

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

‘SPIDERS THAT SPUN IRON’: THE PRODUCTION OF RAILWAY SPACE IN BRITISH  
LITERATURE, 1860-1880

EDWIN JOHN MOORHOUSE MARR

A thesis in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted: April 2021

## Acknowledgements

First of all, thank you mum for sparking my love in literature all those years ago. For raising and educating that boy who loved learning about trains and all forms of transportation, and for creating the conditions that would one day allow that fascination to become a full-length thesis. Thank you to dad for all your support over the years. I am lucky to have the best parents that anyone could ever hope for, understanding, encouraging, and supportive at every step of the way.

Next of all, thank you to Lizzie Ludlow, my first supervisor for this project. Your unwavering advice and support have been invaluable at every level, from undergraduate, to my MA, to now PhD. You've always pushed me to do better and work harder, and I am eternally grateful for your pursuit of excellence. Thank you too to John Gardner, my second supervisor. Your positivity, encouragement, and ability to break overwhelming tasks down into manageable parts, have always come at exactly the moment they were needed.

Thank you to my amazing friends. First up, the incomparable Alice Hare and Sophie Waldock who I have known since our undergraduate days together at Anglia Ruskin. Let's raise a glass together soon! Next, Sophie Phelps who charted the PhD path several steps ahead of me, and always reported on the terrain ahead. And I can't leave out my Cambridge friends, the Vinyl Veterans and the Brazilians! Thank you for all the fun times and the distractions from the thesis stress. Now it's time to emerge from the PhD bunker (and with lockdown lifting), hopefully we can all party again soon! I must also thank Sylvia, who taught me my A-Level English, and has since become a great friend. Looking forward to meeting up again soon, discussing literature, and catching up properly over a nice glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

That only leaves one person to thank, Boyfriend (Gilmore Girls reference there. Incidentally, a programme we watched together during the final stages of PhD writing!). Thank you for all your love and support Andre. I met you in the middle of my PhD, and you have always been there through the final stages of writing and editing. You supported me through the long editing weeks, nestled down in the office, and ensured adequate supplies of coffee were proffered at all times!

I am really so lucky to have such amazing and supportive people in my life, without whom, this project would never have been possible (or would at least have taken a far bigger emotional toll!). Thank you everyone.

# Abstract

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

‘SPIDERS THAT SPUN IRON’: THE PRODUCTION OF RAILWAY SPACE IN BRITISH LITERATURE, 1860-1880

EDWIN JOHN MOORHOUSE MARR

APRIL 2021

This thesis examines the railway space between 1860 and 1880. By railway space, I mean the entire assembly of seemingly discrete parts (stations, carriages, tunnels, and tracks both above and below ground) brought together into one unified locality that is at once open and off-limits, accessible and regulated. My argument draws on Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974), alongside other more recent works of spatial theory, to explore how the railway space is represented in mid-nineteenth-century British literature as an ideological product of Victorian society. As such, it perpetuates all the principles of the capitalist culture that built it; namely, the mercenary and consumeristic nature of nineteenth-century industrialism, the repurposing of nature and pre-existing places, the mechanisation of individuals, and the forced obedience to its systematic rules. Through analysing novels, novellas, and short stories by George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, and Charles Dickens alongside poems by Alexander Anderson and pieces from a variety of Victorian periodicals, this thesis provides a wide-ranging intervention into the field of railway studies in nineteenth-century literature. Each chapter centres around a specific space that the railway produced: the arrival of railway space, the junction space, the London Underground, workers on the tracks, and the violent destruction of space during accidents. The first three chapters of this project explore the literary representations of the network’s production and solidification, focusing on its impact on the old places and ways of life, the costs upon those who fully integrate with it but equally the impact on those who fall outside of its progress, and repeatedly ask what is gained and lost by these new transportation spaces. In contrast, the final two chapters explore how writers sought a renegotiation of the terms of spatial production, with Chapter Four reclaiming the workers at the heart of the railway space, and Chapter Five demonstrating how railway crashes unified the press against railway directors and how passengers found ways to escape, fight back, and bring change when faced with the violence of accidents.

**Keywords:** Nineteenth-Century Railways, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, Alexander Anderson, Victorian Periodicals, Henri Lefebvre, Spatial Theory, Production of Space.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Abstract.....	3
List of Figures.....	6
Introduction .....	7
<i>The annihilation of space</i> .....	9
<i>From reduction to production – Henri Lefebvre and La Production de l'espace</i> .....	15
<i>The railway space in Victorian Britain</i> .....	18
<i>Plan of the thesis</i> .....	20
Chapter 1 – ‘Cut it up into Railways’: George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Arrival of Railway Space .....	26
<i>Introduction</i> .....	26
‘ <i>The better thing to have in the memory</i> ’: Felix Holt between stagecoach past and railway future .....	31
<i>Middlemarch and the networks and dialectics of spatial production</i> .....	37
<i>A Dark Night’s Work between connection and disconnection</i> .....	48
<i>Temporal and spatial suspension in Cousin Phillis</i> .....	56
Chapter 2 - ‘I can go anywhere from here. Where shall I go?’: Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and Junction Space .....	66
<i>Introduction</i> .....	66
‘ <i>Steam winds</i> ’, ‘ <i>iron tides</i> ’, and ‘ <i>Barbox Brothers</i> ’ .....	69
‘ <i>A junction of many branches</i> ’: ‘ <i>Barbox Brothers and Co.</i> ’ .....	84
‘ <i>Smashed to bloody atoms</i> ’, Ferdinand Lopez in Trollope’s <i>The Prime Minister</i> .....	90
Chapter 3 – ‘Glaring out of the Dark Abyss’: The Metropolitan Railway as Non-Place in the Periodical Press.....	104
<i>Introduction</i> .....	104
<i>Consuming space</i> .....	109
<i>The underground railway and domestic space</i> .....	118
<i>At home away from home</i> .....	125
<i>Un-historic localities</i> .....	129
<i>Identity (de)struction</i> .....	134
<i>Spatial disorientation and geographic sameness</i> .....	138
Chapter 4 - Life on the Line: Reclaiming the Railway Space in Alexander Anderson’s <i>Songs of the Rail</i> (1878) .....	144
<i>Introduction</i> .....	144
<i>A thousand paths to progress: publication, preface, purpose</i> .....	146
<i>A link in the chain of advancement</i> .....	150
<i>The gods and Classical allusions</i> .....	166
<i>Nature and the machine</i> .....	170

<i>Death in the railway space</i> .....	179
<b>Chapter 5 - Going off the Rails: The Railway Accident and the Breakdown of Railway Space</b> .....	186
<i>Introduction</i> .....	186
<i>'There must be something wrong about excursion trains'</i> .....	190
<i>'The most terrible disaster that has ever yet occurred': The Clayton Tunnel Crash, 1861</i> .....	199
<i>Insuring against railway accidents</i> .....	206
<i>Lock-ins and break-outs: railway keys</i> .....	213
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	223
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	228
<i>Primary Sources</i> .....	228
<i>Periodical Articles</i> .....	229
<i>Secondary Sources</i> .....	233

## List of Figures

FIGURE 1. GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, 'JUDICIUM ASTROLOGICUM', IN BLANCHARD JERROLD, THE LIFE OF GEORGE CRUIKSHANK IN TWO EPOCHS (LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS, 1894), P. 190. ....	78
FIGURE 2. 'METROPOLITAN RAILWAY 1863', WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (2012) < <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metropolitan_Railway_1863.svg">HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:METROPOLITAN_RAILWAY_1863.SVG</a> > [ACCESSED 14 APRIL 2021] .....	111
FIGURE 3. ANON., 'THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAYS', PUNCH, 6 JAN 1866, N.P. ....	119
FIGURE 4. PHOTOGRAPH OF METROPOLITAN RAILWAY EXPANSION, TAKEN FROM FRANCESCA GILLET AND ELLA WILLS, 'FASCINATING BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS OF TUBE BEING BUILT IN 1863 RELEASED FOR LONDON UNDERGROUND'S 155TH BIRTHDAY', EVENING STANDARD (2018) < <a href="https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/fascinating-black-and-white-photos-of-tube-being-built-in-1863-released-for-london-underground-s-155th-birthday-a3736956.html">HTTPS://WWW.STANDARD.CO.UK/NEWS/TRANSPORT/FASCINATING-BLACK-AND-WHITE- PHOTOS-OF-TUBE-BEING-BUILT-IN-1863-RELEASED-FOR-LONDON-UNDERGROUND-S- 155TH-BIRTHDAY-A3736956.HTML</a> > [ACCESSED 10 FEBRUARY 2021].....	120
FIGURE 5. ANON., 'BAKER STREET STATION', PENNY ILLUSTRATED PAPER, 10 JAN 1863, 14 ...	126
FIGURE 6. ANON., 'METROPOLITAN RAILWAY COMPANY', THE DAILY NEWS, 5 JAN 1863, 1 ....	132
FIGURE 7. GUSTAVE DORÉ, 'THE WORKMEN'S TRAIN', THE VICTORIAN WEB (2014) < <a href="http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/dore/london/32.html">HTTP://WWW.VICTORIANWEB.ORG/ART/ILLUSTRATION/DORE/LONDON/32.HTML</a> > [ACCESSED 28 OCTOBER 2020] .....	136
FIGURE 8. ANON., 'THE GUIDE TO THE METROPOLITAN RAILWAY', FUN, 15 SEP 1866, 13 .....	142
FIGURE 9. 'ALEXANDER ANDERSON' IN SONGS OF THE RAIL, ED. BY ALEXANDER ANDERSON (EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES & CO, 1881), P. 1 .....	146
FIGURE 10. 'THERE AND (NOT) BACK', PUNCH (1878) < <a href="https://punch.photoshelter.com/image/I00009C4OZDXEA4U">HTTPS://PUNCH.PHOTOSHELTER.COM/IMAGE/I00009C4OZDXEA4U</a> > [ACCESSED 17 MARCH 2020] .....	191
FIGURE 11. ANON, 'THE COLLISION IN THE CLAYTON TUNNEL', REYNOLDS'S MISCELLANY, 14 SEP 1861, 185 .....	204
FIGURE 12. 'LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY EARLY CARRIAGE KEY', <i>ANTIQUE ATLAS</i> (2021) < <a href="https://www.antiques-atlas.com/antique/lnwry_early_carriage_key/as218a2264">HTTPS://WWW.ANTIQUES- ATLAS.COM/ANTIQUUE/LNWRY_EARLY_CARRIAGE_KEY/AS218A2264</a> > [ACCESSED 26 MARCH 2021] .....	213

## Introduction

But there were so many lines. Gazing down upon them from a bridge at the Junction, it was as if the concentrating Companies formed a great Industrial Exhibition of the works of extraordinary ground-spiders that spun iron.

Charles Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', in *Mugby Junction*, ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 11

'Production' also implies that space be considered analogous to other economic goods. The produced spatial ensemble - the built environment, the alterations in nature, the signs and symbols of landscape, the relations of particulars in the spatial field - can, among other things, be bought and sold. It makes up an important part of economies. Besides producing goods and services, economies produce space.

Harvey Molotch, 'The Space of Lefebvre', *Theory and Society*, 22 (1993), 887-95 (p. 888)

This thesis focuses on representations of railway space in British literature of the 1860s and 70s. By applying a Lefebvrian reading of spatial production to the literature within this project, I demonstrate that the railways function as products of modern, urbanised, and industrialised capitalism, analogous with other forms of produced commodities, and that mid-Victorian writers were actively aware of these mercenary aspects of the network. As part of this process, I analyse how writers chart the impact of producing the railway on top of existing spaces and longstanding notions of precapitalist place, particularly with regards to the natural world. I unpack the opportunities and threats created by the railway space, question who benefits from these new spaces and who is left behind, explore the unstoppable march of progress, and see how people's behaviours and actions are perceived as altered, regulated, and commodified in a space produced purely for consumption and exchange.

In what follows, I set out the existing work in this field and show how the dominant attitude that emerges in critical responses towards the nineteenth-century railway space is one of spatial annihilation, a conceptualisation foregrounded in Wolfgang Schivelbusch's 1977 *The Railway Journey*.<sup>1</sup> I then challenge this view and by engaging with the work of Doreen Massey and Kathryn Powell, present some of the limitations of viewing technology purely as

---

<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

a force for reducing space.<sup>2</sup> Instead, I show that by using Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) as a critical lens, one can re-evaluate the spatial properties of the railway as it is represented in literature.<sup>3</sup> I then build upon the work of Michael De Certeau, Yin Fu Tuan, and John Agnew alongside Lefebvre, to explain how the railway space signifies the entire assembly of infrastructure and machine inside the network.<sup>4</sup> Finally, I set out the overall structure of this thesis, moving from the arrival of railway space in the works of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell in Chapter One, the junction space in Charles Dickens's *Mugby Junction* and Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister* in Chapter Two, periodical accounts of the opening of the Metropolitan railway in Chapter Three, Alexander Anderson's *Songs of the Rail* in Chapter Four, and railway accidents and periodicals in Chapter Five. My analysis centres around five key spatial elements of the machine ensemble: construction, junctions, Underground, workers on the line, and the breakdown of space (and the ideologies underpinning it) during accidents. I thus chart a broad range of authors and genres to include novels, novellas, poetry, illustrations, short stories, and non-fiction articles, that provide a multifaceted and wide-ranging insight into perceptions of the network during the 1860s and 70s.

The structure of my thesis thus follows a clear trajectory, moving from the arrival of railway space in Chapter One, to its solidification in Chapters Two and Three, Anderson's renegotiation of its terms in Chapter Four, before demonstrating that passengers found ways to resist the tyranny of the forces of production in Chapter Five. In this way, I ultimately prove Michel De Certeau correct when he labelled individuals as 'poets of their own acts,

---

<sup>2</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005) and Kathryn Powell, 'Railways and Regret: Revising Mobility Myths in Victorian Literature and Culture, 1857-1891' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Tennessee Knoxville, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) and John A. Agnew, 'Space and Place' in *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. by John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011).



silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality'.<sup>5</sup> For all that the forces of production regulate the built environment, rob users of their individuality, and destroy the old places, people will always find slippages within the rigid rules of use governing the network. For De Certeau, this process emerged from pedestrians forging their own way through the urban environment. However, in this study, this process emerges from railway passengers purchasing keys and securing their physical and symbolic escape from the machine ensemble.

### **The annihilation of space**

Scholarship concerning the railway and mobility in Victorian literature and culture has been growing since the turn of the century, with Michael Freeman's *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (1999), Ian Carter's *Railways and Culture in Britain* (2001), Ana Parejo Vadillo's *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism* (2005), Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman's *The Railway and Modernity* (2007), Jonathon Grossman's *Charles Dickens's Networks* (2012), Charlotte Mathieson's *Mobility in the Victorian Novel* (2015), and Anna Despotopoulou's *Women and the Railway* (2015), being amongst the most influential in this field.<sup>6</sup> This is in addition to more general and historical works on the nineteenth-century railway such as Christian Wolmar's *The Subterranean Railway* (2004) and *Fire and Steam* (2007) and Simon Bradley's *The Railways* (2015).<sup>7</sup> Despite the growing field of Victorian railway studies, work on the railway's spatial elements remains relatively unexplored or,

---

<sup>5</sup> De Certeau, p. xviii.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Freeman, *The Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), *The Railway and Modernity*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), Jonathan H. Grossman, *Charles Dickens's Networks: Public Transport and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Charlotte Mathieson, *Mobility in the Victorian Novel: Placing the Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and Anna Despotopoulou, *Women and the Railway, 1850-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Christian Wolmar, *The Subterranean Railway* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), Christian Wolmar, *Fire & Steam: How the Railways Transformed Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007) and Simon Bradley, *The Railways* (London: Profile Books, 2015).

where they are explored, stay within Wolfgang Schivelbusch's schema of spatial annihilation, a discussion I expand upon below. For instance, Freeman's *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* charts the impact of the railways on culture more broadly, identifying the railway as a 'cultural metaphor'.<sup>8</sup> Whilst Freeman does dedicate a chapter to questions of capital and recognises that 'Britain's railways in the Victorian era were embedded in the contemporary workings of capital', he still concludes that the 'ultimate impulse was the total annihilation of space'.<sup>9</sup> He then focuses more generally on how capital functions inside the network with the railway boom, investment figures, and the monopolisation of railway operators forming the backbone of his discussion, rather than the inherent commodification at the centre of the railway project.

Freeman's chapter in *The Railway and Modernity* does mention Lefebvre in the context of DH Laurence's *Sons and Lovers*, writing that the railway, 'propounded, produced, mastered and appropriated space in a dialectical interaction'.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, this is a brief allusion in a text otherwise concerned with the railway's impact on existing spaces, in a book centred around Modernism and twentieth-century writing. Jonathon Grossman, meanwhile, makes some interesting observations on the nature of space, recognising that in contrast to other transport spaces (roads, seas, and skies), the railway remains an environment of 'undifferentiating othering', existing within its own 'purpose-built' space and 'proscribing anything but its kind on its road'.<sup>11</sup> To this day, the railway remains unique in this respect as an environment off-limits to anything but timetabled locomotive transport. This is a point I return to in my definition of railway space later in this introduction. Nevertheless, the focus of Grossman's project is on Dickens, and he only considers the railway alongside other

---

<sup>8</sup> Freeman, *The Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Freeman, *The Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Freeman, 'Time and Space Under Modernism' in *The Railway and Modernity*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Grossman, p. 99.

networks. Furthermore, Grossman is also clear that the ‘annihilation of time and space’ informed ‘temporal and spatial coherence’ in Dickens’s novels.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Grossman places his project within the schema of spatial reduction in order to provide a reading of Dickens’s work centring around simultaneity. Ana Parejo Vadillo’s monograph focuses on urban modernity at the end of the nineteenth century which is useful for my discussion of the Metropolitan railway in Chapter Three. However, she deliberately does not speak to the larger railway network, focusing instead on urban localities for the female writer. Meanwhile, Ian Carter’s project is broad in nature choosing breadth over depth, fitting for his approach of re-evaluating the place of the railway in British literature.

Charlotte Mathieson, like Freeman, also mentions Lefebvre briefly. Specifically, his argument that ‘the railways played a fundamental role in industrial capitalism and the organisation of its national (and international) space’, before asserting that ‘the railway network was particularly important because it so visibly reproduced the capitalist restructurings of space as inherent to its systematisation of travel and space’.<sup>13</sup> However, Mathieson is another critic who ultimately approaches railway capitalism in terms of spatial annihilation. She argues, ‘[t]o travel by train was to encounter the perception that space was shrinking or becoming “annihilated” by modern technology; so quickly could space be traversed’.<sup>14</sup> Anna Despotopoulou also draws on Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey, and Tim Cresswell in order to foreground space as ‘socially constructed and constructing, as the product of an ongoing, dynamic process involving nature, politics, culture, and history’.<sup>15</sup> Despotopoulou, like Mathieson, identifies the nature of the railway as a capitalist environment and alludes towards the machine ensemble functioning as a social product in the Lefebvrian sense. She also recognises some of the more troubling aspects of

---

<sup>12</sup> Grossman, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Mathieson, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Mathieson, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Despotopoulou, p. 10.

the railway space, writing that it ‘naturalised even further social divisions by embedding the new practices within old hierarchical systems’ whilst also observing that ‘mobility is not always empowering’.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Despotopoulou places her focus elsewhere, exploring the opportunities, threats, and dangers of female mobility rather than focusing at length on the capitalistic nature of the machine ensemble.

All of the writers I discuss above draw on Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s *The Railway Journey* (1977). In this work, Schivelbusch introduces many of the core ideas that continue to underpin responses to the Victorian railway, including the idea of technological shock and trauma through his analysis of ‘railway spine’; the transition from organic, visible motion (horse drawn) to concealed, rhythmic, industrialised locomotion (steam engines); his exploration of panoramic vision and how individuals began seeing the world through the apparatus of the machine, in addition to his historical analysis of the rise of railway novels and reading on the move. Nevertheless, Schivelbusch’s focus is on how the railways reduced time and space, rather than the entirely new spaces that the railway produced. This can be seen through his observation that the ‘railway knows only points of departure and destination’, a viewpoint that overlooks the entire spatial assembly that exists between origin and arrival.<sup>17</sup> To this end, it is Schivelbusch who popularises the term, ‘annihilation of space by time’, writing that it was, ‘the early-nineteenth-century characterisation of the effect of railroad travel.’<sup>18</sup> Whilst this term dates back to Karl Marx’s *Grundrisse*, written in 1857-8 but published posthumously, it was Schivelbusch who cemented it within the contemporary critical imagination.<sup>19</sup> So central are ideas of spatial and temporal annihilation to Schivelbusch, that he expands them further in his paper ‘Railroad Space and Railroad Time’ published the year after *The Railway Journey*. He says:

---

<sup>16</sup> Despotopoulou, pp. 5-7.

<sup>17</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 524.

The concept is based on the speed that the new means of transport are able to achieve. A given spatial distance, to be covered, traditionally, in a fixed duration of travel or transport time, can suddenly be dealt with in a fraction of that time: to put it another way, the same duration now permits one to cover the old spatial distance many times over. In terms of transport economics, this means a shrinkage of space.<sup>20</sup>

According to Schivelbusch, the increasing speed of mobility led not only to a sense that the world was shrinking, but to a sense that it was accelerating too, with commodities and travellers spreading across the nation in unprecedented ways. For Schivelbusch, the capitalism of the railways is a reductive, rather than productive impulse, as he labels this the ‘image of a temporal shrinkage seen as a spatial one’.<sup>21</sup> In this, Schivelbusch is situated within the development of postmodernism in the latter half of the twentieth century, and the concept of space time compression posited by David Harvey to capture the acceleration of capital exchange and ensuing sense of spatial reduction.

