasingly irrelevant life.

 Mayor also demonstrates that the "old fashioned" customs and beliefs that may seem picturesque to the "romantic spectator" are very often unpleasant or even dangerous to those who participate in them. Hardy's attitude toward rustic life was generally more ambivalent than celebratory; as Radford suggests, "Hardy is cannily oblique when he explores the legitimacy of widely accepted traditions, and reveals many vestigial remnants of ancient lore to be misguided, morbid or even destructive" (Radford *Survivals of Time* 21). For example, the novel's portrayal of the "skimmity ride," a local custom designed to humiliate people suspected of sexual impropriety, turns deadly when Lucetta, one of the intended victims, has a miscarriage and then dies of complications. Hardy's earlier novels use their rural characters as a source of local color and gentle humor, but by *Mayor*, the rustic "chorus" is not romanticized, and even their humor has a darker edge.

 It can be tempting to see a novel such as *Mayor*, with its careful attention to disappearing expressions and customs as performing its own form of preservationist work. To some extent Hardy's novels, especially his earlier works, enact a kind of

celebration of simple, rural life through their preservation of dialect and festive customs

such as the sheep-shearing scene in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and the Christmas

mumming in *The Return of the Native*. In this way, Hardy's texts themselves can be seen

as deliberate acts of preservation. Simon Gattrell attributes the gradual development of

Hardy's texts into a series called "The Wessex Novels" to his desire to preserve the

disappearing Dorset community. Gattrell traces the progression from the early novels that

were loosely tied to the locales Hardy had known as a child to the emergence of a

fictional Wessex in the later novels. When Hardy reissued all of his novels together in

1896 he made the decision to call the collection "The Wessex Novels," even going so far

as to revise the earlier novels to make the place names consistent.[47] Gattrell argues that

Hardy was motivated by the fact that by the 1890s the places he had written about had

changed (Gattrell 28). He started to envision the novels as a series because "he had begun

to understand that he was the historian of a Wessex now passed, the recorder of a series

of unique micro-environments, ways of life and speech, which together had formed a

cultural whole" (Gattrell 31).[48] According to Hardy, reflecting in later years on the

historical authenticity of his Wessex setting, in his novels, "the inhabitants lived in

certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs, just as they are

shown on these pages…. I have instituted inquiries to correct tricks of memory, and

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[47] This process of conforming all of his novels to the Wessex universe was ongoing
through the 1912 publication of the "Wessex Edition," which, according to Kramer, has
until recently been "judged to be Hardy's definitive text" (Kramer xxxvii). The final
"Mellstock Edition," released in 1920, contains few changes to *Mayor*. See Kramer's
"Note on the Text" xxxv-xlvii.

[48] Tim Dolin argues that Hardy had also come to realize by the 1890's that it would be
financially beneficial to bring his novels into a distinctive locale. See Dolin "Liberal
Politics and the Origins of Wessex," *Thomas Hardy and Contemporary Literary Studies*
(2004)

striven against temptations to exaggerate, in order to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life" (qtd. in Millgate 233).

Furthermore, the novels do often express awareness of their status as artifacts. For example, in *Mayor,* Hardy emphasizes the novel's function as a record of the past by positioning the action in relation to specific historical events; as he tells readers in the preface, "The incidents narrated arise mainly out of three events… They were the sale of a wife by her husband, the uncertain harvests which immediately preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the visit of a Royal personage" (3). He also draws attention to the text's preservation work by using footnotes to point out changes from the 1840's timeframe of the novel to the later timeframe of his readers, especially in the architectural layout of the town. The description of the thatched and tiled houses on the outskirts of town are footnoted with "most of these old houses have now been pulled down" (28), the description of the church chimes ringing out the curfew is accompanied by the footnote that "these chimes, like those of other country churches, have been silenced for many years" (29), and the description of the old-fashioned houses Elizabeth-Jane sees on her first morning in Casterbridge likewise notes that "the reader will scarcely need to be reminded that time and progress have obliterated from the town that suggested these descriptions many or most of the old-fashioned features here enumerated" (58). These meta-textual reminders that all of these architectural features have already disappeared emphasizes that the text itself can preserve what might otherwise disappear forever. The novel can be a repository for the architectural memory that has been "obliterated" by "time and progress."

However, as Millgate points out, Hardy approaches his novel's preservationist work from the vantage point of an artist who can stand outside of the historical community the text preserves. Millgate's analysis of Hardy's return to Dorchester to build Max Gate (the Hardy family home for the rest of his life) during the composition of *Mayor* illustrates Hardy's approach to preserving the life and customs of the rapidly disappearing Wessex region. As Millgate describes, "[r]elocation in Wessex had not, for Hardy, meant reabsorption into the contemporary regional consciousness" (Millgate 254). Interestingly, Millgate reads this distance from the "regional consciousness" in Hardy's choice of materials for constructing Max Gate, suggesting that the "red brick of Max Gate—in such contrast to the mellow thatched charm of Barnes's rectory[49]… was precisely indicative of the refusal of the returning native to revert to the assumptions of his own past" (Millgate 254). The comparison of the foreign red brick of Hardy's home to the more authentic "mellow thatched charm" of Barnes's rectory demonstrates Hardy's unwillingness to completely reintegrate into the Wessex community. Moreover, Millgate argues that this refusal indicates that

> devoted as he was to the past of the region and profoundly sympathetic to the fundamental truths… of his earliest experience, Hardy had learned through years of self-education and of London living that there were other, more sophisticated, and on the whole better ways of thinking and acting.…Hardy was an interpreter of that rural world to an urban world that had grown from it. (Millgate 254-5)

Moreover, it is clear that even if Hardy's novels attempt the most faithful of preservations, they still require layers of mediation and displacement. *Mayor* is a fictionalized story set in a fictionalized town—Casterbridge is not Dorchester, after all. When Hardy's preface refers to the history and changes of Casterbridge, such as the three

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[49] William Barnes was a famous folk and dialect poet of the Wessex region.

events he based the novel on from "the real history of the town called Casterbridge" (3), it is not quite accurate. The footnotes that draw attention to houses that have long since been pulled down are really pointing out houses that never existed in the first place. Even if the descriptions of fictionalized houses are modeled with great care after specific houses in the town of Dorchester, the preservation work is a step removed. Of course, it is the prerogative of a novelist to draw upon real places and fictionalize them in whatever way he chooses, and as readers we understand that we are not reading about a real place. But Hardy's work is a somewhat special case—with Hardy's Wessex, the distinctions between the real and the fictional are not always quite so clear. Gatrell's analysis of Hardy's preservationist work is by no means atypical, and for generations of readers since the publication of Hardy's works, his novels seem to offer a history of a real place. Most editions of Hardy's novels come with a Wessex map, and there is a tourist industry built up around visiting Wessex settings. Wessex is as fictional as Tolkien's Middle Earth, but because it incorporates the texture of real customs and dialects, as well as real architectural structures, it comes to occupy our memories of late nineteenth-century rural English life. To some extent, the realness we experience in reading the novels disguises its fictionality, allowing us to forget the mediation. And in thus forgetting, we readers become the "romantic spectators" who regret the loss of "the artistic merit of their old condition" that Hardy critiques in "The Dorsetshire Labourer."

So while *Mayor* does preserve interesting customs, dialects, and even historical events from an earlier time, in our architectural terms it would be perhaps more accurate to call this novel and the entire Wessex project a process of restoration. Standing from a vantage point as a former insider, now outsider, and from forty years after the time of the

Casterbridge world that he depicts, Hardy rebuilds something that never quite existed—just as he did as a young architect restoring churches. Moreover, the larger Wessex project amplifies this restoration by gradually scraping away the evidence of anything that did not fit within Wessex's fictional structure. The result is a coherent, totalizing presentation of a particular time and place. Now, over a century since the publication of the "Wessex Edition" in 1912, this presentation can come to seem like memory—a sense that we know a past that never really was.

Moreover, this sense of restored completeness gives the novel its emotional potency; Henchard's tragic fall, as with Oedipus's or Lear's before him, moves us because, as Barthes says of myth, its "meaning is *already* complete." Henchard's tragedy is humankind's tragedy. However, the novel's acknowledgement of the deflections and fissures beneath the surface of mediated history, as well as its suspicion of both restoring and preserving the past, suggest that it is deeply ambivalent about its own narrative processes.

CHAPTER 5
JUDE THE OBSCURE AND "THE LAMP OF LIFE"
"MODERN THOUGHT… IN SUCH DECREPIT AND SUPERSEDED CHAMBERS":
DISINTEGRATING STRUCTURES IN *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

As young Jude Fawley, the protagonist of Thomas Hardy's final novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1894), begins planning an ambitious move to Christminster (Hardy's fictionalized Oxford) as a classical scholar, he asks himself "how to live in that city?" (71), while working towards a degree. In this case, "to live" refers to what the narrator calls the "mean bread-and-cheese question" (118)—in other words, the question of how a poor young man is supposed to find the means to survive while pursuing his educational goals. Jude determines that the best way to meet his own physical needs will be by laboring to meet those needs for others. If humans need food, clothing, and shelter, then he will provide shelter: "they built in a city, therefore he would learn to build" (71). The implications of this basic human drive for shelter are a starting point for the novel's concern with the way domestic and public architecture sustains and expresses "life."