I do not dispute that spatial annihilation was one way in which the railway and its economic framework were perceived during the nineteenth century, as plentiful accounts across the century affirm.<sup>22</sup> Rather, spatial annihilation was only one of many ways in which the network was conceptualised. Schivelbusch himself acknowledges this, writing that the, ‘shrinking of the natural world by means of mechanical transportation was perceived and evaluated in different ways, dependant on the evaluator’s economic and ideological position’.<sup>23</sup> One’s reaction to the railway space is ultimately dependant on one’s ideology and

---

<sup>20</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, ‘Railroad Space and Railroad time’, *New German Critique*, 14 (1987), 31-40 (p. 31).

<sup>21</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, Henrich Heine writes in 1843 that, ‘[s]pace is killed by the railways, and we are left with time alone’. An 1861 article in *The Cornhill Magazine* asserts that, ‘we are astonished to find how space and bulk seem to have diminished’. Anthony Trollope writes in *Miss Mackenzie* (1865) of how, ‘Miles mean nothing nowadays’, demonstrating the railway’s propensity for obliterating traditional concepts of spatial measurement. Meanwhile, Henry Robert Reynolds published ‘Our Railway System’ in *The British Quarterly Review* in 1872, in which he writes that the railway, ‘has opened up every part of the kingdom; it has lessened space, and shortened time’. Even as late as 1895, an article appeared in *The Speaker* in which the writer discusses the high-speed trains to Scotland and ‘the pleasure of the officials, responsible for this annihilation of time and space’. (See: Schivelbusch, ‘Railroad Space and Railroad time’, p. 34. Anthony Trollope, *Miss Mackenzie* (London: The Folio Society, 1997), p. 50. Henry Robert Reynolds, ‘Our Railway System’, *The British Quarterly Review*, Oct 1872, 362-408 (p. 362). and Anon., ‘The Excursion Train’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, Dec 1861, 727-34 (p. 727).)

<sup>23</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 11.

by focusing exclusively on writers foregrounding space as shrinking, one risks overlooking the new spaces that the railway produced, as well as the spatial politics entangled within the construction of the machine network.

I am not the only critic to take issue with the concept of spatial annihilation. Kathryn Powell writes in her 2017 thesis ‘Railways and Regret’ that, ‘[f]or decades, scholarship accepted [spatial annihilation] as a given’.<sup>24</sup> As an alternative reading, Powell encourages approaching the railway, not as a shock that obliterated the past, but as a continuation of existing anxieties surrounding acceleration and change. Doreen Massey also identifies the limitations of spatial annihilation, even including a chapter in her 2005 book *For Space* entitled ‘space cannot be annihilated by time’. In particular, Massey criticises how spatial annihilation closes down space, rather than opening up the new spaces of modernity for analysis. She writes that:

Space can never be definitively purified. If space is the sphere of multiplicity, the product of social relations, and those relations are real material practices, and always ongoing, then space can never be closed, there will always be loose ends, always relations with the beyond, always potential elements of chance.<sup>25</sup>

Although Massey recognises that the annihilation of space has been a productive framework, it ultimately fails to take into account the true nature of space as always open, changing, and evolving. Furthermore, Massey also identifies how moving away from theories of spatial annihilation allows one to recognise space as a ‘product of social relations’, clearly aligning herself with Lefebvre’s conceptualisations of space set out below. The railway space of the nineteenth century was no different, and whilst seeing this new technology in terms of annihilating space is certainly a common perspective both then and now, it is a limited one. It can never remedy the abundance of new spaces that the railroads pioneered for inhabitation,

---

<sup>24</sup> Powell, ‘Railways and Regret’, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Massey, p. 95.

whether in stations, underground, or in the carriage, as well as overlooking the material relations and ideologies embedded within the railway space itself.

### **From reduction to production – Henri Lefebvre and *La Production de l'espace***

In order to explore how the railway space was coded, not as a force for annihilating space but as a vehicle for producing new spaces and for changing spatial relations, I apply Henri Lefebvre's theories of spatial production to the texts I analyse throughout this thesis. *The Production of Space* (1974) follows on from Lefebvre's earlier three volumes of *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1947-1981), with his later work moving to explore space itself as a product.<sup>26</sup> In keeping with his Hegelian and Marxist roots, in *The Production of Space* Lefebvre foregrounds a view of space defined by dialectical opposition between perceived space (the space of everyday life) and conceived space (the space of architects and urban planners), with lived space (the transcendental space of imagination) existing as the synthesis of the previous two antitheses. To understand these terms further, one might think of perceived space as 'pure materialism', whereas conceived space is 'pure idealism', with lived space balanced in the middle.<sup>27</sup> Literature is situated in lived space, or representational space. As Aguiar, Mathieson, and Pearce recognise, '[l]iterary representations form part of the "representational space" through which social space is constituted'.<sup>28</sup> Literature aids the process of perceiving and living in space. It serves as a locus for imagining the true nature of spaces and for coming to terms with the agents controlling them.

The longstanding view that space serves as a passive container is the key concept that Lefebvre takes issue with. Instead, he encourages shifting 'from *things in space* to the actual

---

<sup>26</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: The One-Volume Edition*, trans. by John Moore (Verso: London, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Zhongyuan Zhang, 'What is lived space?', *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organisation*, 6. (2006), 219-23 (p. 221).

<sup>28</sup> Marian Aguiar, Charlotte Mathieson, and Lynne Pearce, 'Introduction', in *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 12.

*production of space*', recognising that space itself can be produced in parallel with other commodities.<sup>29</sup> As he writes in 'Reflections on the Politics of Space':

Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally populated with ideologies. [...] Why? Because space, which seems homogenous, which appears given as a whole in its objectivity, in its pure form, such as we determine it, is a social product. The production of space cannot be likened to the production of any particular object or commodity. Nonetheless, there are relations between the production of things and that of space.<sup>30</sup>

Space has key similarities with other commodities in so far as it is exchangeable and saleable, with the entirety of the produced space forming part of the country's economic fabric. Space not only embodies the cultural values of the society that constructed it, but it plays an active role in the politics of consumption and commodity exchange and becomes a product in both senses of the word; it is a produced locality and saleable object.

Lefebvre is extremely specific about what 'production' means. As he explains, 'whereas a *work* has something irreplaceable and unique about it, a *product* can be reproduced exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures'.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to an artwork or an inimitable, handmade object which shows all the originality and creativity of its maker, a product is replicable. Lefebvre argues that the production of space is not an accidental or haphazard process, but rather every culture produces its own space in its own image for its own purposes. He writes, '([s]ocial) space is a (social) product. The first implication is that (physical) natural space is disappearing'.<sup>32</sup> For Lefebvre, all societies produce their own environments and naturally, the spaces of Ancient Rome or Greece look markedly different to spaces produced in an industrialised world. Because space in the modern world is produced by capitalist societies, it is inherently bound up with concerns of

---

<sup>29</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 37. Italics in original.

<sup>30</sup> Henri Lefebvre, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. by Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 171.

<sup>31</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 31. Italics in original.

<sup>32</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 30.



capital, domination over landscapes and people, principles of inclusion and exclusion, and the exchange of goods and services.

The railways, as the most obvious and impactful produced environment of the nineteenth century, perpetuate Victorian society's mercenary underpinnings. As Lefebvre writes in a later preface to *The Production of Space*, 'undeniably the railways played a fundamental role in industrial capitalism'.<sup>33</sup> The implication of this reading of Lefebvre for my analysis of the railway space is multifaceted. Firstly, recognising that all societies produce their own spaces in their own image is especially relevant in a century coded as the 'age of steam'.<sup>34</sup> Not only is the Victorian period defined by mechanisation and urban capitalism, but the spaces it produced were likewise urban, mechanical, and capitalist, with the relationship between the two bi-directional and mutually exclusive. Secondly, Lefebvre's recognition of the hegemony and deindividualisation inherently built into produced space is highly relevant to my analyses of identity and class which run throughout this thesis. Finally, Lefebvre identifies that social space comes at the cost of the natural place of the bucolic past, which he recognises 'will soon be lost to view'.<sup>35</sup> Instead, nature 'is now seen as merely the raw material out of which the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces'.<sup>36</sup> The natural world has become an inconvenience, something that stands in the way of technological and industrial progress. In the case of the railway, not only does the rail line vivisect the natural world with its plethora of cuttings, tunnels, bridges, and viaducts, but it very clearly uses the natural world as the raw materials for its production through its consumption of wood for the sleepers and rock for the ballast. As a result, the

---

<sup>33</sup> Henri Lefebvre, 'Preface to the New Edition: The Production of Space', in *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, ed. by Stuart Elder, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman, trans. by Imogen Forster (London: Continuum, 2003) p. 212.

<sup>34</sup> William Thackeray, 'Roundabout Papers – No. VIII', *The Cornhill Magazine*, Oct 1860, 501-12 (p. 504).

<sup>35</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 31

<sup>36</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 31.

vexed relationship between the natural world and the railway space is a notable anxiety that emerges repeatedly in the literary responses to the machine ensemble.

### **The railway space in Victorian Britain**

I use the terms place and space distinctively within this thesis, building on the definitions used by Michel De Certeau, Yi Fu Tuan, Henri Lefebvre, and John Agnew. De Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) writes that place is ‘an indication of stability’, whereas ‘space is like the word when it is spoken’.<sup>37</sup> Place is solid, dependable, unmovable, like the word written down on the page, its composition unbending. Whereas space is a site in flux, a locality of changing relations. The philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan argues the same, stating that ‘[s]pace’ is more abstract than ‘place’. ‘What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’.<sup>38</sup> In other words, space is an abstract locality whereas place is rooted and valued. Tuan further captures this idea through his observation that, ‘if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause’.<sup>39</sup> Lefebvre, like Tuan and De Certeau, also perceives place as a break in the productive forces. For him, ‘place is the momentary suspension to a social flow’.<sup>40</sup> If space is a product of capitalism and symbolises the flow of goods and commodities, then place is the moment when these flows are suspended. To think of this another way, places cannot be produced whereas spaces can. John Agnew has written the same, namely there has been a movement in recent spatial theory to see:

Place standing in for the local (and traditional) and location/space representing the global (and the modern) [...] Place is often associated with the world of the past and location/space with the world of the present and future [...] place is therefore nostalgic, regressive or even reactionary, and space is progressive and radical.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> De Certeau, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Tuan, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Tuan, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Timotheus Vermeulen, ‘Space is the Place’, *Frieze* (2015) <<https://frieze.com/article/space-place>> [Accessed 29 June 2018].

<sup>41</sup> Agnew, p. 319.

This distinction is particularly useful for approaching the space of the nineteenth-century railway and its impact on existing places; hence it is this definition I will be using. Place symbolising the stagecoach past, the natural world, nostalgic traditions, and feudal life whereas space represents the urban, artificially produced, industrialised capitalist economy.

When it comes to the railway space itself, even now it is unique as a locality that is simultaneously public and inaccessible. Unlike the skies that are open to anyone with a private plane and licence, the waterways that are accessible to anyone with access to a boat, or the roads that are available to anyone with a bike, car, or pair of walking shoes, the railway stands alone as a space that is off-limits to any machine other than the train and any operator other than a professional locomotive driver. This is something highlighted by Schivelbusch, as he writes, '[r]oute and vehicle became technically conjoined on the railroad: there was no leeway between the railways and the vehicle running on them'.<sup>42</sup> Schivelbusch terms this conjoining of machine and network the 'machine ensemble,' and the implications of this are significant. The railway, built by private investors, run by private operating companies and traversed by private individuals paying for the privilege to enter the railway space, foreground the capitalist structures implicitly built into every fibre of the railway system. This is precisely why the writers I explore in this project see the railway space as such a powerful product of capitalist modernity. Whereas I take issue with Schivelbusch's view of spatial annihilation, I find his terming of the 'machine ensemble' a useful way to capture the sense of the network as a site of interlinked production, signifying the entire assembly of machine and infrastructure. I therefore use this synonymously with the 'railway space' to signify the conjoined elements of the railway: engines and carriages, stations and platforms, tunnels and cuttings, tracks and junctions, and railways both above and below ground. Whilst I use the machine ensemble synonymously with the railway space, I privilege the latter term

---

<sup>42</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, pp. 16-17.

to invite comparisons between the space of the railway and other forms of spatiality and sites of consumption.

This approach to understanding the railway space as one unified locality, is a relatively underexplored one. James Meek captures this in his review of Simon Bradley's *The Railways*. He proposes that, unlike cities which we tend to conceptualise in their unified entirety we, 'don't tend to speak of the railways as a whole in that way [...] even though we move in and out of the railways constantly, and spend hours – years – of our lives there'.<sup>43</sup> Whereas we recognise the urban environment as a cohesive, socially produced space, it is less common to approach the railway in this way. With this in mind, it is little wonder that critics are reluctant to move away from viewing the railway in terms of spatial annihilation. As Meek identifies, this is merely symptomatic of a culture used to overlooking the intermeshed, capitalist space that the railway embodies, due in large part to the enormity of the network.

### **Plan of the thesis**

I am exclusively focusing on literature of the 1860s and 70s because by this time the railway had become a normalised part of society. Rather than trying to come to terms with the technological marvels of the new space, as writers during the 1830s and 40s were, writers during the 1860s and 70s instead turn to understanding its political ambitions and power dynamics alongside its impact on the nation. Michael Freeman captures this when he writes:

Discussion of railways and territory inevitably focuses on the later decades of the nineteenth century, for this was the time it took for company bases in territory fully to crystallise. By contrast, study of the railway as a mechanical and scientific sensation must inevitably focus on the middle period of the century, for by the closing decades of the Victorian age such novelty was long spent.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> James Meek, 'Trains in Space', *London Review of Books* (2016) <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n09/james-meek/trains-in-space>>[Accessed 15 December 2017].

<sup>44</sup> Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p. 25.

As I consider how the railway space was conceptualised within literature as a product of a capitalist economy, my analysis looks towards the middle to end of the nineteenth century. The 1860s and 70s are also two decades with many major and influential events in the history of the railways in Britain. The world's original underground railway opened in London in 1863, an event that forms the focus of my third chapter. St Pancras station, arguably the pinnacle of railway architecture in the century, became operational in 1868 with the grand hotel that forms the façade opening in 1876, whilst Britain's first sleeping car was introduced in 1873. These decades were not only marked by innovation but anxiety too. The first railway murder in the UK took place in 1864, whilst across both decades there were a number of high-profile railway accidents. This started with the Clayton Tunnel disaster in 1861, Dickens's involvement in the Staplehurst crash in 1865, the Abergele accident in 1868 where thirty-three people died, and accidents with double-digit casualties at Newark (1870), Wigan (1873), and Thorpe (1874) to list only a handful. These two decades concluded with the Tay Bridge disaster of 1879, a catastrophic failure of railway infrastructure that exposed the perceived violence inherent inside the machine ensemble.

I start this thesis with the arrival of the railway network in two novels and two novellas by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell set in the 'just-past', to use a term coined by Ruth Livesey.<sup>45</sup> These texts are *Felix Holt* (1866) and *Middlemarch* (1871-2) by Eliot, and Gaskell's *A Dark Night's Work* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1864). Through my analysis in Chapter One, I demonstrate that the railway plays a significant and shaping role in all four of these texts, severing the world of Gaskell and Eliot's imagination into pre- and post-railway spaces. The railway also divides people into two camps: those advocating change and innovation, and those holding onto the past. Faced with a space that is undifferentiating in its

---

<sup>45</sup> Ruth Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 56.

embodiment of industrial capitalism, Gaskell and Eliot's novels and novellas seek a middle ground, with their narrators consistently asking what is gained and lost by change. They present the railways as a troubling product of urbanisation and express sorrow at the death of the old bucolic traditions and habits brought about by reform. At the same time, those who try and remain outside of progress and all that it embodies are not treated kindly in these stories. They are cast as slow-witted yokels within Eliot's fiction, or worse, face death or a life of hopeless isolation in Gaskell's. By beginning with novels charting the contemporary history of the machine ensemble (the texts in this chapter are set from 1822 to approximately the late 1840s), I am able to map the arrival of the railway space and its impact on existing places and people in the decades when railway expansion was at its height. This chapter also establishes many of the concerns that emerge throughout this thesis, especially the aspects of power, capital, reproducibility, division, and inequality embodied in the produced railway space.

In the next chapter, I use Charles Dickens's Christmas collection *Mugby Junction* (1866) and Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister* (1875-6) to uncover how the junction space represents the absolute and totalising power of industrial capitalism. Dickens and Trollope's fictional junctions of Mugby and Tenway are transitional environments. As such, they exert a strange influence over the passengers inside, confronting them with their identity and placement inside the network and their successes and failures at mapping their bodies to modern, industrialised capitalism and its produced spaces. The users of the station are forced to consume it on its own terms, as Jackson in *Mugby Junction* is ultimately able to achieve. Or else, like Ferdinand Lopez in *The Prime Minister*, be inescapably confronted with one's exclusion from society and left with total erasure. I also explore how stations are exhibition spaces, revealing to the consumer the lines available for them to travel. In so doing, they frame the railway space and its opportunities of mobility as a commodity available to

purchase. It is in this chapter where I also begin to see the impact of the railway on the individual's body and identity, regulating and absorbing them into the structures of the ensemble.

In Chapter Three, I explore representations of an entirely new space produced in the 1860s, the London Underground. Through my reading of periodical articles, illustrations, and short stories across the 1860s and 70s, in addition to my engagement with the work of Marc Augé, I uncover how periodical writers view the Metropolitan railway as a proto-non-place.<sup>46</sup> As part of this discussion, I explore how journalists approach the Underground in the context of West End 1860s consumption and spectatorship, viewing it as an environment of pure exchange. I further explore the impact on identity enacted by the railway space, expanding my discussion of bodies inside the ensemble. I show how the Underground was conceived as an a-historic locality, below and beyond traditional models of space, as well as the Metropolitan railway's re-modelling of the city towards favouring enterprise above domesticity. Attitudes towards the Metropolitan railway are varied in the press. Some writers see it as a filthy, sulphurous environment that yields an iconoclastic impact on the urban fabric, whereas others identify it as a useful tool of slum clearance and are impressed by the airy design of its stations. Despite this, there remains a unifying sense that the Metropolitan railway was a unique and unsettling space to negotiate, with a vexed relationship to the pre-existing city.

The first three chapters centre on the users of the railway space and their relationship with the productive forces. In Chapter Four, I turn to the workers to show how Alexander Anderson seeks a renegotiation of the terms of production through his 1878 poetry collection *Songs of the Rail*. It is at this point in my thesis that the tone begins to shift away from the arrival and solidification of the forces of production, to instead seeing how individuals forged

---

<sup>46</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008).

a reclamation of space. By exploring Anderson's representation of the workers on the line and through applying Kirstie Blair's research into Scottish working-class poetry, I show that Anderson displays a typically Scottish poetic sensibility towards the railway space, with industrial labouring poetry a notable genre north of the border.<sup>47</sup> Anderson presents a reading of human development that celebrates every generation's superiority to the one that preceded it, with the machine ensemble symbolising the apex of evolution. Although he is consistent in recognising the produced nature of the railway, identifying the infrastructure as a product of mercenary forces and portraying nature as the raw materials to be used and dominated by mankind, Anderson does not seek to oppose the processes and violence of spatial production. Instead, he sets out to reclaim the workers as the true architects of progress. He does this by arguing that the worker playing his role in producing the network secures his legacy through the infrastructure he has built and operated. In this way, he is placed at the heart of progress, he is granted immortality, and compared to the gods of antiquity, with even accidents symbolising the might of the workers who successfully survive the pressures of the railway line.

In Chapter Five, I consider an event that violently rips apart the machine ensemble and in so doing, exposes its productive energies for all to see. Railway crashes and incidents became a key area of concern by the 1860s and 70s, with the railway network garnering a reputation as a dangerous locality. Accidents represent a breakdown and a failure of the machine, but far more than that, they also trigger a re-evaluation of the human cost of capitalism and its produced spaces. This is only more apparent when the railway companies are seen as uncaring and attempting to block legislation insisting on greater regulation and safety measures. I return to the periodicals in this chapter to chart the sheer volume of writing

---

<sup>47</sup> Kirstie Blair, *Working Verse in Victorian Scotland: Poetry, Press, Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).



on accidents during the 1860s and 70s, focusing on the overriding sense that the railways had become too powerful at the expense of their consumers. The fact that the railways were comparatively safe and accidents relatively few when compared to the coaching network, was irrelevant; the sense that the railways were a dangerous locality was already established and editors and writers alike called for change. In this chapter, I also reach some of the limits of Lefebvre's theories. For Lefebvre, space is absolute with the patterns of control and production inescapable and totalising. Yet, as I see through my exploration of railway keys, passengers always find ways of breaking free from the forces of regulation, whether by taking a shortcut away from the approved footpaths or carrying keys to escape the carriages in the event of accidents. In the end, humanity finds a way to resist the hegemony of the productive forces, even if only in small gestures, rebellions, and actions. The railway space as a produced environment is always alive and active. Even as it attempts to define, limit, and control its users, there will always be opportunities for renegotiation.

# Chapter 1 – ‘Cut it up into Railways’: George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Arrival of Railway Space

## Introduction

Our midland plains have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit for me; yet at every other mile, since I first looked on them, some sign of world-wide change, some new direction of human labour, has wrought itself into what one may call the speech of the landscape [...] There comes a crowd of burly navvies with pickaxes and barrows, and while hardly a wrinkle is made in the fading mother's face or a new curve of health in the blooming girl's, the hills are cut through, or the breaches between them spanned, we choose our level, and the white steam-pennon flies along it.

George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), pp. 24-25

This extract from George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879) is a philosophical lament on the production of the railway space and its impact on the existing countryside witnessed throughout Eliot's life. No longer isolated, the rural provinces are suddenly part of the 'world-wide change' occurring beyond the horizon as they are drawn into a national, even global, network of communication and transportation. For the narrator, the 'speech of the landscape' is becoming corrupted with it now talking of 'human labour', the 'pickaxes' and 'barrows' tearing up the hitherto unchanged environment and producing the new space of the railways in its place. Before the mother's face has time to fade or the young girl's time to bloom, the landscape is cut, dug, and sliced by the 'burly navvies', highlighting the speed at which railway construction was occurring and the rate at which the natural world was overlaid with the industrial.

In this chapter, I expand these ideas by exploring the arrival of the railway space into four novels and novellas by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. I demonstrate that in each of these texts, Eliot and Gaskell encourage treading a middle course when it comes to the railway space. They present its darker aspects and its elements of regulation, linearity, and urbanism, and mourn the parts of provincial society that it destroys. At the same time, they also identify the railways as a necessary part of progress. Those who position themselves

against change are represented as either small-minded yokels in Eliot's fiction, or worse, threatened with death or consigned to a life of tedious immobility in Gaskell's. In a similar way, those who fully embrace reform and progress are presented as delusional in Eliot's work, or cold-hearted philistines in Gaskell's. Instead of being wholeheartedly pro- or anti-rail, these two writers encourage finding balance between these diametrically opposed positions, recognising the importance of celebrating and remembering the past and holding onto its customs, whilst equally embracing the future.

I begin with Eliot's novel of reform and political discourse, *Felix Holt* (1866). Although set just as the railways are in their infancy, Eliot's preface to the novel compares the stagecoach past and the railway future in light of the spirit of reform running throughout the plot. As the political characters must seek a path between reactionary Conservatism and revolutionary Radicalism, so too does the narrator encourage a nuanced reading of transport spaces; a reading that accommodates nostalgia whilst also celebrating progress and that recognises the dark aspects of pre-reform, pre-industrial life alongside the negative and impersonal elements of modern travel. I then explore Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2), a novel that frequently invokes the image of the network to understand how the railway renegotiated patterns of rural life. Like *Felix Holt*, the railway space of *Middlemarch* is associated with broader structures of reform both political and medical. As the characters need to find a middle path towards progress that rejects empty idealism, so too does Eliot encourage a reading of the railway that rejects simple dichotomies in favour of a multi-faceted view of spatial production.

I next turn to the work of Elizabeth Gaskell. Whereas Eliot shows synthesis by portraying characters who achieve balance in the face of divided society, Gaskell does not provide such mediatory characters in her novellas. Instead, she shows the insurmountable gap between those who are defined by stasis and those who embrace change. I begin with her

novella *A Dark Night's Work* (1863). This is a story of murder and guilt that, like Eliot's novels, demonstrates both the positive and negative aspects of industrial capitalism, with the characters of Ralph and Ellinor embodying the two sides of this debate. In this text, Gaskell presents nuance through the machine ensemble's potential for violence alongside its opportunities for salvation and re-connection. *Cousin Phillis* (1863-4), which I explore in the final part of this chapter, highlights the optimism surrounding the railway as an environment where anyone can make one's name and fortune, as well as the devastating social effects on those left outside the reach of modernity. Like Ralph and Ellinor in *A Dark Night's Work*, it is Manning (and Holdsworth) and Phillis who embody the two sides of progressive and anti-progressive thought in this novella.

As the texts I am exploring in this chapter reveal, the arrival of the railways signalled far more than just a new piece of technology but represented a space entirely at odds with that which preceded it. Whereas the rural place of the past was slow, feudal, and provincial, the urbanised space of the railway was accelerated, capitalist, and national. Crucially, as Eliot and Gaskell show, the railways replaced not only the old transportation spaces of the stagecoach network and canals, but the entire patterns and traditions of precapitalist provincial life that are associated with these slower methods of movement. The railway space as part of urban modernity represents a key cog in the nineteenth-century movement towards the totality of the urban centres at the expense of regional identities. Karl Marx writes in *Grundrisse* that 'the modern [age] is the urbanisation of the countryside'.<sup>1</sup> The boundaries between town and country are eroded by modernity, with the distinct, specific, and individual regionalism of the parochial past surrendering to an interconnected, mechanised, consumerist future. The railway with its distinct, self-contained spatiality symbolises the unstoppable

---

<sup>1</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 479.

march of progress, physically crushing the old ways of life beneath its track and refashioning the landscape into the image of the capitalist systems that produced it.

Despite being written in the 1860s and 70s, all four texts are set several decades earlier to map the arrival of railway space into the provinces and the wider patterns of reform and change occurring in rural society. In this way, they belong to what Ruth Livesey terms the novel ‘of the “just” past’.<sup>2</sup> For Livesey, these novels serve as ‘prosthetic memories’, designed to reconnect the industrialised, urbanised reader to a simpler time, and to preserve the memories of a period before mechanisation became dominant.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, as Livesey observes, the ‘affect [*sic*] of nineteenth-century nostalgia is rooted in the spatial rather than the temporal’.<sup>4</sup> This spatial nostalgia can be witnessed clearly in these four texts, with the narrators and characters not pining for a previous time, but rather expressing a self-reflective and nuanced nostalgia for the old places that have been superseded or altered through the arrival of the railway network. As part of their quest for synthesis between old and new, coaching-network and railway-network, and society pre- and post-reform, nostalgia does not work simply in these four texts. On the one hand, both Eliot and Gaskell express sorrow at the loss of the rural ways of life and the provincial places that have, at times quite literally, been crushed beneath the metal spatiality of the railroad. On the other, both writers present their characters who reject the changes enacted by the railway and exclude themselves from modernity as backwards-looking, parochial, or in the case of Phillis and Ellinor, tragically left behind. Gaskell and Eliot are both writers who recognise the unstoppable power of progress, a view epitomised by Caleb Garth in *Middlemarch* when he declares that the railroad, ‘will be made whether you like it or not’.<sup>5</sup> They set their novels several decades

---

<sup>2</sup> Livesey, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Livesey, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Livesey, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), p. 459.

earlier to better understand the present, to map the changing social patterns as the railway space rose to power, and crucially, to find balance.

Beyond their shared representation of the coming of the railways and their search for synthesis through their use of the ‘just-past’ setting, the four texts by Eliot and Gaskell share other similarities too. With the exception of *Felix Holt*, which was published in full novel form by *Blackwood’s*, all four texts were published serially either in monthly parts like *Middlemarch*, or in periodicals as *Cousin Phillis* and *A Dark Night’s Work* were. Eliot and Gaskell, being born just nine years and dying just five years apart, were also closely contemporaneous. They belong to a generation of mid-nineteenth-century writers who matured with the emergent railway as a backdrop to their extensive literary careers. They were also women who embraced progress within their own lives, with both travelling extensively by train domestically and internationally. Both also found career opportunities in the increasingly urbanised mid-nineteenth-century society, Eliot as the editor-in-all-but-name of *The Westminster Review* and working in the writing heartland of the industrialised nation and Gaskell making her life and career in the heart of the industrial North West. Josie Billington highlights that, ‘George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell [were reading] one another’s short fiction, in the midst of their own writing, to try and gain a more intimate sense of how they “Absorbed” [...] one another’s work’.<sup>6</sup> Both read and borrowed from each other’s fiction extensively throughout their careers, with Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* sharing key similarities with Gaskell’s *The Moorland Cottage*. Eliot and Gaskell never met, although they did exchange letters, but their works intersected throughout their careers as they grappled with a period of unprecedented change.

---

<sup>6</sup> Josie Billington, ‘Reading and Writing Short Fiction: Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot’, *The Gaskell Journal*, 29 (2015), 23-36 (p. 23).

**‘The better thing to have in the memory’: *Felix Holt* between stagecoach past and railway future**

*Felix Holt*, first published in 1866 but set over the passing of the first Reform Bill in the early 1830s, is a novel concerned to its core with issues of place and social change, covering electoral fraud, rioting, and workers’ revolt. It is also a novel covering a divided and fractious Midlands society during a contentious election, with the Tories on one side, embodied by the older generation of Transomes and the Debarry family, and the Radicals personified by Harold Transome and his followers on the other. Then there is the character of Felix Holt who, whilst identifying as a Radical, is seeking to ‘go to some roots a good deal lower down than the franchise’.<sup>7</sup> Later in the novel, the narrator reflects on Felix’s ambitions to start a night school to educate the poorer members of the parish, to encourage them to adopt sobriety, and to teach them to better care for their families.<sup>8</sup> In this, Felix anticipates *Middlemarch*’s Dorothea Brooke and her eventual recognition that social change does not come from waving placards or triggering riots, but from small acts of charity and improvement. Felix signals a middle course in the vexed battleground of Treby Magna politics, with him even stepping into the middle of the riotous mob at the election to abate their anger, signalling his role as mediator within the text. But even before Felix’s introduction, Eliot’s preface to the novel already introduces the themes of division, change, and compromise that will define her text.

The preface opens with Eliot creating a strong sense of place, both spatial and temporal, as she writes, ‘Five-and-thirty years ago the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads’.<sup>9</sup> By framing the novel against the backdrop of the staging past, Eliot immediately roots the text in the tradition of coaching roads and wayside inns. Through these

---

<sup>7</sup> George Eliot, *Felix Holt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1987), p. 368.

<sup>8</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, pp. 566-67.

<sup>9</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 75.

comparisons, she emphasises just how much has been lost in the short thirty-five years since the coming of the railways, with *Felix Holt* turning, as Ruth Livesey argues, to the ‘stage coach nation as a means to reflect on the problematic of national feeling through local belonging’.<sup>10</sup> The stagecoach becomes a visual metaphor for rural society’s provincial identity. It serves as a symbol of rooted tradition through its winding, circumnavigational routes and its journey of stops and starts, emblematic of the slow pace of the feudal past. In contrast to the machine ensemble which produced new spaces on top of existing ones, the stagecoach follows the topography of the natural world and allows its users to view the scenery being traversed. It is also a transportation network where people, livestock, and carriages all negotiate a shared route through the provinces. As Eliot looks back to the world of the 1830s, her narrator reflects on the loss of the rural traditions that vanished alongside the horse drawn transportation networks, ‘the well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers’ all consigned to the past by the coming of the railway space.<sup>11</sup> The competing transportation networks symbolise far more than just different methods of mobility. Rather, they represent two worlds, violently being pulled apart. The staging network on the one side, defined by rootedness, stability, and provinciality; the railway space on the other, with its rootlessness, instability, and nationality.

However, this is not straightforward nostalgia. As *Felix Holt*’s preface continues, Eliot looks to the future and writes that:

Posterity may be shot like a bullet through a tube, by atmospheric pressure from Winchester to Newcastle: that is a fine result to have among our hopes; but the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory. The tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory O!<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Livesey, p. 182.

<sup>11</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 75.



*Felix Holt* was published just three years after the construction of the Metropolitan line, the world's first underground railway. Therefore, the dark, geographically isolated space of the Underground, something I focus on within my third chapter, would have been fresh in Eliot's mind and would perhaps have informed her vision of future transportation.<sup>13</sup> Whilst Eliot's nostalgia is complex, so too is her vision of the future, recognising the fictional tubular railway as a fine and fitting symbol of technological progress, demonstrating that this is a narrator unafraid of new technologies and far from backwards looking. Nonetheless, as her vision of the past is complex so too is her view of the future, with Eliot's narrator refusing to overlook the social and environmental impact caused by the produced railway space. As Paul Fyfe writes, 'Eliot makes railway travel into an antagonist of depiction and narrative: a zero, a vacuum, an empty "O" like the tunnel mouth from which it emerges'.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the rich landscape of the Midlands, with the coaching inns and shepherds, Eliot's railway-of-the-future is a space of almost complete nothingness. This becomes an appropriate metaphor for the wider exclusions intrinsically bound within the network, with Eliot's fictive tubular railway literally existing within a tunnel, entirely removed from the rhythms and scenery of the natural world, presenting a hyperbolic version of the self-contained nature of the railway space. The upcoming generations may be blasted to their destinations by atmospheric pressure faster than a bullet, an image that itself has inherent connotations of violence and

---

<sup>13</sup> Eliot was also likely be referencing atmospheric locomotion which had been trialled relatively early within the development of the railway system. As Simon Bradley describes, '[t]he concept was certainly far-sighted: trains were to run without locomotives, by connecting them via a piston to a heavy tube laid between the rails from which air was constantly exhausted. The vacuum created within the cast-iron pipe drew the train forward'. Brunel even used atmospheric pressure for the fifty-three miles between Exeter and Plymouth. However, it never worked as intended, with the line prone to leaking and failure, rather than speed and efficiency, with the technology proving so unreliable that Brunel's line reverted to standard steam locomotion in 1848. In the 1860s, discussions were once again returning to atmospheric propulsion. By this time, pneumatic pressure was being actively used to move letters between stations and depots, so thoughts turned to developing this successful technology for human propulsion. Far more than just being a fantastical or imaginative exercise, Eliot's representations of the tubular railway were tying into technological visions of the future that were specific to the mid-1860s. (See: Simon Bradley, *The Railways* (London: Profile Books, 2015), p. 269. Anon., 'The Pneumatic Passenger Railway', *The Quiver*, Oct 1865, 490-94 (p. 490). and Anon., 'The Uses of Atmospheric Air in the Saving of Labour', *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, Sep 1866, 412-14 (p. 412).)

<sup>14</sup> Paul Fyfe, *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 200.

danger alongside its impressive speed, but the narrator is clear that there is a certain pleasure in the traditions of the staging past, the slow pace of travel and the appreciation of the countryside, too.

Although the tubular railway is, for the narrator, symbolic of both the promises and the threatening potential of the mobile future, for one unnamed coachman within the preface the modern overground railway is already terrifying enough. As Eliot writes:

The recent initiation of railways had embittered him: he now, as in perpetual vision, saw the ruined country strewn with shattered limbs, and regarded Mr Huskisson's death as a proof of God's anger against Stephenson, 'Why, every inn on the road would be shut up!'<sup>15</sup>

The death of Huskisson symbolises the very worst attributes of the new industrialised spaces and the perils of entering the railway's domain within this coachman's mind.<sup>16</sup> He is entirely removed from the promises of progress and modernisation that the railway space fosters. The notion of 'perpetual vision' is also key, with the railway's violence constantly repeating on this man's sight. He sees the entire landscape coated in body parts, with the railways re-fashioning the nation space into their own, sadistic image.

The representation of the coachman's perception anticipates Wolfgang Schivelbusch's concept of evanescent vision. Schivelbusch writes that for the individual inside the railway space, 'the traveller saw the objects, landscapes, etc. *through* the apparatus which moved him through the world'.<sup>17</sup> When passing through the natural world by rail, vision was constantly filtered through the lens of the machine, industrialising every aspect of the traveller's perception. A comparable process is occurring for the coachman. He is unable to escape from the power of the railway space, the countryside becoming a bloodbath as his vision is constantly re-worked through the patterns of industrialisation. As a result, he is left

---

<sup>15</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Mr Huskisson was the Liberal MP who was killed on the first day of operations on the new Manchester to Liverpool railway in 1830. Distracted by an impromptu meeting with Lord Wellington, Huskisson was unable to evade the oncoming train.

<sup>17</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 64. Italics in original.

looking, ‘before him with the blank gaze of one who had driven his coach to the outermost edge of the universe’.<sup>18</sup> He is isolated from progress, both by choice and enforcement, leaving him an empty version of himself, unable to assimilate into the modern world. His eyes now glazed over by his industrialised vision, he faces the extinction of his livelihood as he stares on into the obscure abyss of change and reform, his coach and his traditions now lying at the edge of the known universe as a relic from a bygone age. Eliot shows her readers that men like this were victims of industrial progress and, whilst the railway of the present and future may be a ‘fine result’, such progress comes with a human cost that should not be overlooked.

Another key transformation that the railway heralded was to land ownership. Eliot writes of the coachman that he ‘knew whose the land was wherever he drove; what noblemen had half-ruined themselves by gambling; who made handsome returns of rent; and who was at daggers-drawn with his oldest son’.<sup>19</sup> The Midlands landscape is divided into clearly understood vicinities, with the coachman knowing intimately where one estate ends and the next begins and the unique conflicts or successes implicit to each. As *Felix Holt* opens, the old feudal world of land ownership is about to be superseded by a new form of spatiality, one that is not passed down the generations, but rather produced through investments. In this way, the railway in the preface further anticipates the content of the novel, particularly the anxieties surrounding legitimacy, hereditary inheritance, and aristocratic land ownership that form a notable subplot of *Felix Holt*. The railway’s new linear spatiality of straight lines is produced on top of the old, often messy and disjointed, feudal systems of land division. As Lefebvre writes, under capitalist production, ‘reproducibility, repetition and the reproduction of social relationships are deliberately given precedence over works, over natural

---

<sup>18</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 81.

reproduction, over nature itself'.<sup>20</sup> Not only are rural traditions threatened by the arrival of the railway but the very sense of regional identity and regional place, removed from the hegemony of central government, is also undermined by the arrival of an iron rail. Especially as the railway space functions like an artery by linking the rural districts to the nation's heart and circulating the impersonal constraints of reproducibility, repetition, and the 'reproduction' of urban capitalism.

Whilst the narrator of *Felix Holt* expresses sadness in the preface at the loss of the wayside inns, the personal greetings, the stories of the coachmen, and the slow and scenic pace of horse-drawn locomotion, this novel, as I have already indicated, is not a work of straightforward nostalgia. The narrator is also alive to the 'unrepealed corn laws, three-and-sixpenny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils' that defined pre-industrial life.<sup>21</sup> In this way, *Felix Holt* is a novel that reflects both sides of the 'just-past'. The dark days of electoral corruption, greedy landowners, and provincial poverty with unkempt children and cottages, overworked mothers, and old-fashioned religious ideas such as an unhealthy obsession with predestination.<sup>22</sup> However, there were also the positive and comforting aspects of a slower agrarian world, with the friendly barmaids, coachmen, and ostlers. The railway and the stagecoach, the two competing networks framed in the novel's preface, serve as fitting metaphors for the two sides of life that run throughout *Felix Holt*. The spirit of conservatism embodied by the stagecoach and associated with the older Transomes, and the radical, reforming energy of the railways embodied by Harold, with Felix and the narrator in the middle, recognising the need for real, tangible change. Felix describes the urban space as 'ugly, wicked, miserable', but he still identifies himself as, 'a man of this generation'.<sup>23</sup> He recognises the depravity and corruption of the urban centre, but he is not a

---

<sup>20</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 367.

reactionary, seeking a return to the staging past. He is a modern man who, like Eliot and her narrator, understands the need for balance.

*Felix Holt* remains in its entirety a pre-rail novel, with Treby Magna outside the railway's reach even by the book's end. Nevertheless, the threat of the railway space's arrival lies just beneath the surface in parallel to other changes to rural life, most notably in Chapter Twenty where Mr Wace decrees in no uncertain terms that he will hold onto his land and refuse to sell it to anyone unless, 'one of the confounded railways should come. But then I'll stand out and make 'em bleed for it'.<sup>24</sup> Wace recognises that the railways, and the progress they embody, are unstoppable forces and all he can hope to achieve is reasonable financial recompense. The railway might not feature prominently in the main body of the text, but it hints at the threats and opportunities of change and has a prominent role in the preface. It serves as a symbol onto which Eliot can map the themes of change, industrialisation, and reform that are the main concerns of her novel, as well as both the positive and negative aspects associated with the production of industrial capitalism into provincial space. The railway allows Eliot to show the need for balance between two extremes and to adopt a vision that is complex and nuanced. Whether that is in politics, or in matters of industry, it is vital to recognise the good alongside the ill and avoid a vision that operates through simple binaries.

### ***Middlemarch* and the networks and dialectics of spatial production**

*Middlemarch* shares *Felix Holt*'s 1830s setting, with both novels centred around the passing of the Reform Act. Like *Felix Holt*, the issue of division features prominently in *Middlemarch*, with the characters differing in their attitudes towards reform and social improvement and these debates finding a fitting metaphor through the production of the railway space. Further parallels exist through these novels' depictions of the relationship between isolated rural communities and the urban centres, and the question of how a national

---

<sup>24</sup> Eliot, *Felix Holt*, p. 308.

railway network threatened to undermine the clear sense of spatial differentiation that hitherto existed between town and province. It is also, like *Felix Holt*, a novel concerned with finding a middle path through a divided society.