As a former architect, Hardy is well aware of the interrelationship of the experience of life and the built environment. His training and early work exposed him to all facets of human interaction with physical structures; as Claudius Beatty suggests, Hardy's *Architectural Notebook* "might reasonably be called a microcosm of the Victorian age" as it includes "every aspect of Gothic church architecture and the plans of big houses,…[as well as] many pages that have a direct bearing on industry and commerce and the day-to-day living of ordinary people" (Beatty *Architectural Notebook* 5).[50] Hardy's sketches and notes examine the exalted artistry of Gothic cathedrals on one

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[50] According to Beatty's preface, the original notebook "belongs to the F.E. Hardy Memorial collection, now preserved in the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester." It was

page and the more prosaic issues of "drainage, cesspools, and water-closets" (Beatty 5) on the next. The notebook demonstrates an intimate awareness of how both exalted and prosaic building design expresses the intellectual and creative life of an age, and also accommodates the bodily needs of everyday experience.

Although dates in the notebook indicate that Hardy used it most frequently during his architectural training and early career, he returned to it as he stayed involved with church restoration projects and the construction of his own home throughout his subsequent career as a novelist. During the composition of *Jude*, for example, Hardy made notes about restoration work at West Knighton church, where he worked as a consultant. Architecture remained a life-long interest, even after he turned his attention to literature; unsurprisingly, architectural imagery permeates his novels and poems. Hardy biographer Michael Millgate suggests,

> Hardy always valued his architectural background and drew upon it when designing a house for himself, lending practical assistance to the family building business, advising the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, even—in ways perhaps not yet sufficiently understood – in composing his own novels, stories, and poems. (Millgate, "The Biographical Sources" 7)

In recent years, critics have taken up this implied challenge,[51] drawing attention to the pervasive architectural signifiers in all of Hardy's work. In this chapter, I want to

first published in 1966, and "as far as is known, it is the only *architectural* notebook of Hardy's to have survived" (Beatty vii). It is a working notebook, containing sketches and notes, dating primarily from the period of 1862 to 1872 (pre-dating Hardy's career as a novelist), but in use until the 1920's (Beatty 4-5).

[51] Claudius Beatty, who describes his field of research as "the topography of the Wessex novels" ("When is a Castle" 258), has worked extensively on connecting Hardy's dual careers as architect and novelist. Other interesting recent examinations of Hardy's architectural influences include Marjorie Garson's chapter "Written in Stone: Hardy's Grotesque Sublime" and Joanna Stevens Mink's article "Fenestration as Narrative Technique in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*."

specifically take notice of the ways in which the inanimate, inorganic architecture of *Jude the Obscur*e helps us think through a moment when the life of traditional structures and ideas were disintegrating and new ones were beginning to emerge. The novel uses its architecture—the homes its characters inhabit, the churches they may pray in, and especially the gothic colleges of Christminster that Jude repairs and hopes to attend—to capture this transition to modernity. The clearing away of old homes and churches means the erasure of the landscape and a loss of associations and permanence. At the same time, efforts to maintain and restore older buildings reinforce restrictive and irrelevant social structures. Examining the architectural structures in the novel thus provokes a cluster of thematic questions about the status and stakes of modernity: what it means to be alive and present in a time of shifting modern consciousness, and the extent to which older structures, including gothic architecture, social hierarchies, and the novel form itself, can continue to live in and speak to this emerging modern moment.

According to Simon During, we should remember in context with Hardy's novels that "[t]he three decades after 1880 marked an especially intense phase, across a number of social and technological fields, in the process of Britain's modernization" (During 54). This is important for our understanding of Hardy's novels because, as Tim Dolin and Peter Widdowson claim, "Hardy is a writer for transitions" (Dolin 1)—not just because of his representative position in the transition from Victorian to Modern, or because, "modernity was his subject matter" (Dolin 2), but also because "Hardy explored the distinctive features of modern experience…. [his novels are] poised between the end of something and the beginning of something else" (Dolin 2). *Jude* captures a feeling that the solid ground is disappearing beneath our feet, as the instability of homes and the

rotting stones of churches and colleges echo the impermanence of traditional familial, religious, and educational structures.

"The Lamp of Life," the fifth of the seven lamps in Ruskin's architectural treatise, similarly interrogates the structures of modernity and tradition, and the transmission of ideas over time.[52] In this chapter, Ruskin challenges the architect, and the artist and intellectual more generally, to engage with and contribute to the life-force of the current moment, instead of mindlessly and mechanically repeating the forms of the past; in this part of his discussion, life stands in opposition to cultural inertia. Ruskin promises that cultural vitality can be maintained, not by cutting off the present from the past, but by judiciously finding new uses for old forms. Furthermore, Ruskin's conceptualization of "life" in terms of artistic technique and intellectual vitality in architecture, especially the way the artist's arrangement and the viewer's imagination can animate the "inert substance" (149) of a building, offers a framework for interpreting *Jude's* examination of life through its architectural structures. According to Ruskin, art has life when it communicates: when Ruskin writes of the life of an architectural work, he is interested in the way stone or brick becomes a communication medium—a means of transmitting the creative and intellectual spirit of the artist to a receptive viewer. He explains that we find material evidence of the immaterial life of the mind by the way it impresses itself upon solid substances, "as sea sands are made beautiful by their bearing the seal of the motion

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[52] Beatty points out in his introduction to Hardy's *Architectural Notebook* that as an architectural student in the early 1860's, Hardy's notes and sketches, particularly of Gothic architecture, are inevitably "pervaded by Ruskinian influence. Ruskin's ideas had helped form the artistic climate of the age, and we know Hardy was familiar with at least some of his writings…Ruskin was very much in the air" (Beatty *Architectural Notebook* 15).

of the waters" (148). Similarly, *Jude's* emphasis on carving and shaping understands that human hands imprint their life-force on inanimate stone.

Applying Ruskin's focus on the animating relationship between architect, architecture, and the viewers who interpret them to *Jude* offers an expansive approach to understanding the thematic implications of "life" in the novel. First, "life" can refer to a physical body that occupies physical spaces, and is animated by a living spirit. "Life" also can denote the vitality of ideas transmitted by physical structures; in *Jude* this is most significantly demonstrated by the way the crumbling architecture of Christminster critiques the relevance of the university system of classical study to modern life. Finally, Ruskin's engagement in "The Lamp of Life" with the living evolution of architectural styles and structures, favoring purposeful creation over mindless copying, is applicable to Hardy's experimentation with novelistic style and structure in *Jude*. The novel, which thematically addresses the disintegration of traditional social, familial, economic, and religious structures with such frankness, also self-consciously presents the inadequacy of 19th-century fictional structures to reflect the modern experience. In its themes and its formal structure, the novel seeks to capture a world that is crumbling away, leaving characters and readers alike disconnected and rootless, but also perhaps opening possibilities for the new to emerge.

Living in Structures

In a 1957 interview, British architect Sir Albert Richardson recounts meeting Thomas Hardy in the summer of 1923, and discussing the influence of his architectural

training on his subsequent career as a novelist.[53] Sir Albert believed that the "buildings of Wessex had written the Wessex novels… for Hardy architecture was full of human association and he sensed the life of a people, as it were, in their buildings. 'People make buildings in their own image'" (qtd. in Beatty x). Sir Albert's insight about the rich connection between Hardy's Wessex characters and their architecture is thematically relevant to *Jude's* exploration of life, in the significant ways of occupying architectural spaces, the symbolic parallels between human bodies and the buildings they construct, and the associative power of material structures.

As Jude recognized, the need for shelter is fundamental to the human condition, but the novel demonstrates that the physical and emotional experiences of life in a home are also culturally and historically situated constructs. How the novel's characters live determines and is determined by where they live—the physical structures they move into and through. Throughout the novel, the characters' living arrangements and search for lodgings tell us a great deal about their economic, geographic, and social circumstances. For example, Jude's first night in Christminster, his "first want being a lodging" leads him to search for "such localities as seemed to offer on inexpensive terms the modest type of accommodation he demanded" (113). Similarly, newly-married Jude and Arabella set up housekeeping in a "lonely roadside cottage" (94) rather than in town where Jude works, so that they may supplement his apprentice's income with a vegetable garden and a pig. In both cases, his meagre means will determine his choice of where and how to

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[53] Beatty interviewed Richardson January 19, 1957. Beatty says of the interview, "Sir Albert Richardson is as far as I am aware the only architect still living to have met Hardy and asked him questions specifically relating to his first profession" (Beatty x). Beatty discusses the interview in *The Part Played by Architecture in the Life and Work of Thomas Hardy.*

live. The reverse can also be true: Jude and Sue choose an isolated home in Aldbrickham so as not to draw attention to their unmarried status, even though it means Jude has to do less skilled and remunerative work; ultimately, their unsanctioned lifestyle forces them to become homeless transients. Because they have, as Sue describes "chosen to live their own way" (333), they cannot stay in one place and earn enough money to support their growing family.