In terms of its origins, *Middlemarch* started life as two shorter and unfinished stories composed in 1869 and 1870 respectively, one concerning Lydgate and the other Dorothea, before Eliot decided to entwine them together into one unified whole. This approach to structuring the novel parallels Eliot's allusions to various types of woven networks throughout *Middlemarch*. Gillian Beer, for instance, writes in her landmark *Darwin's Plots* of how Darwin's 'web of affinities' informed Eliot's representation of the web of human interactions.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Richard Menke writes that the interconnections of *Middlemarch* assert, 'the connections between industry and the lives of characters in its famous invocations of the web [...] or a railway network'.<sup>26</sup> Both metaphors, that of the web and the railway network, serve as key images that Eliot employs within *Middlemarch* to signify her broader project of narrative thread-weaving and interconnectedness. Laura Otis writes in her book *Networking*, that to 'Eliot, railways and telegraphs represented the best of what rationalism could achieve. By facilitating communications, these growing networks increased people's awareness of their connections to others'.<sup>27</sup> Otis presents an optimistic outlook, both on Eliot's own views towards the railway as well as attitudes towards progress more widely, especially through her recognition that the web functions as part of an 'ever-expanding communications network'.<sup>28</sup> However, what Otis chooses not to foreground are some of the complexities that emerge in Eliot's representations of the railway space and progress in both

---

<sup>25</sup> Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Menke, 'Industry and Technology' in *George Eliot in Context*, ed. by Margaret Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 156.

<sup>27</sup> Laura Otis, *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Otis, p. 82.

*Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*. Whilst the railway network is a fine and necessary symbol of technological and scientific endeavour in Eliot's fiction, she is nonetheless alive to the power structures implicit within it, recognising that just as much as a network connects people and functions as a site of increased communication, it also separates and divides.

Franco Moretti claims that a 'network is made of vertices and edges; a plot, of characters and actions: characters will be the vertices of the network, interactions the edges'.<sup>29</sup> The railway space, with stations as its vertexes and the track its web is replicated and modified within literature, with character and plot taking the place of the track and stations within the interconnecting network. For Moretti, network theory turns 'time into space', revealing how this approach spatialises media that is traditionally seen in temporal terms.<sup>30</sup> Rather than understanding plot as a chronological progression from past to future, network theory favours understanding the text as a series of interlocking and interdependent localities. The implications for this theory are profound. As Manuel Castello writes:

Networking power refers to the power of the actors and organisations included in the networks that constitute the core of the global network society over those human collectives or individuals *not* included in these global networks. This form of power operates by exclusion/inclusion.<sup>31</sup>

Network theory, like railway capitalism, relies on the central dialectic of inclusion/exclusion; those who are at the centre of the network versus those who lie on the boundaries or are excluded all together. For Castello, networks of all kinds are implicitly connected with power dynamics and are a further product of a capitalist modernity. This is captured by Lefebvre too, who argues that every financial system attains 'concrete form by means of a network'.<sup>32</sup> Whether that network is for the trade of capital, goods, or labour, networks are a fundamental part of economic exchange. *Middlemarch*, with its networks of plot woven together as the

---

<sup>29</sup> Franco Moretti, 'Network Theory, Plot Analysis', *Literary Lab*, 2 (2011), 1-31 (p. 3).

<sup>30</sup> Moretti, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Manuel Castello, 'A Network Theory of Power', *International Journal of Communication*, 5 (2011), 773-87 (p. 774). Italics in original.

<sup>32</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 86.

novel progresses, demonstrates all the spatial properties of a literary network. Yet it also features the inclusion/exclusion dialectic central to the railway system's foundation, with those who champion progress (Dorothea, Ladislaw, Lydgate) and those who vehemently oppose it (the Cadwalladers, Chinchley, Sprague, Mr Standish) constantly placed into opposition within the network of the text, with Eliot's narrator attempting to find a middle course through this web of oppositions.

With the importance of networks to both the structure and plot of *Middlemarch*, it is unsurprising that the railway plays such a major thematic role within the text. Eliot places the arrival of the railways almost exactly half-way through the novel in Chapter Fifty-Six. In so doing she structurally symbolises how the railway tore through the landscape, splitting the country into pre- and post-rail settings as her novel is likewise divided. After Dorothea invites Caleb Garth to manage the business affairs of her three farms, the narrator states that, 'one form of business which was beginning to breed just then was the construction of the railways'.<sup>33</sup> The emphasis on the railways as a 'business' reminds the reader that far from being an altruistic space for the transportation of passengers, the railway's function first and foremost was as a product to make money for the shareholders. This industrialised network sits uneasily within the natural world. As the narrator explains, a 'projected line was to run through Lowick parish where the cattle had hitherto grazed in a peace unbroken by astonishment'.<sup>34</sup> The railways are seen by the community as a direct threat to the livestock and the old ways of life and, in parallel with *Felix Holt*, are associated with producing mechanised space in a previously pre-industrial setting.

The narrator says that in *Middlemarch*, 'railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill or the imminent horrors of Cholera'.<sup>35</sup> In the same way as *Felix Holt* where

---

<sup>33</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>34</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>35</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.



Eliot's inclusions of the railways in her preface established the novel's themes of reform, in *Middlemarch* the railways are also directly associated with political change. The machine ensemble functions as a physical and tangible construction of the normally invisible spirit of reform and progress operating in the community. Like the 1832 Reform Act which increased enfranchisement, so too do the railways offer opportunities for individuals to play an increased role in society through the network's travel and mobility. However, not all in *Middlemarch* share these views. Whilst for some the railways signal the egalitarianism of reform, for others they are like Cholera, spreading rapidly, tearing through villages, destroying rural life, and causing mass fatalities. The association of the railways with Cholera invites comparisons with illness and medicine more widely in the novel, particularly regarding Lydgate and his attempts at medical reform. Like the railway, Lydgate also serves as an exemplar of progress, and he is equally met with hostility. For instance, Mr Standish asks of his new remedies, 'do you think that is quite sound? – upsetting the old treatment, which has made Englishmen what they are?'.<sup>36</sup> In a similar way, Mrs Dollop becomes 'more and more convinced by her own asseveration, that Doctor Lydgate meant to let the people die in the Hospital, if not to poison them, for the sake of cutting them up'.<sup>37</sup> Crucially, the reader is not encouraged to sympathise with either of these characters. Standish's name is evocative of his literal stasis in the community, standing still and unable to progress whereas Mrs Dollop is a gossip, feeding on and perpetuating misinformation.

If the association of the railway with disease invites comparisons to Lydgate, the association of the emergent railway space with reform invites comparisons with Mr Brooke and his schemes of political improvement. Brooke, like Lydgate, wholeheartedly embraces progressive ideals (even as he mistreats his own tenants). He claims this 'reform will touch

---

<sup>36</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 364.

everybody by-and-by – a thoroughly popular measure – a sort of A,B,C, you know, that must come first before the rest can follow’.<sup>38</sup> Like Lydgate, Brooke also faces opposition. Mr Mawmsey, for instance, who claims that ‘Few men have less need to cry for change than I have, personally speaking – that is, for self and family. I am not one of those who have nothing to lose’.<sup>39</sup> By comparing the railways to Cholera and reform, the railways are directly associated with the two kinds of social and scientific revolution occurring in *Middlemarch*. Like medical changes and political reform, the railway is also heavily resisted, with a large body of the community attempting to oppose the modernity engendered within it. Women in particular, ‘both old and young regarded travelling by steam as presumptuous and dangerous, and argued against it by saying that nothing should induce them to get into a railway carriage’.<sup>40</sup> Here it is the process of entering the railway space that the Middlemarch ladies view with dread, fearing for their safety. Once again the reader is encouraged to disagree with those who oppose the railway out of fear and ignorance, as shown by the fact that Eliot labels them as ‘the slower wits’.<sup>41</sup> This is emphasised further through Mr Solomon and Mrs Waule whose, ‘minds halt[ed] at the vivid conception of what it would be to cut the Big Pasture in two, and turn it into three-cornered bits, which would be “nohow”’.<sup>42</sup> The fact that their minds halted highlights that, like Mr Standish, these are slow-witted characters who are stuck in the past and unable to move towards the progressive future offered by reform and embodied by the railways.

Mrs Waule recognises the unstoppable power of the machine ensemble and its engineers, stating that ‘I can’t fight’.<sup>43</sup> However, Mr Solomon decides to resist the railway head on and just as Mr Wace in *Felix Holt* threatened to assault the surveyors, Mr Solomon

---

<sup>38</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 413.

<sup>39</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 414.

<sup>40</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>41</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>42</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>43</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

proposes directing ‘somebody on to send ‘em away with a flea in their ear, when they came spying and measuring’.<sup>44</sup> The resistance Solomon feels is more than just against the destruction of the natural landscape, but also the surveyors’ attempts to measure and observe that which has previously remained free from constraints of figures, distance, and plotting. The railway surveyors symbolise an attempt to quantify the land, to replace its organic boundaries with clearly marked thresholds as the enclosure acts had done decades and centuries earlier. Solomon believes that the more he protests the greater will be the compensation. He argues, ‘the more spokes we put in their wheel, the more they’ll pay us to let ‘em go on’.<sup>45</sup> Progress is visualised by Solomon as a wheel, rolling relentless on, and the only way to prevent such an unceasing drive is to literally stop the motion of the wheel. To block progress becomes both a metaphoric and a literal act. Yet as the narrator argues, Mr Solomon’s reasoning ‘was perhaps less thorough than he imagined, his cunning bearing about the same relation to the course of railways as the cunning of a diplomatist bears to the general chill or catarrh of the solar system’.<sup>46</sup> Despite Solomon’s extortionist efforts, he has not counted on the true power of the railways, as Karen Chase argues:

What is striking about this choice of simile is the way George Eliot links the historical inevitability of the railway system to the physical laws that govern the solar system; the notion of interfering with the railways is as barren and futile as the notion of manipulating the movement of the planets.<sup>47</sup>

The key word here is ‘inevitability.’ Mr Solomon is unable to comprehend that it is physically impossible to stop progress and that his attempts to halt the progress of the railway workers are as futile as trying to prevent the planets from rotating. One might pine for the old ways of life, and Eliot shows that remembering the pre-railway past realistically and

---

<sup>44</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>45</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 455.

<sup>46</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 455.

<sup>47</sup> Karen Chase, *George Eliot: Middlemarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 52.

faithfully is important and healthy, but one cannot halt progress regardless of its negative and destructive aspects.

As I have suggested already, Eliot's writing is defined by its compromised vision, and whilst her narrator presents those who oppose progress as backwards looking and dim-witted, she also allows them to make some extremely valid points regarding the darker facets of the railway space. For instance, whereas Mrs Waule is labelled as parochial, she also shows an awareness of the very real and unsettling potential of industrial change through her question, 'What's to hinder 'em from cutting right and left if they begin?'.<sup>48</sup> Waule's knife-like imagery captures vividly the violent slicing enacted by the constructors of the railway space and anticipates Lefebvre's view of spatial production. He writes in the wake of mass expansion to the European road network that, 'technology introduces a new form into a pre-existing space [...] A motorway brutalises the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilised, emptied out'.<sup>49</sup> The same was equally true for the nineteenth-century railway. It was a new space, laid on top of the existing topography and crushing the natural world beneath its iron rails. In so doing, it empties out the existing spaces it finds in its path, uprooting the old ways of life, dislodging the farmers, dividing the land, tearing down cottages, and disturbing the cows that had previously grazed in peace.

As well as its destruction to the natural world and unsettling of rural society, the Middlemarch residents are also alive to the capitalistic nature of the railway space:

Proprietors, differing from each other in their arguments as much as Mr Solomon Featherstone differed from Lord Medlicote, were yet unanimous in the opinion that in selling land, whether to the Enemy of mankind or to a company obliged to purchase, these pernicious agencies must be made to pay a very high price to landowners for permission to injure mankind.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

<sup>49</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454.

The idea of obligated land purchasing is a troubling indication of capitalist modernity and the transition from a co-operative working of arable land, to the production of an isolated and isolating spatiality that dictates the terms of who can enter it. Eliot's allusion to the 'Enemy of mankind' equates the railways with the devil, heightening the perceived menace of the railway companies in the mind of the Middlemarch residents as they are directly associated with evil. As even the slow minded members of Middlemarch society recognise, the railways, and the progress they embody, means the development of the capitalist system, with their own motivations turning to financial concerns in response. Land is thus transformed from being inherited to being repurposed into a commodity, available for sale to the highest bidder.

The Middlemarch residents also identify the emotional aspect of spatial re-configuration imposed by the machine ensemble. The narrator explains that the 'submarine railway may have its difficulties; but the bed of the sea is not divided among various landed proprietors with claims for damages not only measurable but sentimental'.<sup>51</sup> The railways are built and operated exclusively in terms of numbers, whether in the width of track, the length of the line, frequency of services, timetabling, speed, or costs. In contrast, the land is more than just financially or geographically measurable but has sentimental value too, completely at odds with the emergent space of the railways. Along with their reshaping and commodifying of the natural world, the railways also signify a troubling connectedness of the provinces to the capital city. This can be seen through Hiram Ford, a local wagoner whose career and position at the edge of the pre-industrial past invites obvious parallels with the coachman from *Felix Holt*. Ford states that the railway prospectors are, "Lunnon chaps, I

---

<sup>51</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 454. Eliot is referencing the Channel Tunnel. In the 1870s, plans were already underway to connect Kent to Calais. Whilst the seabed might not be, 'divided among various landed proprietors', there were far bigger concerns of spatial politics at play that would ultimately seal the project's fate. The writer of an article in one newspaper writes with apprehension of 'the possibility of a war with France, and the danger of the bit battalions of the Republic being despatched through the tunnel and landed in England'. As a possible countermeasure in the event of hostilities, the idea of lining the tunnel with explosives was proposed. The plans for the channel tunnel were later abandoned in 1882. (See: Anon., 'The Submarine Railway', *The London Journal*, 23 Feb 1856, 408. Anon., 'Irish Dissatisfaction and the Channel Tunnel', *The Northern Echo*, 1 April 1882, 3. and Anon., 'The Channel Tunnel', *The Morning Post*, 4 February 1882, 3.)

reckon,” said Hiram, who had a dim notion of London as a centre of hostility to the country’.<sup>52</sup> The railwaymen are directly associated with the urban centre, a locality far removed from the parochial life of Middlemarch, Frick, and Lowick. As Lefebvre explains with regards to the birth of the modern, industrial nation, it ‘subordinates local or regional markets to the national one’.<sup>53</sup> The railway space signals an extension of metropolitan power, a distinct, linear spatiality directly connecting the rural community with the urban heart of the country. The move towards urbanisation and modern capitalism signifies a breakdown in the sway of the regional markets, unifying them into a national marketplace at the cost of their provincial identity.

Mr Solomon argues that the country ‘is being overrun with these fellows trampling right and left, and wanting to cut it up into railways: and all for the big traffic to swallow up the little’.<sup>54</sup> Once again, the word choice of ‘cut’ highlights the severance that the railways enacted, reducing the distinct regionalism of the staging past into a unified, but homogenous, nation state. The fact that ‘these fellows’ are freely traversing the nation, demonstrates their power over regional places, trampling them underfoot with little care towards pre-existing boundaries. The railways are also presented by Solomon as destroying the ‘little’ traffic in favour of the ‘big’. This is mirrored by Timothy Cooper too, a character whose only appearance in the book is to add to the growing voice of railway opposition. He argues that the railways will ‘on’y leave the poor mon funder behind [...] This is the big folk’s world, this is’.<sup>55</sup> Barbara Hardy has written on the two Timothy Coopers in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and Gaskell’s *Cousin Phillis*. As she comments, the ‘characters are not alike, but both are poor labourers unafraid to speak their mind’.<sup>56</sup> Despite their dissimilarities, both Coopers view the

---

<sup>52</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 456.

<sup>53</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 112.

<sup>54</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 456.

<sup>55</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 460.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Hardy, ‘Elizabeth Gaskell in Middlemarch: Timothy Cooper, The Judgement of Solomon, and the Woman at the Window’, *The George Eliot Review*, 46 (2015), 16-20, (p. 17).

emergent railway and its workers with a great deal of apprehension. Whilst the allusion to Gaskell's Timothy Cooper on the part of Eliot appears accidental, it is nonetheless further evidence for how they were absorbing each other's work. Meanwhile, Solomon and Cooper's conversation regarding the railway exclusively benefitting 'big folks and 'big traffic' reiterates the other side of railway opposition, not resisting out of fear, ignorance, or misinformation, but a genuine concern towards the rights of the rural poor and their displacement from urban modernity.

Throughout both these novels, Eliot displays a vision of compromise that recognises both sides of the debate in order to find unity between them. Whilst Eliot presents those resisting progress as misinformed and parochial in *Middlemarch*, the lives of those fully embodying progress do not end well in the novel either. For instance, Lydgate 'regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he once meant to do'.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Mr Brooke is lambasted by the Tory press for his hypocritical treatment of his tenants, unable to live up to the political ideals he espoused. Throughout both *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch*, Eliot resists simple dichotomies between past and future, place and space, stasis and reform, and just as Felix represents the middle path, so too does Dorothea Brooke find the true path of progress at the end of *Middlemarch*, moving from her grand but unrealistic schemes of cottage construction to a more attainable goal of improvement from behind the scenes.

According to Isobel Armstrong, Eliot's vision of compromise in these two novels emerges from her 'understanding of the Hegelian movement not solely through the dialectic of self but through a larger but structurally parallel process of social transformation and historical change'.<sup>58</sup> Eliot had translated German philosophy into English, demonstrating her intimate familiarity with it even though she had not directly translated Hegel. In

---

<sup>57</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 685.

<sup>58</sup> Isobel Armstrong, 'George Eliot, Hegel, and *Middlemarch*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 29 (2020), 1-26 (p. 10).

*Middlemarch*, she places those opposing progress on one side and those wholeheartedly championing it on the other, with the synthesis emerging at the nexus of these two extremes. Eliot encourages her readers to see the railways as neither choleric nor as a space of straightforward celebration either. She voices the destruction that progress brings, its mercenary aspects and its ecological violence, but also perceives it as a necessary part of modernity and improvement. Ultimately, it is the ever-pragmatic Caleb Garth whose attitude towards the railway most closely mirrors that echoed throughout the novel. He says, ‘Somebody told you the railroad was a bad thing. That was a lie. It may do a bit of harm here and there, to this and to that; and so does the sun in heaven. But the railway’s a good thing’.<sup>59</sup> Caleb’s view of the railway is one of compromise, as his position throughout the novel is one of treading the middle course. The railway may do some harm ‘here and there’, but ultimately it will be ‘made whether you like it or not’.<sup>60</sup> Caleb captures the unstoppable march of progress and recognises that, for all one may try to resist the railway, the wheels of production will always grind on.

### ***A Dark Night’s Work* between connection and disconnection**

*A Dark Night’s Work* was first serialised in Dickens’s journal *All the Year Round* in nine parts in 1863 before being published by Smith, Elder & Co. in book form later that same year. Due to dates given in the novella we can place the scope of the text as approximately 1822-1847, therefore covering the railway’s greatest and most volatile period of expansion.<sup>61</sup> If Eliot shows the importance of finding synthesis in depictions of the railway space through her engagement with German philosophy, Gaskell shows the same need for balance but through markedly different means. For Gaskell, treading the middle-course is part of her

---

<sup>59</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 460.

<sup>60</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 459.

<sup>61</sup> The novella begins by explaining that Mr Wilkins lived ‘about forty years ago’ (p. 54), placing the opening in around 1822. Meanwhile, Ellinor suffers a terrible illness in 1829 (p. 194) when she also meets Livingstone for the first time. In the final chapter, Livingstone confesses to loving Ellinor for ‘eighteen years’ (p. 253). If they first met when she was ill in 1829, that means the novella ends in 1847.



accommodating vision of multiplicities, recognising the need for grey areas and for approaching issues from a variety of perspectives. As Jenny Uglow writes,

[Gaskell] was interested in all classes: mill workers and agricultural labourers, small shopkeepers, tradesmen and clerks; doctors, and lawyers and ministers; landowners and politicians and duchesses. Unitarian connections linked her with scholars and reformers in Britain, Europe, and America, from refugee supporters of Garibaldi to young, independent-minded women like Bessie Parkes and Barbara Bodichon. Gaskell, however, was never a wholehearted radical or feminist; while she treated controversial subjects, she elevates sympathy and communication above radical change. In this she resembles Marian Evans (George Eliot).<sup>62</sup>

This sense of Gaskell's multifaceted vision can be seen in all of her novels, from her sympathetic treatment of both mill workers and mill owners in *North and South* to her portrayal of the fallen woman in *Ruth*. Like Eliot, this accommodating perspective can clearly be seen in her representations of the railway space and its impact on society too. However, whereas Eliot provides characters who serve as the synthesis of the antitheses of pro- and anti-reform sentiments (Felix, Dorothea, and Caleb), Gaskell does not offer such characters in these novellas. Instead, she frames the need for nuance by presenting the catastrophic impact on those who isolate themselves from modernity, alongside the cold-hearted, anti-artistic, and regulated natures of those who fully embody it.

*A Dark Night's Work* is a novella with sensationalistic elements and centres on the Wilkins family, lawyers for the local aristocracy. After his father's death, Edward Wilkins takes over the family business but, unlike his hardworking father, is more interested in an extravagant lifestyle than his work. As a result, he employs Mr Dunster as his junior partner to run the firm on his behalf. Meanwhile, Wilkins's daughter Ellinor has become engaged to a country gentleman, Ralph Corbet. As the story progresses, Wilkins becomes increasingly irritated by his deputy's insolence, a frustration that reaches its crescendo as Dunster arrives late one night to confront Wilkins over irregularities in the accounts. Mr Wilkins lashes out,

---

<sup>62</sup> Jenny Uglow, 'Gaskell [nee Stevenson], Elizabeth Cleghorn', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10434>> [Accessed 5 February 2021].

‘he was insolent, beyond my patience – I could not bear it. I struck him – I can’t tell how it was. He must have hit his head in falling’.<sup>63</sup> Mr Wilkins unwittingly kills Mr Dunster and, as he reflects on his actions, is disturbed by Ellinor who, along with his servant Dixon, resolve to bury Dunster’s body in the garden, digging ‘the hole deep and well; working with fierce energy to quench thought and remorse’.<sup>64</sup> The titular ‘Dark Night’s Work’ is complete, but the actions of that night will reverberate throughout the novella and will eventually become directly entangled with the development of the railway.

After aiding her father in manslaughter, Ellinor faces the breakdown of her relationship with her fiancé Ralph. On the one hand, this is directly caused by Ellinor’s involvement in the killing, a dark secret she is unwilling to burden her fiancé with. But their separation is also a result of the increasing gulf between the worlds they inhabit. Ralph travels up to London to focus on his professional career and to make a name for himself in the capital, whereas Ellinor and her father are described as ‘at best [having] only a local and provincial respectability’.<sup>65</sup> This is emphasised by the association of Ralph with technology. Earlier in the story, Ralph stays with the Duke at Stokely Castle where the narrator comments on how the domestics ‘performed their work with the accuracy and perfection of machines’.<sup>66</sup> As Ralph looks to the Ducal home, he sees the bold, nineteenth-century vision of the future, a mechanised culture where even the servants have become reminiscent of post-human automatons. In contrast as he looks to Ellinor she, ‘did not gain his full approval, because her hair was dressed in an old-fashioned way’ and ‘her waist was either too long or too short for the standard of fashion’.<sup>67</sup> Ralph becomes associated with the accelerated, mobile, and

---

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Lizzie Leigh & A Dark Night’s Work* (Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing, 2007), p. 117.

<sup>64</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 119.

<sup>65</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 157.

<sup>66</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 154.

<sup>67</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 154.

urbanised society of capitalist enterprise whereas Ellinor is consigned to a rural, isolated past of homeostasis.

Ellinor is not as dim-witted as the characters opposing the railway in *Middlemarch* or *Felix Holt* are, although the narrator does describe her as ‘dull, and heavy to get on with’.<sup>68</sup> Instead, she is rendered as a woman tragically cut off from modernity and its opportunities. Her displacement from modernity is only emphasised further through her reading tastes. As the narrator states, the ‘books she had been reading were old classics, whose place in literature no longer admitted of keen discussion’.<sup>69</sup> The differences between the regional and national that fuelled *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch* emerge here too, differences that become markedly apparent in an age of interconnectedness, with Ralph and Ellinor’s growing distance from one another underpinned by the changes occurring in society. Ralph is racing towards urbanised modernity, moving to London, engaging with fashionable circles, and travelling widely across the country as he embodies the capitalist and mobilised zeitgeist. In contrast, Ellinor is reading outmoded literature, she possesses only a provincial identity, and she yields to inertia as she emphatically declares, ‘I can’t leave this house. Oh, Mr Ness, I can’t leave this house’.<sup>70</sup> Of course, Ellinor has particular motives for her reluctance to leave the family home, with her terrible secret lying buried in the garden. But her resistance to movement and her provincial ways are also emblematic of a rural society unwilling to accept the interconnected and mobile future that Ralph embodies.

Throughout the novella, the Wilkins family are depicted as existing only at the periphery of the technological revolution. The narrator explains, around a third of the way through the text, that ‘Mr Wilkins had been startled into a system of exaggerated retrenchment – retrenchment which only lasted about six weeks – by the sudden bursting of a

---

<sup>68</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 193.

<sup>69</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 159.

<sup>70</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 177.

bubble speculation in which he had invested a part of his father's savings'.<sup>71</sup> Whilst the nature of the bubble is never elucidated, it seems more than likely to have been railway-related judging by the dates of the novel. Investment in the early rail years was highly volatile with enormous fortunes gained and lost by individuals partaking in railway capitalism. It seems that the iron road has found another victim in Mr Wilkins who has been forced into rapid, albeit brief, economising as a result of his financial shortfall. Even here the proto railways are destructively forcing their way into the pages of the text, further pushing the Wilkins family away from their promises of modernity. In so doing, they provide an ominous foreshadowing of the railway's ability to uproot not just the rural poor and their cottages, livelihoods, and the natural world they reside in, but wealthier individuals are not exempt from their destructive force either. Just as it existed in the real-world landscape, the railway is an unsettling and inescapable entity within the fictional narrative, hinting at future misfortune and the potential for both ecological and social destruction.

The Wilkins family's, and Ellinor's in particular, association with stability and the old spaces of pre-industrialism are further emphasised through her first experience of railway travel. As she is summoned away from East Chester to Hamley to help settle the affairs of the late Mr Ness, Ellinor is described as shrinking 'from this journey' and feeling 'timorous about the very mode of travelling'.<sup>72</sup> In this way, she is further associated with themes of stasis in the novel, not the outright anti-progressive attitudes expressed in *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch*, but nonetheless she is outside the productions of modernity and mobility. For the journey, Ellinor is accompanied by her future husband Canon Livingstone and her governess Miss Monro, with the former repeatedly emphasising the safety of the early railway much to the chagrin of the latter who:

---

<sup>71</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 197.

Was almost annoyed this time by the comfort he would keep giving her; there was no greater danger in travelling by railroad than by coach, a little care about certain things was required, that was all, and the average number of deaths by accidents on railroads was not greater than the average number when people travelled by coach, if you took into consideration the far greater number of travellers.<sup>73</sup>

Whilst the railway space frequently suffered accidents, Livingstone is quick to point out that this is mitigated when one considers the low rate of incidents for the number of passengers. I explore the question of railway safety and issues of perception and reality surrounding accidents within the final chapter of this thesis, but for now it is sufficient to note that Livingstone's attempts to placate Ellinor are somewhat misjudged. By constantly trying to explain away the dangers of railway travel, he only emphasises them further through the disturbing question of why he feels that such reassurances are necessary.

After Ellinor completes her first railway journey and arrives back at her childhood home of Hamley, where the body of Dunster continues to lie undisturbed, the railway once again forces its unsettling presence into her life. As she looks to the fields beyond the house, she sees that:

Men with instruments were busy in the meadow. Ellinor, pausing in her work, asked Dixon what they were doing. 'Them's the people for the new railway,' said he. 'Nought would satisfy the Hamley folk but to have a railway all to themselves – coaches isn't good enough now-a-days.' He spoke with the tone of a personal offence natural to a man who had passed all his life among horses, and considered railway-engines as their despicable rivals, conquering only by stratagem.<sup>74</sup>

The railway once again divides the old and new worlds, with Dixon belonging to the previous horse-drawn generation. This contrasts with those who are unsatisfied with the old structures of provincial life and are keen to push onwards towards the steam-driven future. The inclusion/exclusion dichotomy created by railway capitalism is present here, with Dixon firmly locating himself outside of progress and positioning himself as the most reactionary character in the novella. In a similar way to *Middlemarch*, the men with instruments

---

<sup>73</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 197.

<sup>74</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 200.

measuring the land impose a sense of ownership on the meadows beyond Ellinor's ancestral home, bringing the industrialised and urbanised world to the literal backdoor of the rural. In running through the back garden of the old house, the railway line challenges and reshapes the land of the established and respected families and the values of stasis and lineage they promote, with the new mode of urbanised and fast investments arriving in their place.

As the narrative nears its close, Ellinor arrives in Italy to recover her spirits, only to be informed via a delayed letter 'of the discovery of Mr Dunster's body, found in the cutting of the new line of railroad from Hamley to the nearest railway station'.<sup>75</sup> Whether in its invasion of the aristocratic land or its dubious financial underpinnings, the railway throughout this novella is frequently associated with destabilisation. The exhumation of Dunster's body, like the construction of the railways on the Hamley property, signals an assault to the established rural families, their skeletons lying buried in a pre-industrial world, suddenly and very publicly being dragged out of the cupboard by the forces of technological production. The local police assume Dixon to be guilty of the murder with his 'dogged unwillingness to have the slightest interference by cultivation with that particular piece of ground', only emphasising his apparent guilt in the eyes of the law.<sup>76</sup> Of course, and much like Ellinor's resistance to movement, Dixon has particular and justified reasons for his regressive views, but in the wider context of railway production his opposition to the machine ensemble and the accusation of murder are conflated. The lawmakers, as part of the establishment powers that produce the railway space, and the police themselves as part of early- to mid-nineteenth-century legal reform, are positioned in opposition to Dixon and his love of nature, horses, and tradition. His resistance to modernity seals his fate, emphasising the clear disparity between those embodying progress and those holding onto the past.

---

<sup>75</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>76</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 219.

When the body is discovered and Dixon is blamed for the murder, Ellinor is staying in Italy to recover her spirits. Despite her travel to the Continent, the narrator is clear that she was ‘lifted off her feet and borne away by the unanimous opinion of others’, rather than desiring such mobility on her own.<sup>77</sup> In a similar way, her letters home were, ‘not particularly graphic in her descriptions, nor were there any adventures to be described’.<sup>78</sup> Just because Ellinor has travelled to Italy, this does not signal her sudden alignment with the forces of production. She is the same, homely woman who is carried away by the will of others, with the same ‘grave ways and sober style of dress’, writing old-fashioned, ‘historical reminiscences’ with ‘rather formal details’.<sup>79</sup> But for all that Ellinor locates herself outside of modernity, she is reliant on it. Whereas Dixon opposes the construction of the railway and remains attached to the pre-industrial places of horse-drawn locomotion, for Ellinor it is the lack of a coherent railway system that ultimately proves problematic. The letter telling of Dixon’s arrest and the discovery of Dunster’s body is delayed due to the gaps in the French railway network. The lack of a coherent system ‘before the railway was made between Lyons and Marseilles, put a stop to many a traveller’s plans, and had rendered the transmission of the mail extremely uncertain’.<sup>80</sup> The limitations are so profound that Ellinor opts to take the boat instead, reverting to previous modes of technology due to the limitations of the new as she travels back to England to secure Dixon’s release.

The railway in Eliot’s novels functions as a site of competing ideologies, showing the importance of charting a middle ground through her characters’ viewpoints, but Gaskell shows the path to synthesis in a different way. As Graham Handley argues, ‘in *A Dark Night’s Work* [...] railway expansion brings revelation, and differently but decisively,

---

<sup>77</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 207.

<sup>78</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 208.

<sup>79</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, pp. 194 & 208.

<sup>80</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 213.

wounded and wounding resolution'.<sup>81</sup> For Gaskell, it is the railway network itself that contains the remedy between the opposing states of progressiveness embodied by the police, Ralph, and the machine ensemble, and the intransigence symbolised through the Wilkins family and Dixon. Whilst the railway space is coded as a destructive environment through its exposure of old bodies and impact on ancestral land, and whilst those who oppose it may be dispossessed, the railway is also connective and re-connective, with the network serving as both Dixon and Ellinor's salvation. When the railway network is incomplete, unreliable, or as Ellinor finds on her arrival at Paddington, 'no train was leaving for Hellingford for two hours', then society's increasing dependence on and indeed, its propensity for taking the railway for granted, becomes apparent as never before.<sup>82</sup> It is in this way that the railway is presented as both symptom and cure, and its dark and positive attributes are established. It disconnects and dislocates people, but it also provides the means of their restoration.

### **Temporal and spatial suspension in *Cousin Phillis***

In contrast to the weekly publication of *A Dark Night's Work*, *Cousin Phillis* was serialised monthly, appearing in *The Cornhill Magazine* from November 1863 to February 1864.

Unlike the other texts within this chapter, *Cousin Phillis* lacks a clear temporal setting. The fact that the Manning family, around whom the story centres, have achieved their financial success due to refining existing railway shunting techniques, suggests that the narrative is set beyond the earliest years of the railway. The characters are now in a later period of mechanical improvement and upgrading rather than inventing new machinery. However, towards the end of the novella, Paul Manning reflects on how the 'penny-post reform, as people call it, had come into operation a short time before; but the never-ending stream of notes and letters which seem now to flow in upon most households had not yet begun its

---

<sup>81</sup> Graham Handley, 'A Dark Night's Work Reconsidered', *The Gaskell Journal*, 21 (2007), 65-72 (p. 67).

<sup>82</sup> Gaskell, *Dark Night*, p. 226.



course'.<sup>83</sup> The penny post was introduced in 1840, but the fact that it has not yet flooded the rural communities with letters suggests it is very much in its infancy, likely placing the novella in the early 1840s. On the other hand, we are informed that Holdsworth has just returned from working on the railways in Piedmont, Italy.<sup>84</sup> These rail lines were constructed in the latter half of the 1840s and completed in 1853, perhaps placing the narrative as late as the early 1850s.

Whilst it is difficult to date *Cousin Phillis* categorically, I read this as entirely the point. The obscure timescale of the novella forces the reader to reflect on the sense of timelessness that features throughout the text. As Josephine MacDonagh argues, 'if time in this outpost is governed by nature, it also appears to have been suspended. The ambivalence of the novella towards this temporal suspension is underlined by the character of Phillis herself'.<sup>85</sup> Whereas *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch*, and *A Dark Night's Work* include characters trapped between competing forms of spatial tradition, *Cousin Phillis* adds temporality to that equation. Time for the titular Phillis is defined by stasis. She is rooted in the old-fashioned temporal and spatial framework of the pre-industrial world. In contrast, Manning and Holdsworth are associated with the 'precision, efficiency and punctuality' of railway time.<sup>86</sup> In a similar way to *A Dark Night's Work* and Eliot's two novels, Gaskell shows the dangers and flaws of existing on both sides of that temporal divide.

Whereas Ralph in *A Dark Night's Work* was indirectly associated with the accelerated railway space, for Paul Manning, the first-person narrator of *Cousin Phillis*, his engagement with the machine ensemble is explicit. Manning tells of how it 'is a great thing for a lad when he is first turned into the independence of lodgings [...] I was to be a clerk under the engineer

---

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis and Other Stories* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2010), p. 229.

<sup>84</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 178.

<sup>85</sup> Josephine MacDonagh, 'Place, Region, and Migration', in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820-1880*, ed. by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 370.

<sup>86</sup> Trish Ferguson, *Victorian Time: Technologies, Standardisations, Catastrophes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 3.

who had undertaken to make the little branch line from Eltham to Hornby'.<sup>87</sup> Manning's social mobility and feeling of independence exist in direct correlation to the emergent railway space, a sense only extended by the fact that Manning's father 'was [also] a mechanic by trade, but he had some inventive genius, and a great deal of perseverance, and had devised several valuable improvements in railway machinery'.<sup>88</sup> The railway becomes a space for possibility and for social mobility, where inventive genius is the most important quality for the industrious individual to possess.

As Manning is aware, his father's situation and the position he has secured for his son were both 'above the station in which he was born and bred'.<sup>89</sup> In *Cousin Phillis*, the 'station' of one's birth is invoked as a marker of social standing. The actual space of the railway, with its distinctive web of stations and tracks, becomes conflated with the metaphysical station of one's rank. This indicates how the railways were transcending the physical bounds of their space and extending into the world more widely as an instrument for change and mobility, both physical and social. Through Gaskell's representation of entrepreneurship inside the railway space, *Cousin Phillis* also engages with the mid-nineteenth-century fascination surrounding self-improvement and upwards mobility. Kathryn Powell makes this point through reading *Cousin Phillis* in the light of Samuel Smiles's *The Life of George Stevenson* (1857) and his later *Self-Help* (1859). She reflects on 'the spirit of innovation that gained strength in the 1830s when rapid developments in technological innovation corresponded with radical self-innovation: the individual became empowered to make something of himself by making something'.<sup>90</sup> Men, and still for the most part only men,

---

<sup>87</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 156.

<sup>88</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 156.

<sup>89</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 156.

<sup>90</sup> Kathryn Powell, 'Engineering Heroes: Revising the Self-Help Narrative in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis*', *The Gaskell Journal*, 29 (2015), 79-96 (p. 79).

were able to leave the narrow social circle they were born into and make their fortunes through aiding production of the machine ensemble.

However, Kathryn Powell proposes that ‘Manning’s noticeable lack of Stephenson-level success [...] is one of the puzzles that Gaskell’s novella asks the reader to solve’.<sup>91</sup> For Powell, the fact that Paul Manning’s father is contented with his slight improvement to the railway ensemble and Paul himself is happy to ‘hero-worship’ his senior engineer Mr Holdsworth, is problematic in a novella pertaining to be about eminent, self-made men.<sup>92</sup> I do not find the same puzzle that Powell identifies. Indeed, Samuel Smiles himself writes:

Though the invention of the working steam-engine – the king of machines – belongs, comparatively speaking, to our own epoch, the idea of it was born many centuries ago. Like other contrivances and discoveries, it was effaced step by step – one man transmitting the result of his labours, at the time apparently useless, to his successors, who took it up and carried it forward another stage.<sup>93</sup>

Smiles recognises that whilst certain great men serve as figureheads of progress and deserve to be celebrated, change, invention, and reform do not emerge in a vacuum but are rather the cumulative efforts of multiple generations. This is a topic I return to in Chapter Four with my discussion of Anderson and his reclamation of the workers as part of an unbroken line of progress. Like the engine itself with its elaborate system of pistons and pulleys, regulators and valves, boilers and chimneys, or like the ending to *Middlemarch* and the narrator’s plea to remember the impact of those who ‘rest in unvisited tombs’, the origins of steam-powered technology are found in individuals working in their own small way towards the greater whole.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, it does not seem puzzling that Gaskell chooses to focus on the fictional Mannings: small cogs in the engine of progress. Her novels, much like Eliot’s, foreground a view of society that draws people together. Gaskell, as indicated by Jenny Uglow above,

---

<sup>91</sup> Powell, p. 83.

<sup>92</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 178.

<sup>93</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 39.

<sup>94</sup> Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 688.

frequently turns to the socially overlooked. In so doing, she shows that the role they play in allowing the railway to function is every bit as important as the Brunels or Stephensons.

In contrast to the other three novels under scrutiny in this chapter, *Cousin Phillis* also displays first-hand the struggles of engineering from the perspective of the engineers. Whilst the previous novels show resistance within the community towards railway production, in *Cousin Phillis* it is the land itself that attempts to resist the spatial domination imposed by the machine ensemble. Manning explains that at Heathbridge, ‘the shaking, uncertain ground was puzzling our engineers – one end of the line going up as soon as the other was weighted down’.<sup>95</sup> The boggy ground is unwilling to be constrained beneath the railway with nature fighting back against the tyranny of the machine. This image is evocative of attitudes towards the railway, with the machine ensemble embodying the see-sawing responses to its production; extreme enthusiasm on one hand and total resistance on the other. It is likely that this scene was inspired by a locality Gaskell would have known well from her positioning in the North West; Chat Moss which is located on the Manchester to Liverpool railway.<sup>96</sup> In fact, Manning even directly references the ‘bogs [...] wild myrtle and soft moss’ that were causing these issues, further alluding to the links between the moss of *Cousin Phillis* and Chat Moss in Greater Manchester.<sup>97</sup> Even here, one can see Gaskell subverting the figure of the Stephenson-hero. Stephenson overcame the challenges of the waterlogged Chat Moss by building an embankment out of soil and tree branches to support the line. In contrast, the engineers of Gaskell’s novella ‘had to make a new line on firmer ground before the junction railway was completed’.<sup>98</sup> Manning and Holdsworth are unable to transcend the difficulties at

---

<sup>95</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 159.

<sup>96</sup> As Ian Carter writes, this ‘moss presented the Liverpool and Manchester Railway’s engineer, George Stephenson, with his most difficult technical challenge. In evidence to Parliament, a competent civil engineer asserted that all Chat Moss would have to be drained, then a deep cutting excavated and backfilled before the railway could be constructed. This procedure would have been insufferably expensive in time and money. Discounting this advice, Stephenson determined to build an embankment by tipping’. (See: Carter, p. 59.)

<sup>97</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 159.

<sup>98</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 159.

Heathbridge and are instead forced to divert the railway onto more stable ground. This adds further weight to Gaskell's literary representations of the ordinary, un-heroic engineers in her fiction. These are not Stephenson-like great men able to overcome all challenges. Instead, they fall short in their objectives, forced to use workarounds to continue with their project.

Manning's railway work also introduces him to his cousin Phillis of the story's title. In this way, the railway offers an alternative form of networking; the railway reconnecting lost relatives into a social web of interaction. Phillis is a 'stately, gracious young woman, in the dress and with the simplicity of a child'.<sup>99</sup> Although she is re-introduced into the family network, she is firmly excluded from the space (and temporality) of modernity. As in all the texts in this chapter, a clear dichotomy is drawn between the individuals who embody technological progress and the mobility of the industrialised future, and those who represent the provincial past. Phillis finds herself in the latter group. This is emphasised as she studies what Manning terms 'dead-and-gone languages'.<sup>100</sup> Just as Ellinor studied out-of-fashion literature and wore her hair and dresses in outmoded styles, so too does Phillis study what Manning derisively terms 'dead' languages, distancing her from the technological revolution occurring outside her window. A revolution to which Paul Manning plays an increasingly active role. It is not only Phillis's old-fashioned education that makes Manning uncomfortable. He is equally uneasy with Phillis's father's questions of his 'acquirements or my reading, I shuffled uneasily and did not know what to answer'.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, as soon as the conversation turns to 'the more practical subject of railroads [...] I was more at home'.<sup>102</sup> Manning's fascination, even obsession, with his work comes at the expense of artistic pursuits. He finds conversations surrounding books both challenging and irrelevant in the

---

<sup>99</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 164.