Furthermore, within the novel's houses, we see the significance of the layout of rooms and the relationship of physical bodies to physical spaces. The typical layout of rooms in a house, including the arrangement of bedrooms, workspaces, stairways, and kitchens, codifies assumptions about gender and class roles.[54] However, the way *Jude's* characters inhabit their domestic spaces is often more transgressive. They repurpose and rearrange, demonstrating new ways of living in predetermined spaces. For example, the arrangement of his rooms in his aunt's house and in his Christminster lodgings reveals the intensity of Jude's studying during his periods of scholarly effort; in Christminster "to the consternation of his landlady, he shifted all the furniture of his room…rigged up a curtain on a rope across the middle, to make a double chamber out of one, [and] hung up a thick blind that nobody should know how he was curtailing his hours of sleep" (122). In addition, the way Jude, Arabella, Sue, and Phillotson occupy the novel's various rooms and houses tells us a great deal about their shifting sexual dynamics. Twice in the novel, Arabella traps Jude into marriage by trapping him in her parents' home; she seduces him by pulling him inside the walls of the house and inviting him to move freely from room

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[54] See, for example, Andrea Tange's *Architectural Identities* for a study of gendered spaces in middle-class Victorian homes, and Victoria Rosner's *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life,* for her examination of the reflection of shifting gender roles in new ways of arranging interior domestic spaces in the early twentieth century.

to room as he chases her in a highly-charged game. By contrast, Sue maintains sexual distance from her undergraduate friend, from her husband Phillotson, and from Jude by enforcing their separate occupation of rooms. Sue "shared a sitting room" (181) with her undergraduate—an arrangement she repeats with Jude when she stays with him briefly before her marriage to Phillotson, and then again when she runs away from the marriage. When she lives with Phillotson, she is so unwilling to consummate their marriage that she begins sleeping in a closet rather than share a room with him, and jumps out the window when she believes he is coming into her room at night.

In fact, Sue jumps out of windows twice in the novel: once to avoid her husband, and once to escape from the teacher's college that has come to seem like a prison to her. Buildings make Sue feel trapped, both physically and emotionally. The novel describes her as a character whose spirit is so alive that it wants to burst out of the buildings and conventions that contain it—to Jude she represents the "living city" of Christminster; she is "mobile, living" (125), and "so vibrant" (138). She feels stifled inside her teacher's college and especially in the old house she shares with Phillotson after their marriage. She tells Jude, "[the house] is so antique and dismal… Such houses are very well to visit, but not to live in—I feel crushed into the earth by the weight of so many previous lives there spent" (235). Moreover, this suffocating feeling extends to her place in the conventional marriage structures she lives within. As she describes it, the "social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes that the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns" (238).

Thus, the relationships of characters to their domestic spaces emphasize a timeless human need for shelter, but they also situate the novel in a particular transitional moment,

signifying new geographic, economic, and social experiences. Victoria Rosner claims in *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* that the "spaces of private life are a generative site for literary modernism" (Rosner 2); although Rosner's study focuses on a generation of modernists subsequent to Hardy, *Jude* exhibits a shared concern with what Rosner calls "[m]odernist spatial poetics" because it is also "attuned to architectural dynamics of privacy and exposure, spatial hierarchies demarcating class, the locations and routines surrounding the care of the body, and the gendering of space" (Rosner 2). *Jude* begins with a discussion of how best to house Mr. Phillotson's piano as he moves away from Marygreen; this concern with where to keep the accouterments of daily life repeats in the various auctions and dispersals of furniture that accompany each relocation. Jude and Arabella auction off their furniture after their disastrous marriage, as do Jude and Sue when their nontraditional relationship makes them pariahs in their neighborhood—after all, "what could Jude do with his great aunt's heavy old furniture if he left the town to travel he knew not whither?" (335). Phillotson indicates his acquiescence to Sue's departure by urging her to take their furniture with her; she signifies her desire to become completely independent of him by refusing to take anything. Jude, Sue, Phillotson, and Arabella are mobile—they exhibit the "modern vice of unrest" (120)—sometimes because they aspire to a better life (especially Jude's and Phillotson's initial journeys to Christminster), but more often because their inability to live and thrive within legal and social strictures prevents them from staying in place. This modern impermanence is a stark contrast to the stability of Aunt Drusilla's traditional way of life: after her death, a neighbor comments to Jude that "a lot gets heaped up in nooks and corners when you've lived eighty years in one house" (250).

Thus, the way these characters occupy and fill domestic spaces, and the way they move from one space to another, become what Rosner calls in modernist literature, "a kind of grid of social relations that shifts and slips, often upending the individuals who traverse it" (Rosner 2). The lines of this grid in *Jude* are the distinctions between spaces of social, familial, and commercial interaction, and they do indeed "shift and slip" throughout the novel. Sue and Jude cannot bring themselves to marry inside a court or a church building, even though they stand outside of both with the intention to go in, because coming to a public space to authenticate their private relationship gives it the "sordid conditions of a business contract" (316). As a result of their failure to marry, when Sue accompanies Jude to work in a small country church, their unorthodox domestic arrangements come under public scrutiny, and Jude loses the job. And most tragically, their homelessness and inability to rent lodgings provokes Young Father Time to murder and suicide. These intersecting lines of family relationships, commercial exchanges, and social communities reflect an alienated and rootless experience of modern life—one in which people cannot occupy physical structures as they once did, nor can they live within the social structures these buildings represent.

"Accentuated by the Rottenness of the Stones": Maintaining Christminster

As the center of England's system of higher education since the Middle Ages, the university city of Christminster at first seems to have a permanence that counteracts the rootless, alienated experience of modern life. As young Jude fantasizes about leaving Marygreen to live in Christminster, he finds that "the city [Christminster] acquire[s] a permanence, a tangibility, a hold on his life" (58). Although he has never actually seen

the city, except as a kind of misty reflection in the distance, he endows it with a solid

presence. He imagines that Christminster is "a city of light" where "the tree of knowledge

grows," a place where "teachers of men spring from and go to" (62). The city of

Christminster is both a physical location that Jude longs to travel to, and an embodiment

of the university system he aspires to. However, Jude finds that physical survival, even

of stone buildings, is always precarious, and because the stoneworkers can only create

poor reproductions, what does remain only speaks faintly. The failure of Christminster's

stone texts to pass on their meanings and associations throughout the ages undermines the

cultural ideals they are supposed to represent.

Christminster's gothic design encodes the structure of beliefs and procedures that

has maintained the university throughout the centuries. For example, the gothic features

of the various colleges reinforce the religious nature of the university system. When Jude

first arrives in Christminster, it is the "saints and prophets in the window tracery, the

paintings in the galleries, the statues, the busts, the gargoyles, the corbel heads" that

"seemed to breathe his atmosphere" and embody the "Christminster 'sentiment'" (121)—

at least the "atmosphere" or "sentiment" that interests Jude, since the "active life of the

place…was largely nonexistent to him" (121). The sacred imagery of the colleges' design

reflects the spiritual Christminster that Jude aspires to. The gothic architecture also

reinforces the rigid social hierarchies of the university system; the physical structures

include walls and gates that shut Jude out of the university as well as towers and spires

that reflect the privileged status of the university students and faculty over the rest of

Christminster. Jude soon perceives that "only a wall divided him from those happy young

contemporaries of his with whom he shared a common mental life…. Only a wall—but

what a wall!" (121). Yet he hopes that he may enter into "those palaces of light and leading; he might some day [sic] look down on the world through their panes" (122). At first, Jude aspires to the exalted status of the university students who can literally look down on the rest of the city. He doggedly pursues his studies so that he may climb the gothic tower and raise his intellectual and social sphere. However, when it becomes clear that he will never achieve his ambition, he feels that the vertical structures of Christminster represent unjust social structures where the privileges of the few are built upon the foundation of the forgotten many. After he receives a rejection letter from the dean of Biblioll College, he

> …went up to an octagonal chamber of the lantern of a singularly built theater that was set amidst this quaint and singular city. It had windows all around, from which an outlook over the whole town and its edifices could be gained….Those buildings and their associations and privileges were not for him. From the looming roof of the great library, into which he hardly ever had time to enter, his gaze traveled on to the various spires, halls, gables, streets, chapels, gardens, quadrangles…. He saw his destiny lay not with these, but among the manual toilers in the shabby purlieu which he himself occupied, unrecognized as part of the city at all by its visitors and panegyrists, yet without whose denizens the hard readers could not read nor the high thinkers live. (152)

The "visitors and panegyrists" who celebrate Christminster point to its "looming roof" and its gothic "spires, halls, gables, streets, chapels, gardens, quadrangles," but these are the very features that enable them to ignore the rest of the city, even though the life of the university depends upon the efforts of manual laborers like Jude.

The novel and its characters explicitly associate gothic architecture and the beliefs and hierarchies of Christminster's mediaeval university system. Mark Rollins notes that Ruskin uses the same quotation from St. Paul, "The Letter Killeth" in *Stones of Venice* that Hardy chooses as an epigraph for *Jude*. Rollins argues that for Ruskin, the gothic he celebrates in "The Nature of the Gothic" from *The Stones of Venice,* and throughout his

work, embodies an epistemology of openness and imperfection that stands in contrast to the rigidity of classical design, and by extension, the rigidity of the system of classical education represented in *Jude*.[55] However, while the value of classical languages and learning in the modern age is questioned, the novel does not offer the gothic as a viable living alternative. As the novel's representative of modern, progressive thought, Sue is especially critical of gothic architecture and its associations. She refuses to visit gothic ruins with Jude and chides him that he "ought to have learnt classic [stone-working]. Gothic is barbaric art, after all. Pugin was wrong, and Wren was right" (336).[56] Jude comes to realize that the perpetual restoration work that he performs on Christminster's mediaeval buildings is ineffective, not because, as he originally thinks, his fellow workers are incompetent, but because "medievalism was as dead as a fern leaf in a lump of coal…other developments were shaping the world around him, in which Gothic architecture and its associations had no place" (119-20). If, as Jude believes, "other developments" are shaping the world, then Christminster will soon be left behind.

The novel provides a model for Christminster's possible future: the medieval city of Shaston (based on Shaftesbury in Dorsetshire), the location for the fourth book of the novel, was once a site notable for its castle, its "magnificent apsidal abbey" as well as "its

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[55] Hardy notes in his 1912 postscript that many readers who saw the novel as an attack on Oxford suggested that "when Ruskin College [an Oxford-affiliated college founded in 1899 for working class students] was subsequently founded it should have been called the College of Jude the Obscure" (3).

[56] A. W. N. Pugin (1812-1852) "was one of the most influential advocates of the Gothic Revival style and was regarded as one of the leading commentators and writers on medieval architecture. As an architect and designer he is known chiefly for his work for the Houses of Parliament in London, in collaboration with Sir Charles Barry" (Benezit Dictionary of Artists). Christopher Wren (1632-1723) was "the leader of the English Baroque school… the creator of St Paul's Cathedral, London, completed in his lifetime, … [he] remains the most famous architect in English history" (Grove Art Online).

twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions"; as a

burial site for kings, queens, martyrs, and saints, it had a "renown which made it the

resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, and enabled it to maintain a reputation far

beyond English shores" (231). By modern times, however, all of this has been "ruthlessly

swept away" (231), only remembered through poems and songs. With the Dissolution of

1536-1540, King Henry VIII broke England's ties with Catholicism and Rome and took

over the Catholic monasteries and abbeys throughout the country. In Shaston, "[w]ith the

destruction of the enormous abbey the whole place collapsed in a general ruin" (232). In

this example, a shifting set of beliefs necessitated a sweeping away of old physical

structures to make way for new ones. Furthermore, when the new systems of thought and

belief destroyed the abbey, the physical and spiritual center of the town, the rest of the

town disintegrated along with it. Christminster only preserves its outdated religious and

social hierarchies through continuous effort; if this effort were to cease, it could meet the

same fate as Shaston.

The perpetuation of the medieval university system is, in part, a physical and

mechanical process. The state of the buildings themselves, and the labor required to

prevent those buildings from crumbling away reflects the struggle to keep the

Christminster way of life unchanged. Young Jude, who walks miles from home just to

catch a glimpse of his shining city, envisions Christminster as a "castle, manned by

scholarship and religion" (62). At first, Jude conflates the solidity of the physical

Christminster with the permanence of the ideal cultural values it represents. The stone

construction of Christminster's buildings implies durability and permanence, suggesting

that they are suited to the task of transmitting transcendent learning through the ages.

However, the Christminster Jude encounters is not quite the solid, unchanging structure he had imagined. The literal stone material that Jude works to maintain demonstrates a fragility of Christminster's buildings that parallels its religious and educational structures. The "extinct air" Jude breathes in the city's forgotten streets is "accentuated by the rottenness of the stones" (114); the city is crumbling and decaying, and "[i]t seemed impossible that modern thought could house itself in such decrepit and superseded chambers" (114). Only the efforts of stoneworkers like Jude to constantly restore the decrepit architecture keeps it from disintegrating entirely.

Moreover, Jude finds that even the repairs he makes cannot perfectly preserve the stone. Jude soon realizes that the work he and his colleagues do is "at best only copying, patching, and imitating," (120). Hardy describes the difficulty of copying Gothic architecture in his essay on Church Restoration: the first problem, he claims, is physical and material in that "no man can make two pieces of matter exactly alike… even an easily copied shape … does not get truly reproduced" possibly because of "some deviation in geometry (curves were often struck by hand in medieval work) which never reappears in the copy" ("Church Restoration" 193). The original stone encodes certain methods and techniques that change with time; Jude's fellow stone-workers can only mindlessly copy the shapes they see without understanding the processes that produced them, or, more importantly, the mindset that necessitated such designs and procedures. Ruskin makes a similar claim in "The Nature of the Gothic" as well as in "The Lamp of Life"; he warns against depending upon machine work because it loses contact with human hands, but even without actual mechanization "it was possible for men to turn themselves into machines, and to reduce their labour to the machine level" (169). Thus,

even as they recreate gothic curves and angles, Jude's company of masons brings the building further from its original existence until it becomes something different entirely. The copied forms Jude finds in the work yard are "forms in the exact likeness of those he had seen abraded and time-eaten on the walls. These were the ideas in modern prose which the lichened colleges presented in old poetry" (119). The ideas are the same, but the modern copy is "prose" while the original is "old poetry." Furthermore, as Sue understands, the gothic is itself derivative: she describes the interior of Christminster Cathedral as a place where "[u]nder the picturesqueness of those Norman details one can see the grotesque childishness of uncouth people trying to imitate the vanished Roman forms, remembered by dim tradition only" (336). Jude comes to think that his stonework is artificially reproducing structures that are no longer meaningful, but Sue pushes the question even further by asking whether such forms were ever meaningful at all. The analogy of restored and original forms to modern prose and old poetry continues on to make a similar point, noticing that "[e]ven some of those antiques might have been called prose when they were new. They had done nothing but wait, and had become poetical" (119).

Sue's critique emphasizes that the novel is not only concerned with whether modern stoneworkers can learn to reproduce gothic structures in a meaningful way, but also whether restored or reproduced architecture, gothic or otherwise, can live for late Victorian audiences in the same way it communicated with its original population. Both Hardy and Ruskin complain that restoration work is inherently inaccurate because it is impossible to reanimate the spirit of the original craftsmen or recreate the cultural conditions that produced the original building. The artificiality of Jude's restoration work

is pushed to its logical extreme in the small-scale model of Jerusalem that Sue and Phillotson bring their school children to see. The resemblance of this model to its original is highly suspect—as Sue asks "how does anyone know what Jerusalem was like at the time of Christ?" (142). Philloston's response that it is based on "the best conjectural maps" (142) does little to vouch for its accuracy.

But just as important as the correctness of its construction is the effectiveness of its reception—the question of what this reproduction means for the people who view it. The students find little of value in their field trip because the model city "wore too much of an educational aspect for the children not to tire of it soon" (143). The children are bored by something that seems pedantic rather than relevant to their lives. Sue echoes the children's reaction, asking whether Jerusalem has anything to offer modern people. "I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem" (142) she claims, finding little to value in this condensed, inaccurate reproduction of an ancient city inhabited by people who did not resemble her. Furthermore, if the model of Jerusalem is an example of restoration work pushed to its logical extremes, the Christminster cakes that Jude bakes and Sue sells in a market stall take the idea to the point of parody. These gingerbread cakes have "windows and towers, and pinnacles" as well as "[t]raceried windows, and cloisters" (342)—the same architectural features that speak so distinctly to Jude of the "Christminster 'sentiment'" (121) when he first comes to the city. And yet, they are completely ephemeral, as Arabella demonstrates when she begins "unceremoniously munching" (342) the cakes, with little regard for the gothic forms that Jude once found so meaningful.

The model of Jerusalem and the Christminster cakes echo the ongoing

reproduction of gothic forms that keeps the university from crumbling away. This

mindless reproduction calls into question the vitality of the institutional structures that

perpetuate the university system. It is not only stone buildings that are endlessly

replicated in the city; the scholarly Christminster of the novel is itself a kind of education

machine. The university system's ostensible work of transmitting learning from one

generation to the next is largely invisible in the novel, but what we do see has much in

common with the work of the mindless "copying, patching, and imitating" (120) the

stoneworkers do with no understanding. The most accurate picture of what they "do" in

Christminster probably comes from the old workman young Jude pumps for information

about the exalted city. He explains that

> 'Tis all learning there—nothing but learning, except religion. And that's
> learning too, for I never could understand it. Yes, 'tis a serious-minded
> place….They raise pa'sons there like radishes in a bed… though it do take
> …five years to turn a lirruping hobble-de-hoy chap into a solemn
> preaching man with no corrupt passions, they'll do it if it can be done, and
> polish un off like the workmen they be, and turn un out with a long face,
> and a long black coat and waistcoat, and a religious collar and
> hat….There, 'tis their business, like anybody else's. (60-1)

With mixed agricultural and industrial imagery, the old man describes

Christminster as a kind of assembly line, turning out polished and identically-clad

parsons. He focuses on the superficial changes Christminster produces in its students;

learning affects demeanor and appearance more than anything else. He sees no personal

relevance in Christminster's learning or religion which he "never could understand." The

work they do in Christminster is a "business, like anybody else's," not at all exalted

above the common labor. This, of course, is the opinion of an ignorant old man who has

only passed through Christminster as an observer, and young Jude is certainly not put off

from his goal by anything he hears. However, this analysis must color the way we read

Jude's experiences in the city. Certainly he never encounters anything that would

contradict this interpretation. The only scholars he meets are drinking in a bar, and they

have "not the slightest conception of a single word" (156) of the Latin creed Jude recites.

It is difficult to see in the novel that the intense and celebrated learning of Christminster

is transmitting knowledge in any meaningful way.

Sue goes so far as to argue that the intellectual life of Christminster cannot

progress unless it drastically reconstructs itself; she claims that "intellect at Christminster

is new wine in old bottles. The medievalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or

Christminster itself will have to go" (184). In contrast to the university system that

Christminster embodies, it is useful to compare Virginia Woolf's 1938 vision of how

colleges should be built in the modern age:

> Let it be built on lines of its own. It must not be built of carved stone and
> stained glass, but of some cheap, easily combustible material which does
> not hoard dust and perpetrate traditions. Do not have chapels. Do not have
> museums and libraries with chained books and first editions under glass
> cases. Let the pictures and books be new and always changing. Let it be
> decorated afresh by each generation with their own hands cheaply. (qtd in
> Rosner 16).