<sup>100</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 171.

<sup>101</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 171.

<sup>102</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 171.

modern world. Through this, Gaskell suggests that the machine, and the men producing it, operate within a space that both unsettles and obsolesces existing ways of life and learning.

Gaskell draws a marked contrast between artistic enjoyment and industrial work, but for those who are coded as championing progress and industrial production, she highlights the power of instant attraction. This can be seen when Manning's boss Mr Holdsworth consults Manning's father about improving the line. As Manning narrates, it 'was odd and yet pleasant for me to perceive how these two men, each having led up to this point such totally dissimilar lives, seemed to come together by instinct'.<sup>103</sup> Different in every way, the railway serves as a point of connection, bringing together Manning's father and Holdsworth through their mutual interest in railway technology. In *Cousin Phillis*, one's attitude to progress and location either inside or outside the modern network becomes the defining aspect of one's individuality. These two men as proponents of the railway space find themselves united inside the machine ensemble. As Mr Holdsworth says of Manning's father:

Here's a Birmingham workman, self-educated, one may say – having never associated with stimulating minds, or had what advantages travel and contact with the world may be supposed to afford – working out his own thoughts into steel and iron, making a scientific name for himself.<sup>104</sup>

In Holdsworth's image, it is almost as if the boundaries between the brain and the railway have broken down, with the mind becoming a mechanised space of iron and steel, whilst the railway itself becomes an organic construction flowing directly from the brain. The railway engineers' thought processes and the railway infrastructure become inseparable as one produces the other and the organic and industrial body intermesh together.

Manning, his father, and Holdsworth are firmly on the side of progress and the railway space, but as I have already indicated, Phillis lies outside railway space and time and is cut off from its promises of advancement. Marian Aguiar emphasises that the

---

<sup>103</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 182.

<sup>104</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 188.

‘spatialisation of the railway highlights certain kinds of relationships; the nexus pivots around the paradigm of inside and outside, one of the primary binaries constructing railway space’.<sup>105</sup> For the characters in *Cousin Phillis*, this paradigm has lasting and damaging effects. As the novel develops, Phillis forms an increasingly romantic attachment to Holdsworth but the different spaces and temporalities they inhabit prevents any hopes of union, just as it did for Ralph and Ellinor. As an individual firmly involved in the modern methods of spatial production, it is inevitable that Holdsworth will eventually move on and refuse to yield to the stasis that defines Phillis’s existence. Ultimately, the railway system signals his removal from Hornby as he is carried away by the very machine space he worked to produce.

For Phillis, Holdsworth’s removal is catastrophic. She sinks into a delirium from which she never fully recovers and is forever cut out of the railway revolution, even as it is brought to her door. She decrees, in a way once again comparable to Ellinor’s plea to stay in her family home, that ‘we will go back to the peace of the old days. I know we shall; I can, and I will!’.<sup>106</sup> The story may end with Phillis’s resolve, her eventual return to health, and her desire to remain in the pre-industrial past, with the final exclamation mark a sign of individual power; but in the context of the book’s celebration of modernity, Phillis’s plea to return to the ‘peace of the old days,’ can only ever be a regressive step. She is left trapped within the stasis of her old books and old ways, physically and mentally left behind by Manning and Holdsworth and the mobile, capitalist future they embody.

This was not to be the original ending. In a December 1863 letter to George Smith, the founder and later editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, Gaskell explains her planned ending of *Cousin Phillis*. Written in the guise of Paul Manning, it was intended as follows:

---

<sup>105</sup> Marian Aguiar, ‘Making Modernity: Inside the Technological Space of the Railway’, *Cultural Critique*, 68 (2008), 66-85 (p. 78).

<sup>106</sup> Gaskell, *Cousin Phillis*, p. 244.

I married - We hear of the typhus fever in the village where Phillis lives, & I go to persuade her & her bedridden mother to come to us. I find her making practical use of the knowledge she had learnt from Holdsworth and, with the help of common labourers, levelling & draining the undrained village.<sup>107</sup>

In this alternative ending, far from being left behind by the engineering culture of the Mannings and Mr Holdsworth, Phillis actively embodies it. She becomes a Dorothea-like figure learning the middle-path to progress and the need for compromise between the mobile but uncultured world embodied by the men of the railway, and the educated but outdated life of stasis Phillis had hitherto lived. Significantly, Phillis succeeds where her cousin failed. Whereas Holdsworth and Manning were unable to master the boggy ground at Heathbridge and had to find a new bedrock for their railway line at considerable expense, Phillis has successfully undertaken a drainage project in the village. It is Phillis who has become the true engineering hero of the novella by recognising the need for balance in the face of a de-individualising and anti-artistic produced network. Unfortunately, Gaskell was constrained by the serialisation schedule of George Smith and not allowed another instalment, leaving her unable to end *Cousin Phillis* as she intended.<sup>108</sup> The idea that Phillis uses the knowledge of engineering she has garnered from Holdsworth for purposes of drainage and agricultural improvement, commanding an army of men as a radical female engineer, is certainly an appealing one. Alas, in the context of *Cousin Phillis* it remains unobtainable. Gaskell may show the need for finding balance, but the novella ends with little sense of synthesis between the extremes of mobile modernity and static archaicism embodied by Manning and Holdsworth on one side, and Phillis on the other.

In all four of these texts, the arrival of the railway space has a major and transformative impact on the landscape, dividing the world into pre- and post-rail localities.

---

<sup>107</sup> John Chapple and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 260.

<sup>108</sup> Nancy S. Weyant, *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Guide to English Language Sources, 1992-2001* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. 80.



In the face of industrial revolution, Gaskell and Eliot show the need for balance. Eliot frames this in terms of a nuanced nostalgia, remembering the past but accepting the future. In contrast, Gaskell achieves balance by showing the railway space as both destructive and reconnector, and by presenting the flaws in the immobile lives of Ellinor, Dixon, and Phillis alongside the cold lack of culture in the regulated lives of Ralph, Manning, and Holdsworth. Both writers identify the anti-artistic nature, reproducibility, and violence of the railway space, but they also reject the stasis of Ellinor and Phillis; the coachmen, barmaids, and ostlers of *Felix Holt*; and the 'slow wits' of *Middlemarch*. Ultimately, what Eliot and Gaskell show is that in the face of unstoppable progress, one is best to find a middle path, celebrating the past and holding onto its traditions, whilst accepting and embracing the inevitability of change.

## Chapter 2 - 'I can go anywhere from here. Where shall I go?': Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and Junction Space

### Introduction

In this chapter, I build on my analysis of Eliot and Gaskell's nuanced representations of the machine ensemble, especially their focus on networks, the question of what is lost and gained by the production of technological spaces, and the impact on those unable to assimilate with modernity. However, I also turn away from the arrival of railway space and focus instead on one specific locality that was unique to the railroad: the junction. I explore the junction's influence over its users and operators in Charles Dickens's 'Barbox Brothers' and 'Barbox Brothers and Co' published as part of *Mugby Junction* (1866) and Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister* (1875-6). As the access point to the network where pre-existing spaces and the machine ensemble meet, the station is a liminal environment where lines converge, spaces intersect, journeys begin and end, and people are reunited and parted. It is a site of potential, contingency, and re-evaluation and has a direct and powerful influence over the people within its bounds.

Some of the ways in which the junction environment is influential are explained by Steven Spalding and Benjamin Fraser:

As an apparatus of the train industry, the railway junction can also symbolise how ideologies, narratives, and experiences underlying the outlook and relational dynamics of an individual intersect. Similarly, characters might decide to fall in line with (or bypass) codes of conduct, even as they recognise they do not make choices independent of mainstream conventions and ideologies shadowing their decisions.<sup>1</sup>

The railway junction serves as an intersection where branch lines connect to the main line and where passengers transfer from one route to another. It is also a site where competing 'ideologies, narratives, and experiences' overlap and interact. The junction reveals the user's

---

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Fraser and Steven D. Spalding, *Trains, Literature, and Culture: Reading/Writing the Rails* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 7.

relationship with the forces of production and their successes and failures at acclimatising to the modern, industrialised, and capitalist society that produced the station space in the first place. Moreover, the junction actively shapes, influences, and moulds the individual into its own image as a mobilised consumer of the modern network. As such, it is a site where characters' lives rattle over the points and the users are faced with the decision whether to conform to 'mainstream conventions and ideologies', ideologies that perpetuate the rigid rules of the capitalist system, or, for those individuals who resist the ideologies that the station perpetuates and refuse to conform to modernity, these texts chart their ultimate destruction.

The first two stories from Dickens's *Mugby Junction* concern the character of Barbox Brothers whose name is later disclosed to be Mr Jackson. He is alone and dejected arriving at Mugby in the early hours of the morning to escape both his traumatic past and the impending birthday that serves as a reminder of his miserable existence. The railway is the machine that carries him away from his life in London and reveals his isolation from society, but it is also the machine that re-connects him to the modern world. As he spends time at Mugby and meets some of the station dwellers he becomes increasingly influenced by the junction. He learns to read it and to understand the logic that emerges from its chaos and initial terrors. In so doing, he can begin to re-assimilate into society by aligning himself with the structures of capitalist modernity that the railway space signifies. I then turn to *The Prime Minister*, focusing on the character of Ferdinand Lopez at Tenway Junction in Chapter Sixty. He is a charming, flirtatious, and rakish man seeking a wealthy match to counterpoise his financial failings. Like Jackson, Lopez runs away from his life in London when things begin to go awry. As it did for Jackson, the station environment charts Lopez's isolation from society. He is unable to progress any further in the network in parallel to his inability to assimilate into

the financial world of the capital. But whereas Jackson can forge a new destination for himself, Lopez is unable to do so and is left with suicide on the tracks as his only recourse.

Like three of the four texts in Chapter One, the texts within this chapter were published in serial form with *Mugby Junction* appearing in Dickens's own journal *All The Year Round* whilst *The Prime Minister* was published in standalone parts. I am placing Dickens and Trollope into conversation because over and above the marked similarities in their representations of Jackson at Mugby and Lopez at Tenway, they are also writers who focus on political debates, are keenly aware of social issues, often feature strong urban settings and make extensive use of satire and comic elements. In addition, they both travelled extensively by train even as they were ambivalent towards industrialisation.<sup>2</sup> They are also, like Gaskell and Eliot, writers who extensively read each other's works. In *The Warden* (1855), Trollope satirises 'Mr Sentiment' in a clear attack on Dickens's more maudlin tendencies, writing that 'Namby-pamby in these days is not thrown away if it be introduced in the proper quantities'.<sup>3</sup> Trollope also alludes to Dickens's *Bleak House* by referencing the 'vale of Taunton' in *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-5).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile Dickens writes in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) of Mr Bazzard writing a play that 'nobody [...] will hear, on any account, of bringing [...] out', in what appears to be a thinly veiled attack on Trollope's failure to find an audience for his own play, *The Noble Jilt*.<sup>5</sup> If Gaskell and Eliot were actively reading and absorbing each other's work with admiration and respect, it seems Dickens and Trollope do so with far more antipathy but also considerably more playfully, gently satirising each other whenever the opportunity arose. This means that when one finds a

---

<sup>2</sup> Dickens in particular was always frightened of the railways, a fear that only got worse after his involvement in the Staplehurst railway accident in 1865. (See: Nicholas Daly, 'Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernisation of the Senses', *ELH*, 66 (1999), 461-87.)

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, n.d.), p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, Vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1906), p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (London: Collins, 1956), p. 254. Trollope's *The Noble Jilt* was written in 1850 but was not published until 1923. Trollope later took parts of the story and adapted it into *Can You Forgive Her?*

major railway junction emerging in a significant way in the work of Dickens in 1866 and ten years later in an 1876 novel by Trollope, it is far from coincidental. Instead, it is evidence of Trollope reading and re-evaluating the literary potential of a space that Dickens tackled exactly ten years earlier. Whereas Dickens provides a story of re-integration into the network, Trollope writes a bleaker narrative, showing his readers what happens when an individual is unable to re-acclimatise to modernity.

### **‘Steam winds’, ‘iron tides’, and ‘Barbox Brothers’**

Dickens assembled *Mugby Junction* for the Christmas 1866 edition of *All the Year Round*. In keeping with several of the magazine’s other Christmas editions, the stories all centre around one locality.<sup>6</sup> In this case, five branch lines intersecting at Mugby which was based on the important West Midlands junction of Rugby. The stories highlighted below are each designed to represent one of the lines. There are several reasons why Dickens might have set his story here. Firstly, Mr Jackson is running away from London to Birmingham. Therefore, Rugby as a major junction is a logical crossroads for his journey, with the station already well-established by the early 1850s as a site where several main lines intersected. Secondly, in 1864 a well-known art dealer Mr Leggatt died after ‘swallowing a large nail in some soup supplied at the refreshment-room of the Rugby station’.<sup>7</sup> It is evident from newspaper accounts that Rugby station was in the popular imagination as an exemplar of some of the worst elements of corporate greed and the dangers of financial concerns above safety inside the railway space of the mid-1860s. Rugby’s catering facilities are even satirised directly by Dickens in his account of the refreshment room in ‘The Boy at Mugby’, the third story from

---

<sup>6</sup> The 1859 edition of *All The Year Round* was set in ‘The Haunted House’, with each story covering a different room. Elizabeth Gaskell provided one story for this collection, as did Wilkie Collins and Hesba Stretton (who also contributed to *Mugby Junction*). ‘Somebody’s Luggage’ formed the Christmas 1862 edition and covered different objects in a suitcase.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., ‘The Hayward and Leggatt Gallery’, *The Reader*, 17 Dec 1864, 777.

the collection, but a story that, like the other contributions to *Mugby Junction*, lies outside the main scope of this chapter as it does not directly concern the station space.<sup>8</sup>

*Mugby Junction* includes four short stories by Dickens. These are ‘Barbox Brothers’, ‘Barbox Brothers & Co’, ‘Main Line: The Boy at Mugby’ and ‘No 1. Branch Line: The Signalman’. The latter, and most well-known story from the collection, re-shapes the gothic horror story into the industrial age, with the new spaces of tunnels, tracks, and cuttings replacing the old gothic sites of castles, towers, and ravines. *Mugby Junction* also contains Andrew Halliday’s ‘No 2. Branch Line: The Engine Driver’ which emerges from interviews with locomotive drivers describing their challenging work. For instance, one driver reveals that he had ‘killed seven men and boys’ in his career.<sup>9</sup> This is in addition to the ‘twelve hours’ hard and anxious work’ of a standard day and the fact that he ‘didn’t know much about the engine scientifically’.<sup>10</sup> Halliday offers a detailed insight into some of the dangers of train travel, with the long and tiring shifts as well as the ignorance of the workers when it came to the machines they were responsible for operating.

‘No 3. Branch Line: The Compensation House’ by Charles Collins is another ghost story from the collection, detailing a haunted house that was due to be knocked down to make space for an expanded goods yard, signifying the violence of capitalism and unstoppable power of railway expansion. Hesba Stretton’s ‘No 4. Branch Line: The Travelling Post-Office’ is a tale of mystery and suspense as a minister’s dispatch box is stolen from the overnight post train, whilst Amelia B. Edwards’s ‘No 5. Branch Line: The Engineer’ concerns childhood friends who move to Italy together to work on a railroad. Divided by the love of the same woman, one kills the other in a fit of jealous rage but when given the

---

<sup>8</sup> In this piece, the eponymous boy narrates how the ‘proudest boast’ of the refreshment room was that ‘it never yet refreshed a mortal being’. (See: Charles Dickens, ‘The Boy at Mugby’ in *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 44.)

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Halliday, ‘The Engine-Driver’ from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> Halliday, pp. 68 & 73.

opportunity to drive the train carrying the woman off a ravine, his friend appears in spectral form in the driver's cab, slows the train and urges him to forgive and move on. Taken as a whole, *Mugby Junction* covers a wide variety of life inside the railway space, from love affairs to broken men, from the lives and careers of the workers, to theft, death, accidents, hauntings, and murder. It demonstrates how the railway space represents society in microcosm, with all the concerns, relationships, and characters finding their parallel in the industrial make-up of the machine ensemble.<sup>11</sup>

The opening of 'Barbox Brothers' brings with it the arrival of Mr Jackson into Mugby Junction. He is physically and mentally lost in the network of capitalist modernity. Frustrated by work, unable to connect with others, no longer able to stand life in London nor his impending birthday with all its traumatic memories, Jackson resolves to run away. The opening line sets the tone for a narrative defined by confusion and spatial disorientation as Jackson asks, 'What place is this?'.<sup>12</sup> Jackson's lack of knowledge regarding his location is greater than geographical but existential too. In trying to place the station he is also trying to place himself and his positioning in a modern world he feels increasingly isolated from. The junction Jackson has arrived at is a strange and fragmentary locality and it initially seems incomprehensible to the London traveller. This is shown through the notably impressionistic language that Dickens uses:

'A windy place!'  
 'Yes, it mostly is, sir.'  
 'And looks comfortless indeed!'  
 'Yes, it generally does, sir.'  
 'Is it a rainy night still?'  
 'Pours, sir.'<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the stories of *Mugby Junction*, see: Edwin Marr 'Mugby Junction', *The Literary Encyclopaedia* (2019) <<https://www.literaryencyclopaedia.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=38925>> [accessed 23 February 2021].

<sup>12</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers' from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 3.

The stormy weather serves as pathetic fallacy for Barbox's gloomy disposition, whilst the short sentences suggest the speed of exchange inside the station. However, it also paints the station space in distinctively abstracted language evocative of the brush strokes of Impressionism as the junction's spatiality is reduced to summaries. Through this, Dickens parallels the psychological impact on Jackson and his inability to grasp the space he has entered. This is not the only occasion where Dickens turns to Impressionism to tackle overwhelming and confusing localities. Mick Short writes about Dickens's *Pictures from Italy* (1846) that:

Dickens's description of Genoa is not a standard travelogue description but, rather, an impressionist evocation (parallel to the impressionist movement in visual art) of his initial mental struggle in coming to terms with what, for him, is the overwhelming variety and unusualness of Genoa.<sup>14</sup>

Dickens's use of Impressionistic linguistic elements captures the struggle of comprehending overwhelming and unusual environments, whether an Italian city or a Midlands junction. In this way, both *Pictures from Italy* and *Mugby Junction* can be read as alternative travelogues, aiming not at reality but rather using impressions to capture the impact of spaces on the individuals within them.

The abstract and Impressionistic nature of *Mugby Junction* is extended further as the train departs after depositing Jackson on the platform. 'Lamp waved. Signal lights ahead already changing. Shriek from Engine. Train gone'.<sup>15</sup> Dickens is presenting a confusing locality where trains arrive and vanish seemingly from nowhere in a literal puff of smoke, stressing further Jackson's overwhelming confusion as he arrives at a locality he cannot comprehend. Dickens's use of impressions also captures the obscurity of industrialised capitalism and the fleeting nature of commodities in the network of exchange. Peter William

---

<sup>14</sup> Mick Short, 'Listing and Impressionism in Charles Dickens's Description of Genoa in *Pictures from Italy*', in *The Stylistics of Landscape, The Landscapes of Stylistics*, ed. by John Douthwaite, Daniela Francesca Virdis, and Elisabetta Zurru (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 3.



Slater captures this when he summarises the text as follows, the ‘gentleman from Nowhere alights at Mugby Junction. The description of the environment of the station is deliberately distorted and phantasmagorical [...] a demonic space of exchange [...] [where] Passengers become cattle in the machine ensemble’.<sup>16</sup> Slater’s emphasis on the culture of ‘demonic exchange’ at the station highlights how technological mobility is neither benign nor neutral. Instead, by surrendering oneself to the machine one not only enters an abstracted system running on unintelligent signs and signifiers but an entire capitalist framework that feeds off the exchange of commodities, in this case people. Faced with a confusing ensemble, Jackson makes the decision not to continue his journey north from Mugby but to take time to understand the junction instead. Mugby is not meant to be Jackson’s destination. It is intended as a waypoint on the train’s journey. However, for a character lacking a clear narrative trajectory in his life, Jackson is not yet ready to have a destination. Instead, his act of alighting at Mugby and spending time analysing and reflecting on the structures of station life reflects a need for pause; to find his place within the whirling sites of modernity.

Jackson’s initial impressions of the railway space are far from positive. Over and above the fragmented language, the network is also coded through explicitly infernal imagery. The narrator describes the:

Red hot embers showering out upon the ground, down this dark avenue, and down the other, as if torturing fires were being raked clear; concurrently, shrieks and groans and grinds invading the ear, as if the tortured were at the height of their suffering.<sup>17</sup>

On arrival into the network in the early hours of the morning, Jackson is confronted with a space of violence with the fires of the engines compared to the screams of the ‘tortured’, giving the scene an inherently hellish quality. This is emphasised further through the ‘shrieks

---

<sup>16</sup> Peter William Slater, ‘The Ghost in the Machine Ensemble: Generating the Industrial Supernatural in *Mugby Junction* (1866)’, *Playgrounds in Prison* (2014) <<https://playgroundsinprison.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/the-ghost-in-the-machine-ensemble-generating-the-industrial-supernatural-in-mugby-junction-1866/>> [Accessed 2 November 2018].

<sup>17</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 4.

and groans' of the machine space and the embers showering upon the ground like infernal fires. The whole scene is strange and initially hostile to the casual observer with the railway presented as a distinctly unwelcoming and inhospitable locality, setting the tone for the ambivalence towards the machine ensemble that emerges throughout the 'Barbox' narratives.