Woolf, like Hardy, understands the significance of the physical materials and

architectural designs we use to build our educational structures. She suggests that only

new forms and new materials can transform education into something truly modern. Even

Ruskin, for all his concern to stay connected to the forms of the past, argues that

sometimes living art requires "audacity," by which he means "the unhesitating and

sweeping sacrifice of precedent where precedent becomes inconvenient" (153).

"The Effect of a True": Making Associations

As we have seen, the restrictive structures of domestic, religious, and educational institutions are generally detrimental to the lives of the novel's characters, and furthermore, it is only continual restoration effort that allows these institutions and the buildings that house them to retain their power. However, *Jude* also recognizes the painful loss of connection and meaning that comes when old buildings and traditional ways of life begin to crumble away.

The novel's portrayal of the experience of human life in physical buildings and in physical bodies reflects the paradox that structure can be both fragile and restrictive; this is also a central tension in the way architectural structures may uphold or constrain the life of the ideas and values they represent. The novel's analogy of crumbling buildings that house people to the fragile bodies that house their souls underscores the potential painfulness of this loss and the vulnerability of both human life and the work of human hands. When Jude decides to train as a stonemason so that he may support himself when he moves to Christminster, the narrator describes his plan as "engaging himself awhile with the carcases [sic] that contained the scholar's souls" (71). Similarly, when he arrives in Christminster, Jude finds that the "condition of several [of the crumbling buildings] moved him as he would have been moved by maimed sentient beings. They were wounded, broken, sloughing off their outer shape" (119). These descriptions of buildings as carcasses, or as maimed, wounded, broken beings are in themselves striking; these strange and vivid images imbue the buildings with an eerie human presence. Furthermore, given that this is a novel that also dwells viscerally on an array of real carcasses, including the slaughtered pig, the hanging children, and Jude's abandoned

corpse, this choice of language to describe buildings seems especially suggestive. The novel emphasizes that buildings and bodies are susceptible to the "deadly struggle against years, weather, and man" (119)—for example, Arabella and Jude understand that his final walk home "in the teeth of the north-east wind and rain" (418) is a suicide attempt. Buildings and bodies alike are ultimately ephemeral, eventually decaying and finally disappearing into obscurity.

Young Jude yearns for permanence and the sense of physical, material association that comes from touching the same stones that his predecessors have touched, and even breathing the same air that they breathed, but as he moves from place to place, and as old buildings disappear this connection becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. First, the kinds of buildings people occupy are shifting, reflecting a modern sense of isolation and discontinuity. Beatty argues that this modern alienation and exclusion is "portrayed in architectural terms" in *Jude*; unlike in Hardy's other novels where the buildings are described as lived-in and individualized, "what is striking about Hardy's portrayal of Christminster is that no buildings are treated this way. There is no feeling of belonging to the university city; no college is described from the inside" (Beatty, *Part Played by Architecture*, 371). Similarly, Jude admires the Melchester Cathedral (based on Salisbury Cathedral) as "the most graceful architectural pile in England" (164) and is relieved to find it requires enough restoration and maintenance to keep a stonemason like himself employed indefinitely. However, the kind of life the cathedral represents—the "ecclesiastical and altruistic life" (162) that Jude imagines he will pursue in Melchester— is no longer relevant. Sue argues that it is the railway station and not the cathedral that is "the centre of the town life now. The Cathedral has had its day" (168). In the cathedral's

"day," the church was the physical and spiritual center of gravity in the community. By contrast, the railway station is emblematic of the rootlessness of modern life. The novel's structural divisions similarly reflect this change: each book of the novel represents a different city,[57] each with its own kinds of architecture and its own social systems. The narrative divisions emphasize that the novel does not reflect a way of life but rather multiple ways of living.

Furthermore, the railway not only sets people in motion, but it is a kind of movement that removes travelers from historical associations. Simon Gatrell argues that, unlike Hardy's earlier novels, *Jude* is a "railway novel," and that this "means of transport isolates passengers from the country through which they travel, its rails follow no track formed by thousands of years of human travel from village to market, from cottage to church" (Gatrell 29). The "old road from London to Land's End" that Jude and Sue follow on their excursion is a good example; as they travel along the road they notice "the desolation which had come over this once lively thoroughfare" (171). Such desolation has a marked impact on the historical continuity of a community. The town of Stoke-Barehills, for example, sits at a point where the highway from London "branches into two, merely to unite again some twenty miles further westward." This division and reunion used to provoke "endless questions of choice between the respective ways." But because the railroad has obviated travel on either road, "the question is now dead… and probably not a single inhabitant of Stoke-Barehills is now even aware that the two roads which part in his town ever meet again" (319). The railway station that is now the center

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[57] The books of the novel are: Part First: At Marygreen; Part Second: At Christminster; Part Third: At Melchester; Part Fourth: At Shaston; Part Fifth: At Albrickham and Elsewhere; Part Sixth: At Christminster Again.

of life in Melchester, as elsewhere, is a building that disconnects the present experience of life from the past.

Jude suggests that this disconnection is physical; the novel's characters do not know their histories because they cannot literally inhabit the same buildings or touch the same stones that their ancestors did. The village of Marygreen where Jude grows up has seen the kind of outright destruction Hardy describes in his essay "Memories of Church Restoration" (1906) where he describes the churches that were pulled down from "no genuine necessity, but from a wanton wish to erect a more modish one" ("Church Restoration" 186).[58] This destruction in Marygreen has left Jude in a landscape devoid of associations. As William Siebenschuh points out, *Jude* is notable among Hardy's novels for the extent of its sense of dislocation; he claims that "because Jude has no ritual, psychological, or imaginative access to associations from either its immediate or distant past, he cannot be sustained by a sense of continuity within a particular community, a geographic region, or a perceived and vital cultural past" (Siebenschuh 776). The field that Jude guards as a boy seems to him an empty and "lonely place;" the uniformity of the plowed rows seems to suggest it has no "history beyond that of the few recent months" (50). In fact, the field does have a history in its "echoes of songs from ancient harvest days, of spoken words, and of sturdy deeds" (50). Jude's own ancestors walked over this land, and many love-matches were made and children conceived there. Yet none of this history speaks to him at all; he sees nothing but empty space because almost all

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[58] The connections between Ruskin's and Hardy's attitudes towards the restoration of architecture from earlier periods are important, but even more relevant to Ruskin's sixth chapter "The Lamp of Memory." See Ruskin's and Hardy's critique of restoration work in the previous chapter on "The Lamp of Memory" and Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

the "relic[s] of the local history" (48) have disappeared. The old houses have been pulled down and the ancient church was demolished with its original stone sold for scrap or "utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard stones to fences, and rookeries in the flower-beds of the neighborhood," and the "site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple… was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard" (48). Jude's desire to go to Christminster originates in his desire to find somewhere to connect to; as a lonely boy he sets his sights on Christminster because it was "the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on, to cling to—for some place which he could call admirable" (62). Compared to the disappearing village of Marygreen, Christminster seems permanent and solid enough for his heart to "anchor on."

That Jude longs for associations is clear from his interaction with the well after Phillotson leaves Marygreen. The well is "probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged" (48) but this history is less important to Jude than the immediate connections. The well comforts him because he finds reassurance in touching the same stones his friend once touched. Similarly, the buildings of Christminster have meaning for him on his first night in the city because they are the very structures that housed the scholars he admired, "the worthies who had spent their youth within these reverend walls, and whose souls had haunted them in their mature age…the brushings of the wind against the angles, buttresses, and door-jambs were as the passing of these only other inhabitants" (114). The buildings are a tangible reminder that he now inhabits the same physical space as the scholars he admires once did. These now-deceased scholars come alive for Jude when the buildings inspire him to remember their words.

The specificity of the architectural description here is striking—the ghostly wind brushes against "angles, buttresses, and door-jambs" and the rest of the description draws attention to "crocketed pinnacles and indented battlements" as well as "porticoes, oriels, [and] doorways of enriched and florid middle-age design" (114). Of course, the focus on these details reflects the specialized knowledge of the author and his character, but it also emphasizes the intensity of Jude's physical, material connection to the buildings of Christminster, and the associations they suggest. Each individual part of the buildings speaks to him; when he examines the moldings he "stroke[s] them as one who knew their beginning, said they were difficult or easy in the working, had taken little or much time, were trying to the arm, or convenient to the tool;" he is the "comrade of the dead handicraftsmen whose muscles had actually executed those forms" (119).

Jude's sense of physical connection through touching stones accords with Ruskin's claims in "The Lamp of Life," and throughout his body of work. For Ruskin, the finished stone of a cathedral communicates the spirit and enthusiasm of the stoneworker. He asks "was it [the stonework] done with enjoyment—was the carver happy while he was about it?" If not, "it will not be living" (173). It will be necessary to complicate this apparent faith in the power of stone structures to communicate through time, but first, it is worth pausing to recognize both Ruskin's and Hardy's intense investment in the possibility that physical materials connect once-living minds and bodies to present ones. There is real excitement when Ruskin claims that "I do not know of any sensation more exquisite than … the finding of the actual blocks and stones carved by other hands and in other ages, wrought into new walls, with a new expression and purpose given to them" (152). Similarly, Jude's first night in Christminster is

transcendent and transformative, albeit short-lived; regardless of the disappointments that follow, for a brief moment Jude experiences the kind of exquisite sensation Ruskin describes. Ruskin's chapter and the novel rest upon an underlying hope that human life can imprint itself upon solid materials, and further, that such imprinting offers the possibility that fleeting human life can last as well, by connecting to the lives of the past, and in some small way living on into the future. Jude makes his small mark upon the world: when he retraces his steps, he sees footprints in the dirt from the day before; on his numerous returns to Christminster he finds the milestone he carved with his name and intended direction. The emphasis on the words "obscure" and "obscurity" in the title, and throughout the novel, is to some degree balanced by the possibility of leaving an impression, however faint.