Whilst Jackson may be cut off from the structures of the modern world, it does not take long for the railway space to begin to force its patterns of regulation onto his body. He is described as a man 'who had turned grey too soon, like a neglected fire; a man of pondering habit, brooding carriage of the head, and suppressed internal voice; a man with many indications on him of having been much alone'.<sup>18</sup> Brooding and isolated, Jackson wears the scars of his social ostracism in his body. Significantly, his hair resembles a 'neglected fire' whilst the 'carriage' of his head is sullen and grave, covertly describing his body in railway terminology and comparing it to the machines surrounding him. Jackson's increasing absorption into the railway space is suggested by Dickens in other ways too. At this point in the narrative Jackson's real name is unknown. He is only referred to as 'Barbox Brothers', named as such 'on the warranty of his luggage'.<sup>19</sup> The luggage label is directly forming Jackson's identity within the junction environment. Moreover, the luggage label itself bears the name of Jackson's firm, suggesting that not only has Jackson become reduced to a mere traveller, but he has become marked by his relationship to the forces of production. He is now defined entirely by the consumeristic enterprise he was previously responsible for supervising. On the strange, dreary platform at Mugby, machinery, capitalism, and luggage produce the individual, not the other way around.

It is not only passengers who are deindividualised by the forces of modernity; station employees also become tainted by the machine. For instance, the station worker who, as

---

<sup>18</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 7.

Bożena Depa writes in her study of *Mugby Junction* and identity, is ‘tellingly named Lamps [and] whose presence and hospitality lighten the stranger’s stay in Mugby’.<sup>20</sup> Depa reads Lamps as literally and figuratively guiding Jackson’s way through the dark and mechanised space of the station. However, there is an alternative and more unnerving reading on offer here. Lamps’s name also emphasises the reduction of his identity to his role in the machine. No longer named, Lamps has no selfhood beyond his role as a station porter. He has become a product of the railway. In this way, his assistance of Jackson takes on a different tone. He is not only assisting a traveller in need, but he is showing Jackson how to integrate into the railway space, his physical lamp and metaphoric lamp-like purpose working together to illuminate the paths of Mugby. In so doing, Lamps begins to show Jackson how to connect once more to the modern industrial society that the railway space embodies but Jackson has lost sight of.

There are other ways too that the station space maps its rhythms onto its users and operators in order to dehumanise them. For instance, Jackson’s ‘up and down, up and down’ movement on the platform.<sup>21</sup> This is an image that emerges repeatedly in *Mugby Junction* and visualises Jackson’s lack of onward drive or forward direction. But it is also reminiscent of the pistons that drive the engines, with the organic ambling of human activity replaced by motion that is cyclical and regulated as his humanity further breaks down inside the network. As part of this process, the boundaries between Jackson’s internal world and the machine ensemble disintegrate too. He finds in Mugby his own situation and social position reflected back to him, something that becomes explicitly clear as he stands on the platform and sees his life travel before him through the metaphor of the train:

Now, too, as the belated traveller plodded up and down, a shadowy train went by him in the gloom – which was no other than the train of a life. From whatsoever intangible

---

<sup>20</sup> Bożena Depa, ‘Redefining Identity Through Railway Imagery in “Mugby Junction”’, in *Reflections on/of Dickens*, ed. by Ewa Kujawaska-Lis and Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 4.

deep cutting or dark tunnel it emerged, here it came, unsummoned and unannounced, stealing upon him, and passing away into obscurity. Here, mournfully went by a child who had never had a childhood or known a parent, inseparable from a youth with a bitter sense of his namelessness, coupled to a man the enforced business of whose best years had been distasteful and oppressive, linked to an ungrateful friend, dragging after him a woman once beloved. Attendant, with many a clank and wrench, were lumbering cares, dark meditations, huge disappointments, monotonous years, a long jarring line of the discords of a solitary and unhappy existence.<sup>22</sup>

The passing train becomes a metonym for the despair of Jackson's existence. It arrives 'unsummoned', much like life itself, pulling out of the dark tunnel in a way that is symbolic of birth. The carriages then represent the different parts of Jackson's life, with the first carriage signifying his unspent childhood. This is coupled to a youth defined by bitterness and 'namelessness', highlighting again Jackson's loss of identity and his fragmentation from both himself and others. This then leads to an adulthood spent in unsatisfying business, finally dragging behind a failed romance. It is significant that Jackson's career in 'enforced business' provides him with no satisfaction, suggesting his frustrations with capitalism and his lack of monetary aspirations. The world of 'enforced' work is tedious for Jackson, but it is also seen as oppressive and robbing him of the best years of his life. He is not only isolated from himself, from others, and from society, but also distanced from the capitalist drivers of work and commerce, further stressing his failure to integrate with the modern forces of mid-nineteenth-century consumer culture.

As much as the metaphoric train represents a unified, coherent spatiality, Jackson's life is quite the opposite. It is defined by missed opportunities. Tamara Wagner captures this through her discussion of *Mugby Junction*, coupling, and un-coupling. She writes that, 'the symbolic potential of railway lines to suggest connection counterpoises the association of technological innovation with a sense of being unsettled, derailed, fragmented'.<sup>23</sup> The whole narrative of *Mugby Junction* swings on the interplay between coupling and missed

---

<sup>22</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Tamara Wagner, 'Dickens's "gentleman for nowhere": Reversing Technological Gothic in the Linkages of *Mugby Junction*', *Dickens Quarterly*, 28 (2011), 52-64 (p. 52).

connections. In this, Dickens's account of the railway space mirrors Gaskell and Eliot's, with all three of these mid-nineteenth-century writers identifying the potential of the railway space to offer connectivity, but equally recognising the ways in which it could lead to fragmentation and loss. Jackson's life flashes before him as a series of interconnected carriages, but the nature of the traumas he highlights are defined by their missed opportunities. A romance plot that falls through, a business partner who lets him down, a childhood without a childhood, a 'nameless' youth where his identity is uncoupled from himself. Dickens turns to the socially produced environment of the railway to map out his characters' lives, with Jackson's existence spread before him like a giant train set where nothing ever runs smoothly. Crucially, it is the station space that renders this visible to Jackson. Mugby may initially be incomprehensible, with its 'Unknown languages in the air, conspiring in red, green, and white characters'.<sup>24</sup> However, as Jackson begins to acclimatise to the railway space, the network signals his failures at integrating into the capitalist, industrialised world that it embodies.

After staying the night at Mugby Junction, Jackson considers where to travel next. 'I can go anywhere from here. Where shall I go? I'll go and look at the Junction by daylight. There's no hurry, and I may like the look of one line better than another'.<sup>25</sup> Looking down on the station below with its plethora of lines intersecting and diverging, the station space again reflects human experience. Much as human life is a complex web of networks and missed connections, the station mirrors mankind's limitless choices for progression with the potential for success or suffering waiting at the end of each of life's lines. As well as serving as a metaphor for human life, these lines also signify the threads of consumerism. This can be

---

<sup>24</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 11.

seen as Jackson gazes ‘down upon [the railway tracks] from a bridge at the junction’. As the narrator elaborates:

It was as if the concentrating companies formed a great industrial exhibition of the works of extraordinary ground spiders that spun iron. And then so many of the lines went such wonderful ways, so crossing and curving among one another, that the eye lost them. And then some of them appeared to start with the fixed intention of going five hundred miles, and all of a sudden gave it up at an insignificant barrier, or turned off into a workshop.<sup>26</sup>

The image of the spider’s web in relation to the railway was not unique to Dickens. An 1850 illustration by George Cruikshank appeared in *The Comic Almanac* showing unwary investors (three of whom are holding out bags of money in supplication to the engine) trapped in a spider’s web, with the locomotive spider grinning mischievously in the middle.

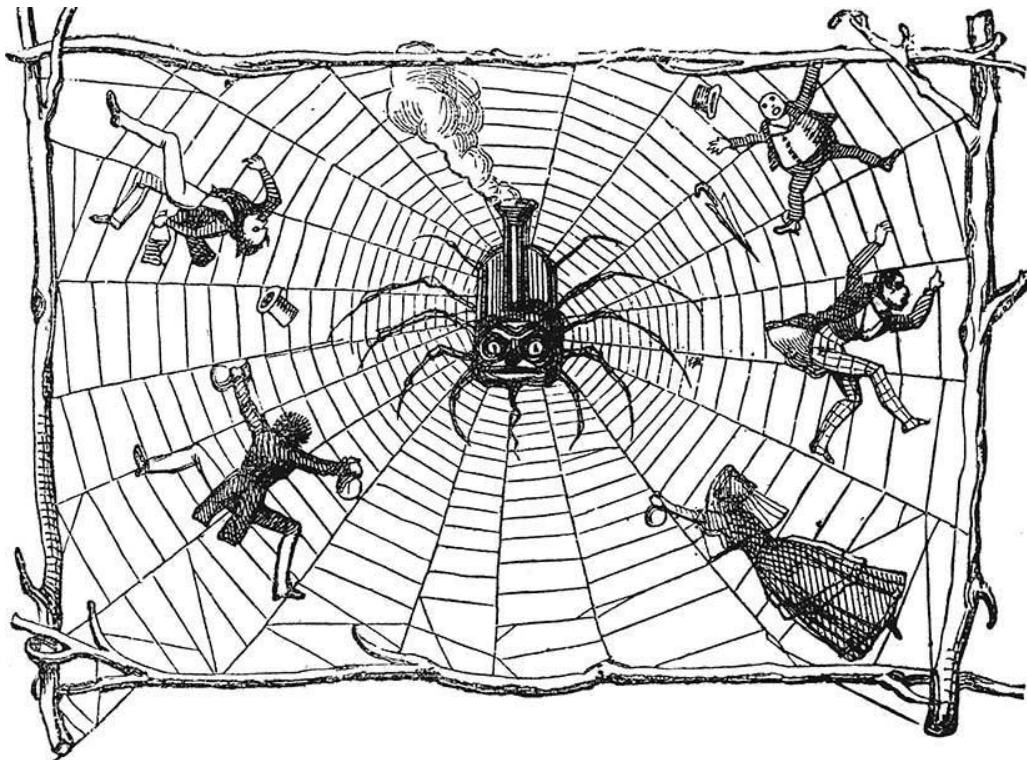


Figure 1. George Cruikshank, ‘Judicium Astrologicum’, in Blanchard Jerrold, *The Life of George Cruikshank in Two Epochs* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), p. 190.

For Cruikshank, the production of railway space, capitalism, and the web metaphor are intrinsically tied together as investors find themselves entrapped by the network they are

<sup>26</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 11.

meant to be funding and controlling. This captures the consumptive violence of railway investment and is re-iterated by Dickens sixteen years later, with the arachnid once again standing in for the forces of production in *Mugby Junction*. Like a giant spider's web spanning the interconnected nation, the railway space is woven by the corporate might of modern capitalism.

Incomprehensible in its entirety, Dickens's word choices of 'extraordinary' and 'wonderful' paint the awe-inspiring nature of the junction as a mysterious and strange space. This is emphasised further as Jackson traces the lines with his eyes and watches them merge and blend into each other. Some appear to travel for miles before abruptly hitting a barrier whereas others suddenly turn into a workshop. They are like a puzzle, laid out for the observer and inviting contemplation. Paul Fyfe develops the bewildering nature of the ensemble in this scene, writing:

The passage traces the junction's confusion in conjunctions: 'and' leads to 'or'; another 'And then' leads to 'And then others' which leads elsewhere to 'while others' and other 'others'. The descriptive effort impedes its own goal; each attempt to straighten things out in prose adds another strand to the tangle. The clauses are subject to the switches, parallels, and dead ends of the junction itself.<sup>27</sup>

Just like the complex network of points and tracks, intersecting, crossing, and re-crossing, so too does Dickens's language become a tangled web of conjunctions, demonstrating the conflation of the literary space with the imagined space of the railway junction. Language must be adapted here to capture the essence of the new structures and sites of modernity.

Dickens's reference to the 'great industrial exhibition' invites comparisons between the space of the junction and the Great Exhibition of 1851, suggesting that *Mugby* is the very real manifestation of the manufacturing and industrial ideals promoted at the Crystal Palace fifteen years earlier. As Dickens wrote in his 1851 *Household Words* article, 'The Great Exhibition and the Little One':

---

<sup>27</sup> Fyfe, p. 184.

Of these special signs and tokens of the peaceful progress of the world [...] how impossible to be thoroughly singled out and examined amidst the crowding masses of men and things, raw materials and manufactured articles, machines and engines that surround you on every side!<sup>28</sup>

Dickens presents a view of the Exhibition space that is overwhelming in its multitudes of innovations, with machines and engines on all sides and the sheer quantity of ‘manufactured articles’ on display making it impossible to appreciate the individual objects. It becomes a consumerist temple of the modern age, an awe-inspiring sensual overload where the products of mechanisation are spread out for all to see. In a letter of 1854 Dickens goes even further, writing of the:

Terrific duffery of the Crystal Palace. It is a very remarkable thing in itself; but to have so very large a building continually crammed down one’s throat [...] is a little more than even I (and you know how amiable I am) can endure.<sup>29</sup>

Exhibition spaces signify show, consumerism, and spectatorship, a trend that was booming during the 1860s especially. But they also signify the unconstrained power of capitalism. They are a marvellous spectacle and symptomatic of inventive might, but equally they are overwhelming, forcing the productions of the age onto the individual inside the exhibition whether they want them or not.

Jackson’s act of staring at the tracks and considering where to travel next, solidifies the exhibition elements of the junction and is similar to viewing objects in a shop window. Both entice the consumer to pick a product and pay for its ownership, or in this case, pay to traverse it. As Lefebvre posits, ‘buildings, the homogenous matrix of capitalistic space, successfully combine the object of control by power with the object of commercial exchange’.<sup>30</sup> This discussion emerges from his analysis of the built environment and how buildings serve as the clearest signifier of power operating spatially. For Lefebvre, buildings

---

<sup>28</sup> Charles Dickens, ‘The Great Exhibition and the Little One’, *Household Words*, 5 Jul 1851, 356-60 (p. 357).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Dickens, ‘Letter to Mrs. Watson 1854’, *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol. 1 1833-1856* (2008) <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25852/25852-h/25852-h.htm>> [Accessed 24 Nov 2018].

<sup>30</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 227.



signify the nexus of spatial relationships where the broader structures of social power and the nature of capitalism as ‘commercial exchange’ intersect in disturbing and visible ways. This is especially true of buildings that function as transportation hubs such as airports or train stations. These spaces are elaborate gateways for consuming the goods on sale, only here, the goods for sale are transport, travel, and mobility, rather than other more concrete commodities such as the clothes, food, or ornaments found in other commercial buildings. Despite its elaborate iron and glass architecture, as well as its function as a site of movement, the railway station is fundamentally a locality of consumption, displaying the goods and services it offers in a similar way to any high street shop, with both produced for the exchange of capital for services. As such, the consumer’s relationship with the station space reflects the contract between shop and shopper.

The direct relationship between the user and the station space is emphasised even more explicitly as the narrative continues. As Jackson stands on the bridge and meditates on the lines below, he passes ‘his right hand across the lines on his forehead, which multiplied while he looked down, as if the railway lines were getting themselves photographed on that sensitive plate’.<sup>31</sup> Like Manning’s father in *Cousin Phillis* whose thoughts work themselves ‘into steel and iron’, for Jackson the barriers between body and railway space also break down inside the network, with the organicism of his face merging with the linearity and regularity of the unbroken railway tracks. As Jackson stares into the abyss of the station space, the abyss stares back. He is envisioned as a ‘sensitive plate’ onto which industry is overlaid and in so doing, his body is further amalgamated into the machine ensemble.

As Jackson continues to explore Mugby, he increasingly recognises that to find closure and peace he will first need to comprehend the confusing spatiality of the station. This is no easy task. Jackson says that “‘Mugby Junction must be the maddest place in

---

<sup>31</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 11.

England”’.<sup>32</sup> It is a Wonderland-like environment, where the railway porter Lamps composes comic songs in his leisure hours, and where the young Phoebe appears to mine playing a music instrument with no sound (it later emerges she is in fact making lace). The disorientation of the junction is so pronounced that Jackson realises he must ‘stick for a time to Mugby Junction [...] I can’t make up my mind yet which iron road to take. In fact, I must get a little accustomed to the Junction before I can decide’.<sup>33</sup> He must acclimatise to the rhythms of railway life. In so doing, he must also re-acclimatise to the rhythms of industrial capitalism before he can decide where to turn next. Only by improving ‘his acquaintance with the Junction [...] going down to the station, mingling with the people there, looking about him down all the avenues of railway, and beginning to take an interest in the incomings and outgoings of the trains’, can he reach a sense of rehabilitation into society.<sup>34</sup> Jackson must learn to find meaning and order in the seeming chaos of society as it is encapsulated at Mugby. He needs to mingle with people, listen to their stories, and forge a re-connection to those he abandoned due to his bitterness. In so doing, he can begin to address his own mental disorder, as well as returning from his self-imposed exile from industrial modernity.

Phoebe, the disabled lace-maker indicated above, shares the greatest role in reconnecting Jackson to society along with Lamps, who it later emerges is her father. Jackson meets Phoebe whilst wandering the station and, after he is invited into her home, the narrator highlights how she looks out of the window at:

Those threads of railway, with their puffs of smoke and steam changing places so fast make it so lively for me [...] I think of the number of people who *can* go where they wish, on their business or their pleasure; I remember that the puffs make signs to me that they are actually going while I look; and that enlivens the prospect with abundance of company.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers’, p. 18. Italics in original.

In many senses, Phoebe is comparable to Phillis from *Cousin Phillis* published two years earlier. She is a liminal female figure trapped between womanhood and childhood and something of an eccentric outcast from society. There is one crucial difference between these two women: Phoebe is not frightened of modernity. Whilst she is denied the opportunity to partake in the railway network directly because of her physical disability, caused by being dropped as a baby by her fit-prone mother, she mentally involves herself with the modern world, with the railway station below offering escapism through its promises of mobility. Not only does Phoebe look to the steam trains beyond her window and imagine the railway network they fit within, but her father also brings wider communications from the station:

He looks into the carriages, and tells me how the ladies are dressed – so that I know all the fashions! He looks into the carriages, and tells me what pairs of lovers he sees, and what new-married couples on their wedding trip – so that I know all about that!<sup>36</sup>

The railway network is once more depicted as society in microcosm, lovers, brides, grooms, the sick, and the travelling businessmen all coming together under the roof of the railway carriage. Phoebe, through watching the trains and listening to her father's reports, can mentally integrate herself into the network. In so doing, she integrates herself into society at large. The puffs of steam on the horizon and the lively pace of the ever-changing machines connect her to a network greater than herself in a way Phillis is never able to achieve, at least not in the published version of *Cousin Phillis*. In her work, Phoebe can see the potential for the threads by her side to be worked into ingenious patterns and delicate materials, so too can she comprehend the network. Like a piece of lace, the railway space is defined by the relationship between discrete, small parts being woven into a unified and serviceable whole, exemplified by her explicit choice of the word 'threads' to describe it.

Phoebe can see meta and micro together, she can see the parts and the whole, but Jackson is denied such perception, at least when he first arrives at Mugby. His self-absorption

---

<sup>36</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 23.

prevents him from seeing the entirety of the railway space, or for understanding what it represents. For Jackson, as a self-imposed exile from society, the railway network is a bleak environment where his failures, disappointments, and heartbreaks are played out before him on the passing railway carriages. It is a site where his identity is lost and where his sense of disorientation is exemplified by the plethora of tracks seemingly going nowhere. On discovering Jackson's backstory, Phoebe refers to him as the 'gentleman for Nowhere'.<sup>37</sup> This moniker highlights Jackson's lack of a purpose inside the machine ensemble as well as his unusual position of being a traveller who has lost his destination. However, Jackson's positioning as a 'Nowhere' man also re-emphasises his social isolation and fragmentation. He no longer belongs to society as he has lost his firm grasp of place in his personal and professional life. Hence the significance of Lamps and Phoebe to the narrative. The former lights his path initially, shows him the junction and begins the process of Jackson's return. The latter teaches him the importance of unified vision, of seeing the world as bigger than its constituent parts. Phoebe proves that whilst the junction might be a product of industrial capitalism and whilst it may rob individuals of their identities, integrating with these networks is vital if one wishes to avoid being left behind by modern society.

### **'A junction of many branches': 'Barbox Brothers and Co.'**

'Barbox Brothers and Co.', the second story taken from *Mugby Junction*, opens with 'the gentleman for Nowhere beg[inning], on the very next day, his researches at the heads of the seven roads'.<sup>38</sup> Jackson branches out from the junction and begins to put into practice the fresh social perspectives he has learnt at Mugby. The addition of 'and Co' to the title of 'Barbox Brothers and Co' highlights that Jackson's time at Mugby has given him a network to reforge his connection to others. As the narrator writes, his 'heart being in his work of

---

<sup>37</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co.' from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 27.

good nature, he revelled in it'.<sup>39</sup> Now that his heart and head have reacclimatised and he has been given the tools by Lamps and Phoebe to see the modern world anew, he is able to find pleasure and enjoyment in his journey. However, as he looks to the tracks beyond, he is once again unsure which way to travel as he 'could deduce no reason [...] for giving any road the preference'.<sup>40</sup> Like the view from the railway bridge earlier in the narrative, the railway space spread out before Jackson is defined by its infinite reproducibility and sameness, with one iron road indistinguishable from the next. Whilst he has learnt to recognise the potential of integration offered by the railway space, he has not yet learnt to understand the significance of the differing lines of track.