However, this ideal communication proves to be more difficult in practice, in part because the changes of modernity disrupt continuity and coherence. Besides the destruction of old churches and houses, Ruskin's concern in the "Lamp of Life" is that the increasing reliance on machinery for construction will destroy the human-to-human connection that happens when human hands carve stone and work metal. He argues "so long as men work *as* men, putting their heart into what they do, and doing their best… there will be that in the handling which is above all price" (169), or that sense of connection without which architecture does not have life. He urges that, at the very least, architecture should strive for "the doing without machine ornament and cast-iron work" and avoid "[a]ll the stamped metals, and artificial stones, and imitation woods and bronzes…all the short, and cheap, and easy ways of doing that whose difficulty is its honour" (174). A machine may produce work that is visually indistinguishable from that

produced by traditional methods, but according to Ruskin, the finished product conveys the labor of the hands and muscles that crafted it. Jude's sense of comradeship with Christminster's medieval builders comes from his understanding of the physical exertion required to turn stones into finished structures. Part of Ruskin's mission in this chapter is to warn against losing this living connection through generations.

The novel's concerns about the communicative potential of stone structures are even more complex. Even when human hands have impressed upon stone, the impression's communicative power from one human mind to another is questionable; as the novel repeatedly demonstrates, the subjectivity of the viewer always influences the communication's reception. Whereas Ruskin assumes that the life encoded in stone remains legible, the world of the novel offers no such assurance—form is not devoid of meaning, but that meaning is ambiguous. For example, when Jude sees Sue for the first time, she is working for an ecclesiastical shop, carving the word "ALLELUIA" (124) on a stone tablet in Gothic letters. As Alison Katz points out, Sue is "more interested in the design of each individual letter rather than in its symbolic religious reference" (Katz 91), but Jude infers meaning in the text that she writes. He thinks she is engaged in "a sweet, saintly, Christian business" (124) and assumes that the text she engraves reflects her inner state. Conversely, when Jude and Sue are carving the Ten Commandments on a stone tablet for a church in Melchester, the parishioners object when they discover that pregnant Sue is not married. They superstitiously fear that the holiness of the text could be tainted by the sinfulness of the inscriber. Sue is not the author of the alleluia or the commandments, but the people who see her work read it as though it contains her own intention.

The difference between Ruskin's faith in and the novel's distrust of the expressive

potential of stone can itself be understood as evidence of the novel's emergence in a

transitional moment. According to Terry Eagleton,

> Hardy… is still dealing with symbolism, with the material as signifying or
> expressive; but this doctrine is also steadily decaying, since the material
> world now seems to occlude at least as much as it discloses…
> Logocentrism, transparent expressivity, is still possible…but more
> typically we deal with obscure texts, broken signifiers, objects which
> demand a labour of decipherment. Because matter resists and refracts
> meaning as well as mediating it, and because any one bit of it may
> embody colliding signifiers, we are now plunged into the epoch of
> hermeneutics….By the age of modernism, acts of interpretation will have
> become the objects we deal with. (Eagleton 15)

Jude grapples with the fact that in the "age of modernism," the material world no longer

speaks quite clearly or coherently of the human life imprinted upon it. However, it might

be more precise to say that in the world of the novel, the human intentions encoded by the

material world are not so much refracted as they are overdetermined. At least for the first

part of the novel, Jude has no difficulty reading meaning into stones; he finds the material

structures in the cities he travels through rich in suggestive associations, not fragmented

or obscured. Jude interprets Sue's impression on the tablet she carves according to what

he wants to see, just as he believes the composer of a song that moves him must be a wise

and spiritual artist.

Ruskin's description of the way we find living associations in the material

constructions of architecture helps explain how it is that Jude finds stones so meaningful.

Ruskin looks at the stone walls of gothic architecture as evidence of the life of the hands

and muscles that constructed them, but he also recognizes that this life is only visible

through acts of imagination. As Ruskin and Hardy understand, the potential for material

objects to communicate life depends upon the imaginative reception of a viewer to

animate the inanimate. Ruskin claims "the human imagination takes pleasure in exalting, without for an instant losing sight of the real nature of the dead thing it animates; but rejoicing rather in its own excessive life, which puts gesture into clouds, and joy into waves, and voices into rocks" (Ruskin 149). The inorganic natural world seems alive when we imbue it with life; similarly, art suggests life but is not itself life. Ruskin explains

> sculpture is not the mere cutting of the *form* of any thing [sic] in stone; it is the cutting of the *effect* of it… half his [the sculptor's] touches are not to realize, but to put power into, the form: they are touches of light and shadow; and raise a ridge or sink a hollow, not to represent an actual ridge or hollow, but to get a line of light, or a spot of darkness. (170)

The important distinction Ruskin is making here is between art that tries to make an exact copy of life and art that tries to evoke an experience of life in the viewer—Ruskin argues that the latter is the true purpose of art. According to Millgate, Hardy's notebook entries of the 1880's, including quotes from and response to Ruskin, take up this same distinction in thinking about how to construct fiction, and "such ruminations had a direct relevance to some of the technical effects he was striving towards in his fiction, his desire somehow to make visible 'the true realities of life, hitherto called abstractions'" (Millgate 285). Similarly, Hardy notes in response to Turner's paintings that "Art is the secret of how to produce by a false thing the effect of a true" (qtd. Millgate 285). Ruskin and Hardy both contend with the mechanisms through which technical effects activate the viewer's or reader's imagination to animate the inanimate.

Young Jude's imagined vision of the city of Christminster reflected in the distant lights, and his later ghostly walk through Christminster are two of the most vivid examples of how characters of the novel experience these "effects," but these scenes also illustrate the potential limitations of this imaginative, associative process. The vision of

Christminster's reflected lights confirms Jude's idealized understanding of Christminster as a "city of light" (62), without offering any contradictory information. Similarly, as Jude wanders through the heart of the city and its colleges, from one "ancient medieval pile" to the next, he imagines himself "encircled as it were with the breath and sentiment of the venerable city" (113). However, this imaginative endowment of breath and sentiment requires that he shut out anything that does not fit; when he "passed objects out of harmony with [the city's] general expression, he allowed his eyes to slip over them as though he did not see them" (113). One danger of this kind of subjective association, where the sense of meaningfulness and connection is an imagined construction, is that it obscures other potentially important but contradictory information. Jude builds his expectations for his life out of the deep sense of life and meaningfulness that imagines is associated with the stone buildings of Christminster, but this imagined life conceals everything "out of harmony" with his ideals.

Furthermore, imagining life requires an active process of construction, without which the stone loses all associative power. There is a parallel in this active process of maintaining imagined associations to the active process of maintaining physical structures that Jude participates in as a stonemason. Although one is an act of imagination and the other is an act of physical repair, they both emphasize that the perpetuation of associations, meanings, ideas, and beliefs require deliberate effort.

"Rusty and Irksome Moulds": Narrative Structures

Architect Sir Albert Richardson observed of Hardy, "Architecture had taught him to put one thing correctly, accurately and squarely upon another…He could build a

human soul with human material in the same way" (qtd. in Beatty x); Sir Albert suggests that Hardy developed techniques for building characters that seem to live and breathe—that have a "human soul." Ruskin claims that the stone or brick that composes a work of architecture is not inherently pleasant or notable; therefore, we find "dignity and pleasurableness" in architecture to the extent that it presents a "vivid expression of intellectual life" (149). Similarly, Hardy would argue fiction is built from materials—words, characters, events, and circumstances—that only have value when they communicate life to the reader. Hardy's hope that fictional structures can honestly and accurately communicate a sense of life clearly echoes Ruskin's belief that architecture can do the same. In an essay from the same period as his work on *Jude*, "Candour in English Fiction" (1890), Hardy articulates this hope, arguing that "conscientious fiction alone it is which can reflect a reflective and abiding interest in the minds of thoughtful readers of a mature age, who are weary of puerile inventions, and famishing for accuracy…[the] immortal tragedies… reflected life, revealed life, criticised [sic] life" (16).

However, in *Jude*, his final full-length novel before his turn to verse drama and poetry, Hardy questions the capacity of the established structures of the Victorian realist novel to reflect, reveal, and criticize life. Hardy writes in a postscript to a 1912 edition of the novel that, "Artistic effort always pays heavily for finding its tragedies in the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds [sic] that do not fit them" (4). Noticing the way the novel uses the physical, material structures of its cities and towns to comment on the life of its social and intellectual structures can also illuminate its own sense of its capacity to communicate the life of its characters and its moment. Ruskin's

multi-faceted explanation of how architecture encodes and expresses "life" can help us understand the way structures of all kinds communicate through time—or fail to do so. The novel presents its characters' tragic inability to adapt to the "rusty and irksome moulds" of traditional social hierarchies and marriage customs; just as importantly, it also highlights the artistic price of forcing old narrative structures to adapt to new stories.

Jude was Hardy's final novel before he began exclusively writing poetry; the standard narrative (one that Hardy himself propagated in his later writing) is that it was his frustration with the overwhelmingly negative response to the frank sexual content and pessimism of *Jude* and a similar response to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* a few years earlier that prompted this shift. Defending himself against the accusation that reading *Jude* would corrupt vulnerable readers, he writes in the 1912 postscript that "the only effect of [the novel] on human conduct that I could discover [was] the effect on myself—the experience completely cur[ed] me of further interest in novel writing" (2). Certainly, Hardy was hyper-sensitive to criticism throughout his literary career, and prone to respond defensively when he felt his work was under attack. Hardy was especially critical of the serial publication and library structure that required an excessive degree of prudishness, potentially stifling important work. He complained that "To say that few of the old dramatic masterpieces, if newly published as a novel … would be tolerated in English magazines and libraries is a ludicrous understatement" ("Candour" 19).

Clearly, there is evidence to support the story that Hardy responded to what seemed like unfair attacks by giving up on novel writing altogether. If Hardy was frustrated that prudish readers and critics attacked the more prurient details of the novel (a great deal of ink was devoted to the tossing of the "pig pizzle"), all the while ignoring

what he called in the postscript "the greater part of the story—that which presented the shattered ideals of the two chief characters" (40), then it speaks to the difficulties of communicating "life" through artistic forms that the novel itself takes up. The subjectivity that we see in Jude's interpretation of Sue's tablet carving or of the gothic buildings surrounding him echo the misperception of Hardy's intentions in the reception of the novel by an unsympathetic readership. In "Candour in English Fiction," Hardy argues that imagination is the "slave of stolid circumstance" in fiction as in all forms of art. In other words, he complains that no matter the creativity of the artist, if art emerges to an unreceptive audience in an unfavorable time, the work will not succeed. The difference from one period to the next—the "inequality in its [creativity's] realisation [sic]" has to do with the "differences in how creative, artistic expression is received… in contingencies which, at one period doom high expression to dumbness and encourage the lower forms, and at another call forward the best in expression, and silence triviality" (15). As this complaint suggests, Hardy believed that the social conditions of a particular moment would color the reception of a work of art, ultimately supporting or suppressing creative expression; the public's reaction against *Jude* demonstrates the difficulty of using writing, and the novel form in particular, to communicate "life" to an unreceptive audience.

This complaint that the written word may often prove a dysfunctional means of communication is a common trope throughout Hardy's work. *Jude*, like many of the novels, demonstrates what Galia Benziman describes as Hardy's "concern about the writer's failure to be read 'properly,' or even to be read at all"; she points out that "writing is represented in Hardy's fiction as a deeply problematic mode of

communication, especially when naively trusted to have a solid referential function"

(Benziman 199). For example, before their marriage, Phillotson carefully preserves every

scrap of Sue's writing he can find, and although his treasured pile contains little more

than dictation notes or the kind of short letters written "with no other thought than their

speedy destruction"—in short, "absolutely nothing to muse over" (194)—he spends hours

poring over the bundle, trying to puzzle out Sue's intentions. Jude is similarly confused

by Sue's letters, and frequently finds himself "in danger of attaching more meaning to

Sue's impulsive note than it really was intended to bear" (190). Hardy's grievances about

the reception of *Jude* echo the characters' misinterpretation of writers' intentions,

especially the willful misinterpretation that Jude and Phillotson apply to Sue's letters. He

resisted the critics' attribution of social and political motives, claiming, for example, that

the novel's portrayal of unhappy marriages was "used in great part as the tragic

machinery of the tale" (41), and not, as was accused, because he was promoting "an

unholy anti-marriage league" (42).

However, as Benziman points out, this mistrust of the written word is a thread that

runs throughout Hardy's novels, from Bathsheba's ill-conceived valentine to Farmer

Boldwood in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, through Tess's misplaced letter to Angel in

Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Furthermore, as I argue in the previous chapter, Hardy's novels

often dispute the reliability of communication through architecture and artifacts, or any

mediated mechanism. In this regard, the untrustworthiness of text, whether written on

paper or carved into stone, is not new to the world of modernity represented in *Jude*.

What has changed, however, is that the gradual dissolution of social contexts that

culminates in *Jude* exacerbates the potential for miscommunication. In Hardy's most

characteristic earlier novels, the protagonists are understood in relation to Hardy's

Wessex—a fictional but particularized landscape with a community of rustics that

maintain traditional ways of life. By the opening chapter of *Jude*, however, it is clear that

Wessex is quickly disappearing; the old church has been torn down, and even the grave

stones have been replaced with cheap metal crosses, only guaranteed to last five years.

Gatrell associates the end of Hardy's novel- writing with the end of Wessex, arguing that

"Hardy wrote the novel [*Jude*], among other reasons, to reinforce one of the conclusions

of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, that the Wessex world given life in his earlier fictions was

no longer viable, and where it survived, was living on borrowed time" (Gatrell 28). As a

result, Jude and Sue are not enmeshed in a tightly-woven social structure, but adrift. The

institutional hierarchies and intractable social customs at work against Jude and Sue keep

them out—out of colleges, out of neighborhoods, and out of lodgings. The narrator

describes their inability to integrate into the neighborhood in Aldbrickham where the two

live together by explaining that, "The Society of Spring Street and the neighbourhood

generally did not understand, and probably could not have been made to understand, Sue

and Jude's private minds, emotions, positions, and fears" (328). As the reception of the

novel indicates, there is real question about whether readers can be made to understand

the "private minds, emotions, positions, and fears" of these rootless characters outside of

recognizable social context.

Again, this was a gradual evolution in Hardy's work: *Tess* portrays the tragic

displacement that comes with the end of traditional agrarian ways of life, and as I show in

the previous chapter, even as early as *The Mayor of Casterbridge* we have a novel that

narrates social mobility and upheaval against the backdrop of a traditional community.

However, whereas *Mayor* reaches back forty years to present a Wessex where the accretion of disjointed and illegible layers of the past disrupts continuity and understanding, *Jude* portrays the opposite force of the dissolution of Wessex in the moment of modernity. These two novels mark out the opposite extremes of the possibilities for the Wessex novelist; either the Wessex novel offers a mediated preservation of the past, with the fissures, erasures, and concealments that entails, or else it situates disconnected characters in a disappearing landscape, with little possibility of effective communication. Ultimately, these two extremes are novelistic dead-ends for Hardy.

Beyond the hysterical public response that included censorship, book-burning, and condemnation of "Jude the Obscene," there were thoughtful contemporary critics who recognized that with *Jude*, Hardy had reached an ending point for what he could achieve within the structures of the Victorian realist novel. For example, Max Beerbohm claims in a 1904 review of Hardy's experimental dramatic poem, *The Dynasts*, "Hardy writes no more novels because he has no more novels to write" (Beerbohm 136). In his biography of Hardy, Millgate similarly explains the shift from novels to poetry by speculating "that he had been impelled to find a new form by a growing sense of the inadequacy of the novel as a means of 'expressing how life strikes us'" (Millgate *Biography* 432).

The characters' disconnection from their social contexts is analogous to the narrative's uneasy fit with the familiar forms of the Victorian novel; Eagleton describes *Jude* as a novel "which mischievously refuses to stay within its realist frame" (Eagleton 20). This is especially evident in relation to the conventional marriage plot and the related

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bildungsroman—both of which rely on the protagonist's ultimate integration into a larger community. These familiar narrative structures are certainly relevant to *Jude*, and it has been read through these lenses; for example, Frank Giordano argues that reading *Jude* as a *bildungsroman* gives a "unifying formal principle" (Giordano 581) to what otherwise seems like a formless novel.[59]

Franco Moretti defines *bildungsroman* as a form that balances between the opposing poles of "the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization*" (Moretti 15); both of these poles are pushed beyond meaningfulness in *Jude*.[60] First, Jude's quest for self-determination through education, while admirable, does not follow a satisfying path toward a meaningful goal. Even at its most exalted level, the Christminster education does not offer much beyond endless acquisition. Jude realizes this even as a child embarking on his quest: to his dismay when he receives his first Latin grammar, he realizes that learning will not empower him with a secret key to deciphering the ancient language, but "that every word in both Latin and Greek was to be individually committed to memory at the cost of years of plodding" (67)—and so the plodding begins. Similarly, with its series of marriages, divorces, and remarriages, the novel parodies the conventional marriage plot that Moretti claims serves as a "metaphor for a possible social pact" (Moretti 24).

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[59] See Giordano's article "*Jude the Obscure* and the 'Bildungsroman'" for a summary of critical arguments that accuse *Jude* of formlessness.

[60] From Moretti's *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987). Moretti's definition of the form is useful for my purposes because it emphasizes the importance of the larger community in the development of the individual. When Hardy dissolves Wessex as the site of his novelistic community, his protagonist no longer fits the *bildungsroman* model.

According to Moretti, in the classic *bildungsroman*, it is "essential to build a 'homeland' for the individual" and it is "indispensable for time to stop at a privileged moment" so that we end with "'meaningful' life as a tightly-closed ring; the stability of social connections as the foundation of the text's meaning" (Moretti 26). As Moretti describes, this ending is the point from which we can look back over the preceding novel to understand why it has all been meaningful. However, *Jude* ends with the image of its hero's unloved and unmissed body, destined for an unremarkable grave. Jude's struggles to acquire, piece by painstaking piece, the mysteries of classical and religious learning are of no consequence; he has left no mark upon the world, and that world is itself disappearing through the forces of modernity. As he quietly dies, the distant cheers from the Christminster Remembrance Day celebration reverberate through the air, mocking Jude's life spent trying to join the ranks of the city's scholars. His wife Arabella pretends not to notice his death so that it will not put a damper on her plans for the afternoon, and she loses no time identifying a possible replacement husband. Neither education nor marriage creates a meaningful narrative.

Nor can Jude's path be neatly classified within naturalism; Frederic Jameson claims that naturalism is distinct from realism because "naturalism's various and quite distinct exemplifications all share in a more general narrative paradigm, which could be described as the trajectory of decline and failure, of something like an entropy on the level of individual destiny" (Jameson 149). In other words, Jameson explains that the meaning produced by the naturalist plot differs from the meaning produced by a realist plot such as the *bildungsroman*, but ultimately both produce meaning. Although Jude's life can be understood as a "trajectory of decline and failure," the disintegrating world of

this novel calls into question the structures of representation and reception through which

we make meaning in the first place. As a result, *Jude* becomes a novel where form begins

to collapse in on itself. As Eagleton describes,

> The problem of the novel is that it has to slip its realist frame in order to
> up-end the sort of representation which is in league with the political
> power it protests against; yet in thus becoming proto-avant-garde, in
> foregrounding the problem of form and writing and representation, it risks
> breaking faith with Jude's own very un-avant-garde attempts to get
> himself some standard education. How can you kick over the very ladder
> your hero is trying to climb without simply cancelling him out? (Eagleton
> 20)

The contradiction Eagleton describes is that the *bildungsroman* form should lead readers

to feel invested in Jude's success—we should root for him to get into a Christminster

college and pursue a scholarly career—and yet novel's stark depiction of the

disintegration of social and educational structures dismantles the framework of Jude's

pursuit. Instead, I suggest that *Jude* parodies the *bildungsroman* and marriage plot, just as

the model of Jerusalem and the Christminster cakes parody the gothic forms that seem so

meaningful at the beginning of the novel. *Jude's* parody of this model is embodied by the

milestone Jude carves on the road from Marygreen to Christminster: As a young

apprentice, Jude carves a finger pointing to Christminster with the word "thither"

underneath it to indicate the direction of his life. After his first marriage to Arabella ends

he finds this stone again and it inspires him to renew his educational goals in

Christminster. He seeks out the milestone one last time, as he returns from his suicidal

trip to visit Sue after her remarriage to Philloston, and this time it only mocks his former

aspirations. At first, the milestone seems to be a literal marker of the kind of

developmental path we associate with *bildungsroman*, but it is finally an empty

signifier—no matter how many times Jude passes the carving, he never achieves any milestones in his pursuits.

Hardy's desire for a different angle of vision becomes evident with the publication of *The Dynasts,* his experimental dramatic poem that follows *Jude.* Beerbohm titles his 1904 review of *The Dynasts*, "Hardy as Panoramatist," because the panoramic sweep of the drama is one of its most striking features. Millgate speculates that *The Dynasts* shows Hardy reaching for forms that would soon become possible with new technology:

> those bird's eye views of battlefields and panoramic sweeps of entire continents which seemed so extraordinary in the first years of the twentieth century are potentially cinematic… Hardy in seeking for a narrative form more expansive and more flexible than the novel as he knew it was groping towards the methods of a 'neighbor art' which had not yet been fully born. (Millgate 432)

Readers and critics of Hardy's novels have often noticed his narrator's panoramic descriptions—of Egdon Heath, in *The Return of the Native*, for example—but the architecture of *Jude* suggests a growing sense of the incongruity of panoramic vision and novelistic realism. As I describe above, when Jude stands in the tower with all of Christminster spread out before him, he sees the city's celebrated architecture, but not the unrecognized workers that make the city function. The "panegyrists" tell stories of the city from this elevated angle, and thus miss other possible stories. Sue notices that the "townspeople, artisans, drunkards, and paupers…see life as it is, of course, but few of the people in the colleges do" (184); these townspeople see life from the street level. As Jude struggles with his daily life in the city, he similarly has flashes of insight that "…town life was a book of humanity infinitely more palpitating, varied, and compendious than the gown life" (153). Yet, this is decidedly *not* the "book of humanity" that Hardy writes in

Jude. Compared to a Dickens or Eliot novel, or even Hardy's earlier work, we do not really see a "palpitating, varied, and compendious" picture of intertwined lives. Instead we have only four rootless characters, rearranged in various configurations. The other characters, whether the children or people from the various places they live, are only barely sketched out so that the novel's perspective does not enable us to see them.

Of course, the end of Wessex and the end of Hardy's novel-writing does not spell the end of the novel form. As Bakhtin famously describes, the novel is an endlessly flexible genre, capable of parodying and dominating any other form it comes in contact with.[61] Even as Wessex is disintegrating, new forms of the novel begin using the rootless experience of modern life as the impetus to turn inwards. Hardy steps back from the up-close focus of the Victorian novel to gain a wider angle, just as modernism is reaching its own set of solutions to modernity's challenges of legible communication in the face of subjectivity and disconnectedness. Or, to return to architectural terms, while *Jude* shows characters moving around and through crumbling buildings that no longer speak clearly, as Rosner explains "the modernist novel draws a conceptual vocabulary from the lexicons of domestic architecture and interior design, elaborating a notion of psychic interiority" (Rosner 2).

Readers and biographers will probably continue to speculate about the reasons why Hardy turned away from novels, but as *Jude* exemplifies, there is always a process of change where older forms—buildings, ideas, and ways of life—crumble away as new ones take their place. In his chapter "Realism and the Dissolution of Genre," Jameson describes a similar process in the development of literary forms. Realism began as a

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[61] In "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" from *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays"* (1981).

reaction against the formulaic conventions of earlier genres, but inevitably reified its own

set of conventions (of which the *bildungsroman* is one),

> motivating later realists (not to speak of the modernists themselves) to
> subvert and destroy those in their turns. Unfortunately, however, as the
> history of nominalism testifies, new universals always begin to form
> around the wreckage of the old ones, and what had deservedly been
> revealed to be unnamable inevitably gets named and generalized in its
> turn. Such are then the new plot-types that begin to emerge within realism
> itself and to be codified and marked in their turn for narrative
> deconstruction. (Jameson 145)

Jameson calls it a cycle of "hardening over, as it were, in a few tale-types"; the types then

"serve as scaffolding which must in turn be dismantled" (Jameson 144). Ruskin also uses

the image of "hardening-over" to explain the life-cycle of architectural style in the "Lamp

of Life," describing three stages of artistic development: "like the flow of a lava stream,

first bright and fierce, then languid and covered, at last advancing only by the tumbling

over and over of its frozen blocks" (150).

Despite *Jude'*s concern with the inadequacy of the structures of the realist novels,

it is undoubtedly a novel that continues to live for its readers. One reason for this may be

similar to the reason for Ruskin's admiration for gothic architecture. Ruskin believes that

the gothic has life because it is an architecture in transition. He describes it as:

> an architecture… rude and infantine in itself and surrounded by fragments
> of a nobler art of which it is quick in admiration and ready imitation, and
> yet so strong in its own instincts that it re-constructs and re-arranges every
> fragment that it copies or borrows into harmony with its own thoughts…
> all the borrowed elements being subordinated into its own primal,
> unchanged, life. (152)

In other words, gothic architecture has "life" because it shows us a moment of creation,

as old forms shatter and new ones struggle to materialize from the fragments. Published

on the cusp of a new century, in a moment of transition, *Jude* also demonstrates this

laborious process of tearing down and reconstructing; as Beatty says, with *Jude* Hardy's

intention is to "crack creation's mould and begin anew" (Beatty *The Part Played by Architecture* 360). *Jude* continues to live for its readers because it expresses what Ruskin calls in gothic architecture a "magnificent struggle into independent existence" (152).

CONCLUSION

This architectural and structural analysis is hopefully an interesting and revealing method for describing the work these novels perform, but description is not sufficient. After all, description is itself a stabilizing procedure; when I lock a novel into analogical relationship with one of Ruskin's lamps, I potentially lock out other possible relationships. When I enclose four different novels within a common interpretative frame, I risk concealing the discordances among them. Therefore, I seek a gothic aesthetic for this interpretive process—gothic in Ruskin's sense of an open, incomplete system. Beyond sketching out the way various structuring forces interact, my analogy of architectural, social, and narrative structures emphasizes that novels, like buildings, are living structures. Bender's premise that buildings are "cultural systems" (Bender 22), and my claim that novels are as well, is perhaps a more literal premise than would first appear. Buildings and novels do not simply reflect the social systems that produced them, but are themselves systems in process. As we interact with a building or a novel, we work to fix meaning, but our success is fleeting, and our meanings provisional.

This project had its origins in many different strands of my thinking about time, narrative, and culture, but there was also one repeated image that seemed so striking to me that I wanted to pursue it as far as possible. In all of these novels, in Ruskin's writings, and many other novels and essays of the period as well, there are descriptions of new buildings made from the stones, bricks, wood, and glass of an older structure—I have referred to several examples in the preceding chapters. When the physical structures of a medieval cathedral or an ancient fortress are no longer meaningful to their

communities, the people pull off pieces to construct pigsties or pave pathways; structures

can be reconfigured to become meaningful in new ways. This is a model for what authors

do as they construct their narratives, but also for what we do as readers as well—we

become part of the living system of the novel by our own work of continuous creative

repurposing and construction.

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