Reflecting on the seven iron roads that radiate out from Mugby Junction, but confused by Jackson's reference to only six, Phoebe asks him, 'is the seventh road dumb?'. No, replies Jackson, that 'is the road I took, you know, when I went to get your little present. That is *its* story, Phoebe'.<sup>41</sup> Remembering the musical instrument that he bought Phoebe from his initial survey of the line, Jackson explicitly conflates the exchange of goods and products with the railway network, with the seventh railway track and its role in facilitating the purchasing of commodities indistinguishable. Having reflected on the roads spread before him, 'at last the gentleman for Nowhere took a ticket for Somewhere, and his destination was the great ingenious town'.<sup>42</sup> By settling on a destination, the placelessness of Jackson's life ends as he finally becomes the gentleman for 'Somewhere'. Crucially, this process is again inseparable from the capitalist systems that produced the network in the first place. Jackson is forced to take a 'ticket for Somewhere'. This is an inevitable result of using a transportation system

---

<sup>39</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 27. Italics in original.

<sup>42</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 28. With Jackson unlikely to be returning to London, the 'ingenious town' is probably Birmingham with it being the obvious destination from Rugby (Mugby). The fact it is labelled 'ingenious' may be in reference to Birmingham's industrialism and the fact it produced all manner of objects in the nineteenth century from buttons to silverware.

that one must pay to traverse, but it also gestures towards the wider culture of commodification taking root across the century. The very process of re-connecting to society becoming a purchasable act within 1860s consumer culture.

As Jackson leaves the station, Dickens writes that ‘in losing Mugby Junction, he had found himself again; and he was not the more enamoured of himself for having lately passed his time in better company’.<sup>43</sup> For Jackson, Mugby station provides a distraction from the fundamental dissatisfaction of his life. Whilst Lamps and Phoebe comfort him with their optimistic view of the social space of the network, as soon as the train pulls out of the station, they are left behind and Jackson’s trauma returns to haunt him. The station space once again exerts an impact beyond its physical bounds and yields a direct influence on Jackson’s character, defining and containing his sense of self whilst providing him the mechanism to reinstate himself to society. This further demonstrates that Jackson’s rehabilitation into society is directly a result of the junction space and not the railway environment more widely. Carol Rumens writes in a 2013 newspaper article on literary voyages that the ‘best fictional journeys usually generate, or accompany, a psychological voyage, and this is the premise of Dickens’s two “Barbox” tales’.<sup>44</sup> What Rumens overlooks is that it is not the fictional journey that triggers Jackson’s psychological voyage. Rather, it is wholly within the station environment that he achieves his epiphany and resultant re-integration into society. As soon as he recommences his journey, he begins to lose his newly found sense of connectivity.

Through reflection and meditation Jackson again begins to connect to the ideas and concepts that Mugby embodies, even as he is no longer physically bound within the junction. The train arrives at his destination in the ‘ingenious town’ and Dickens writes of how:

It began to be suspected by him that Mugby Junction was a Junction of many branches, invisible as well as visible, and had joined him to an endless number of

---

<sup>43</sup> Dickens, ‘Barbox Brothers and Co’, pp. 28-9.

<sup>44</sup> Carol Rumens, ‘Summer Voyages: Mugby Junction by Charles Dickens and Others’, *The Guardian* (2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jul/31/summer-voyages-charles-dickens-mugby-junction>> [Accessed 7 Dec 2018].

byways. For whereas he would, but a little while ago, have walked these streets blindly brooding, he now had eyes and thoughts for the external world. How the many toiling people lived, and loved, and died.<sup>45</sup>

Jackson eventually comes to realise what Lamps, Phoebe, and the observant reader have known all along, that the nature of Mugby Junction reaches far beyond its visible branches. Instead, the station space extends into all aspects of society, and crucially, provides an overview of the world more widely. It connects Jackson to something far bigger than himself. Before his time at Mugby, he would only have considered his own feelings and stood brooding alone. Now, he is finally realising that a world exists beyond himself, a world 'he now had eyes and thoughts for'. This newly found recognition of the wider world is something the station space has forced him to confront. He reflects that, 'I too am but a little part of a great whole'.<sup>46</sup> Post-Mugby Junction, Jackson's entire world view has shifted, with the station space restoring him to the network by forcing him to recognise his function as a small cog within the machine of society.

As Jackson spends more time in the town, he encounters a young girl called Polly who turns to him for help finding her way. After taking her to his hotel for dinner, it emerges that Polly is the daughter of Beatrice, Jackson's previous love interest whom he earlier saw reflected in the train of his life. Beatrice reveals that she never contacted him because she was afraid he would be unable to forgive her for leaving him and emigrating to America. After seeing him buy a musical instrument for Phoebe, she realised that he had softened since his youth and so resolved to meet him.<sup>47</sup> Once again, the force of the Junction exerts itself onto Jackson, not only connecting him to wider society but re-connecting him to his past. Just as Mugby Junction is an intersection of different lines where the trains arrive on one track before crossing onto another, so too is Jackson shunted onto a different track during his time

---

<sup>45</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 37.

within the station space, moved from the line of intolerance and bitterness towards interconnectedness, acceptance, and forgiveness.

After his journey, Jackson arrives back at Mugby Junction because:

It was the convenient place to live in for brightening Phoebe's life. It was the convenient place to live in for having her taught music by Beatrice. It was the convenient place to live in for occasionally borrowing Polly. It was the convenient place to live in for being joined at will to all sorts of agreeable places and persons. So he became settled there.<sup>48</sup>

The Junction, the waypoint on Jackson's journey has ultimately become his destination. The gentleman for Nowhere has at last found Somewhere. Again, one sees Dickens's use of anaphora, but whereas the earlier repetition of 'then' belies the constant movement of the station space, now the sense of onward progression has been replaced by an emphasis on rooted place through 'it was'. Space, a whirling site of modernity, of confusion, of identity loss, has at last become place; grounded, fixed, stable. The junction, the crossroads between origin and destination becomes the end goal as Jackson is connected to Phoebe, Beatrice, and Polly and 'joined at will to all sorts of agreeable places and persons'. The station space as a product of society initially signals Jackson's isolation and exclusion from the world, but as he increasingly feels at home within the mechanised spatiality of Mugby, he begins to be at home within society more widely too. He is now connected to something bigger than himself. He is at home at the centre of the network. He has been found at last.

*Mugby Junction* ends on a note of reconciliation and restoration with Jackson, like Scrooge in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* twenty years earlier, offered a second chance to improve his life, to re-connect to others, and to re-integrate into society. Whereas the four ghosts of *A Christmas Carol* showed Scrooge his failings in the world and how to change for the better, for Jackson it is the train, the machine ensemble, and its operators that provide comparable guidance. As Don Ihde writes, '[t]echnologies transform our experience of the

---

<sup>48</sup> Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers and Co', p. 43.



world and our perceptions and interpretations of our world, and we in turn become transformed in this process. Transformations are non-neutral'.<sup>49</sup> The railway space changes our very notion of the world, and in response, our behaviours become transformed too. This is a fitting ending for a story headlining the Christmas edition of *All The Year Round* where themes of redemption would have been uppermost in Dickens's readers' minds. As Tara Moore observes, readers 'brought to the Christmas reading experience their own knowledge of the everyday world plus their hope for some Christmas revelation'.<sup>50</sup> 'Barbox Brothers and Co' certainly ends with revelation for Jackson, acknowledging where he had gone wrong in his life and seeking amends through forging new connections. The last story of *Mugby Junction*, 'The Engineer', ends on a similar note of forgiveness. As Amelia Edwards writes in the closing line, 'I believe in the mercy of Heaven and the forgiveness of repentant sinners'.<sup>51</sup> Whilst the stories in the middle may be darker and more disturbing, the Christmas 1866 edition begins and ends on a positive note of second chances, demonstrating Dickens's keen awareness of his audience's expectations.

Yet as I have shown through the two 'Barbox' stories, when one considers that Jackson's restoration involves his understanding of, and alignment and engagement with, the productive forces of modern capitalism, the happy ending of the two 'Barbox Brothers' stories becomes somewhat mitigated. Over and above the consumerism implicit in the railway space, the machine ensemble has hardly been presented positively throughout the collection, repeatedly associated with torture, hellfire, death, murder, and hauntings. Furthermore, Jackson's increased integration into society is repeatedly framed as coming at the cost of his individuality. To be part of the industrial present means yielding to the patterns

---

<sup>49</sup> Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Tara Moore, *Victorian Christmas in Print* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Amelia Edwards, 'No. 5 Branch Line. The Engineer', in *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005), p. 128.

of reproducibility and mechanisation it embodies. This is not simply an optimistic narrative of character transformation where Jackson's purpose is rediscovered and he finds peace. Instead, Jackson's restoration involves his total alignment with the spaces of capitalism. However, the alternative is far worse as proven by Jackson's predicament at the beginning of the two stories. In this, Dickens reflects the vision of Eliot and Gaskell. The railway space may be infernal and possessed of many negative attributes but trying to situate oneself outside of modernity is not presented as a viable option. Instead, it results in isolation and exclusion from the modern world and one's fellow citizens. Modernity may be far from perfect, it may be industrialised, commercialised, and regulatory, but given the choice it is always better to be on the inside.

### **‘Smashed to bloody atoms’, Ferdinand Lopez in Trollope's *The Prime Minister***

*The Prime Minister* appeared in monthly parts from November 1875 to June 1876 and is the penultimate novel from Trollope's Palliser series (1864-1879). In contrast to the earlier *Chronicles of Barsetshire* (1855-1867) which were set in the rural provinces and focus on the clergy and old aristocracy, the six Palliser novels engage comprehensively with modern politics, progress, and the urban centre. Characters travel extensively in these novels and the focus is on issues of national, rather than provincial, importance. In Chapter One, I traced the impact of the railways on society and the change from an agrarian to an urbanised economy. The development in Trollope's writing between the composition of the Barchester novels and the Palliser series highlights a similar trend. Trollope moves away from the bucolic towards the urbanised and industrialised in tandem with the increased power of capitalism and the shift of economic importance from the provinces to the capital.

In my analysis of *The Prime Minister*, I focus particularly on Chapter Sixty, ‘The Tenway Junction’ and Trollope's representation of the station. Like Eliot, Trollope uses the railway space to chart politics. However, Eliot set her novels over the 1832 Reform Act

whereas Trollope sets *The Prime Minister* in the contemporary political climate with the chaos at Tenway reflecting the fragile coalition government between the Whigs and Tories. This government is built with Plantagenet Palliser at the helm and the main plot of the novel concerns the confused roles faced by both Palliser and his wife, Lady Glencora, as they negotiate their newfound status at the head of government. In this vein, Tenway Junction becomes the perfect metaphor for the confusion and disorder of contemporary politics and political life. As Jenny Bourne Taylor observes:

In contrast with Dickens and George Eliot, who tend to set their stories in the recent past (usually thirty years, or a generation, earlier), Trollope, like Collins and Braddon, sets his plots in the immediate, or almost immediate present, reinforcing the presence of his fictional world, often through specific topical references.<sup>52</sup>

Just as the tracks of the Tories and Whigs form a challenging alignment, so too do the ‘convergent rails’ at Tenway merge and unmerge in a sea of metal unintelligible to the casual observer.<sup>53</sup>

Ferdinand Lopez is a character with clear parallels to *Mugby Junction*’s Mr Jackson. Like Jackson, Lopez lacks a clear background. With respect to his ancestors, he ‘did not know very much himself, but what little he did know he kept altogether to himself’.<sup>54</sup> He is cut off, not only from others, but from his own sense of lineage too. From his introduction in the first chapter, Trollope emphasises that Lopez has not learnt the spirit of collaboration and compromise that defines travelling a shared network. Lopez:

Could not seat himself in a railway carriage without a lesson to his opposite neighbour that in all the mutual affairs of travelling, arrangement of feet, disposition of bags, and opening of windows, it would be that neighbour’s duty to submit and his to exact.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor, ‘Trollope and the Sensation Novel’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, ed. by Carolyn Dever and Lisa Niles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 87.

<sup>53</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (London: Penguin Classics, 1994), p. 517.

<sup>54</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 12.

Deeply selfish, Lopez fails to identify the railway carriage as a shared environment, forcing his co-travellers to submit to his wishes on all matters of using the space. He is immediately established as a man ill at ease amongst the ideologies of the railway; his lack of integration with his fellow travellers paralleling his lack of success in negotiating the networks of modernity, foreshadowing his eventual destruction inside the railway space.

The fact that *The Prime Minister* features a chapter titled ‘The Tenway Junction’, demonstrates the significance of this scene within the narrative. This chapter follows the final failure of Lopez’s schemes in London. After being brusquely rejected by the wealthy Lady Eustace in his plan to elope with her to Guatemala to start a new life, Lopez is left with few options. He arrives in Tenway, like Jackson did at Mugby, with a vague and half-formed plan to run away from his problems in London. Trollope writes that it ‘is quite unnecessary to describe the Tenway Junction, as everybody knows it’.<sup>56</sup> Tenway is based upon Willesden junction to the north of London.<sup>57</sup> By the 1870s Willesden was, like Rugby, already well established as a major junction boasting a million passengers per year, 79 porters, 58 signalmen, and 14 signal boxes by the 1890s.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, in 1873, just three years before Trollope published *The Prime Minister*, a mutilated body ‘was found about a mile and a half from Willesden Junction’.<sup>59</sup> It later turned out that the man had died after being run over by a train at the station. Like the accidental death of the man in the restaurant at Rugby inspiring Dickens’s account of the greedy refreshment room practices, the suicide of the man at

---

<sup>56</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 517.

<sup>57</sup> Jenny Uglow and an 1876 writer in *The Saturday Review* both identify ‘the Grand Junction at Willesden’ as the inspiration for Tenway. Trollope himself says that Tenway is six or seven miles north of Euston on the way to Birmingham and the North West. This would tally with the fact that Willesden Junction is 6.2 miles from Euston. (See: Lucca Cadia, ‘The Soi-Distant Hero’s Suicide: Chancy Speculation in Trollope’s *The Prime Minister*’, in *Merchants, Barons, Sellers and Suits: The Changing Images of the Businessman through Literature*, ed. by Christa Mahalik (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 48. and Anon., ‘The Prime Minister’, *The Saturday Review*, 14 Oct 1876, 481-82 (p. 481).)

<sup>58</sup> V.L. Whitechurch, ‘Twenty-Four Hours at a Railway Junction’, *Railway Magazine*, September 1897, 263-71.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., ‘Accidents and Offences’, *Downpatrick Recorder*, 31 May 1873, 3-4.

Willesden Junction almost certainly played a role in influencing Trollope's depiction of Lopez's suicide at the same location three years later.

Trollope perceives Tenway as a space not requiring narrative description, but in typically ironic Trollopian narratorial style, he still proceeds to describe in great detail how:

From this spot, some six or seven miles distant from London, lines diverge east, west, and north, north-east, and north-west, round the metropolis in every direction, and with direct communication with every other line in and out of London. It is a marvellous place, quite unintelligible to the uninitiated, and yet daily used by thousands who only know that when they get there, they are to do what someone tells them.<sup>60</sup>

The lines radiating from Tenway Junction surround the metropolis, suggesting the power of the railway space to dominate even the capital city itself, encircling London within its tightly regulated metal enclosure. This was a major anxiety during the 1860s and 70s. The writer of an 1866 article in *The Athenæum* writes with evident anger that, 'London is again in a state of siege. Engineers surround her on every side'.<sup>61</sup> In this way, the railway space is perceived almost as a foreign enemy looking to invade and capture London. In addition, the fact that the lines at Tenway fuse with tracks originating in other parts of the country, further highlights the breakdown of specific regional identities that I saw as a major concern of railway expansion in the previous chapter. In Gaskell and Eliot's writing, the railways were frequently associated with the capital city by the countryfolk and seen as replicating all its negative attributes. However, for the city dwellers there is a similar sense of disquietude, with the railway network likewise conceived as an othering spatiality that threatens the urban order. Significant too is the lack of knowledge on the part of the users of the junction space. The passengers, at least in their first impressions, do not understand how Tenway Junction works. In this, Tenway further parallels Mugby, with its users forced to surrender to the porters and operators of the railway space and do precisely as they are instructed.

---

<sup>60</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 517.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., 'New Metropolitan Railways', *The Athenæum*, 27 Jan 1866, 134-35 (p. 134).

As well as being confusing visually, Tenway is overwhelming aurally too. Further parallels with *Mugby* emerge through the constant clamour and confusion that takes place at Tenway:

From dusky morn to dark night, and indeed almost throughout the night, the air is loaded with a succession of shrieks. The theory goes that each separate shriek, - if there can be any separation where the sound is so nearly continuous, - is a separate notice to sperate ears of the coming or going of a separate train. The stranger, as he speculates on these pandemoniac noises, is able to realise the idea that were they discontinued the excitement necessary for the minds of the pundits might be lowered, and that activity might be lessened, and evil results might follow.<sup>62</sup>

The whistles guiding the trains and the shrieks of the engines merge into one cacophony. Even in the depths of night the junction is still active, with the continuous roar of the railway space never ceasing. This suggests the unstoppable power of capitalist spaces by always labouring in their productive duties. It also re-emphasises the mysterious nature of the railway space. Not only do people find themselves lost within it, but it operates on a new industrialised language that is incomprehensible to all but the workers. Trollope suggests that the shrieks and whistles hold a directly shaping influence over the behaviour of the railway operators. If Tenway was without the constant din of whistles and engines, then the ‘pundits’ would not be mentally stimulated to carry out their duties in regulating and controlling the space. This is a discussion I return to in the next two chapters with my exploration of Underground spaces, and their influence over their operators, and Anderson’s representations of the railway workers and their relationship with the machine. As in *Mugby Junction*, where Lamps was defined by his relationship with the train, here too the railway workers’ humanity breaks down inside the machine ensemble. It is almost as if they have become locomotives themselves, blindly and obediently following the signals of whistles to guide them through the junction. They are responsible for directing people and for maintaining the hegemony of the railway space, but this comes at the cost of their own individuality and even humanity.

---

<sup>62</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, pp. 517-18.

It is not only the passengers who lose their way within the bounds of Tenway, but the trains also appear to lack a sense of direction. The narrator reflects that, ‘these rails always run on into another with sloping points, and cross passages, and mysterious meandering sidings, till it seems to the thoughtful stranger to be impossible that the best-trained engine should know its own line’.<sup>63</sup> The junction space is as confusing for the trains as it is to the onlooker, with the plethora of lines and tracks merging and blending into one another. The confusion of the tracks, as well as having a physical significance, also hold a key metaphoric relevance in symbolising one of the core elements of capitalism, namely the ignorance surrounding the operation of financial networks and the processes of capital exchange. In this, Tenway further parallels Dickens’s representation of Mugby. As Lefebvre explains regarding the obscure networks of commodities, the ‘notion of flows – a strictly economic notion that has been mistakenly generalised by some philosophers – is still not clearly understood’.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the ideas of production, industrialisation, and uniformity that the railway space embodies, the confusing metal spatiality of the junction also represents the unclear nature of the contemporary marketplace where money is exchanged in obscure and uncertain ways.

Trollope’s representation of the chaos at Tenway is also comparable with his description of Phineas Finn’s arrival into parliament in the 1867-8 novel of the same name, also from the Palliser series:

At two punctually Phineas was in the lobby at Westminster, and then he found himself taken into the House with a crowd of other men. The old and young, and they who were neither old nor young, were mingled together, and there seemed to be very little respect of persons [...] he was confused, half elated, half disappointed [...] He tried hard to realise what he had gained, but the dust and the noise and the crowds [...] were almost too strong for him.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 517.

<sup>64</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 350.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn* (Ware, Wordsworth Classics: 1923), pp. 36-37.

As Tenway is depicted as a locality of chaos in *The Prime Minister*, so too is Parliament presented in *Phineas Finn* as a space of madness with crowds merging in all directions in an overwhelming assault on the senses. At Tenway, ‘Men and women, - especially the men [...] look doubtful, uneasy, and bewildered’.<sup>66</sup> Bewilderment, confusion, and unease are the defining features of both Trollope’s Tenway and his vision of Parliament, associating these spaces together as symptomatic sites of chaotic modernity in the 1860s and 70s. Moreover, the conflation of Tenway with the confusion of parliament further highlights the produced nature of the railway space as a site constructed in the image of the contemporary political environment, imbued with the political attributes that define Westminster.

The association of Tenway with parliament and capitalist exchange are notable when one considers that it is precisely these two career paths that Lopez has failed in. The station represents the exchange of goods and commodities, something Lopez has fallen victim to on multiple occasions throughout the novel, with his career turning frequently to matters of ‘speculation’. This word is used thirteen times in the novel in conjunction with Lopez, highlighting the dubious and unstable nature of his financial underpinnings. He is forced to use other people’s money to pay for unstable schemes that always result in failure. Isolated from his roots and lacking the necessary skills to traverse the industrialised, capitalist world, Lopez is rendered a pathetic figure, cut off from society and faced with failure at every turn. In a similar way, Lopez has failed in his parliamentary ambitions too. The narrator reflects earlier in the novel, he ‘was very low in spirits on this return journey [...] While he had before his eyes the hope of being a member of Parliament he had been able to buoy himself up’.<sup>67</sup> Now his political ambition has been lost, Lopez is left with an overwhelming sense of despair and failure.

---

<sup>66</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 517.

<sup>67</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 298.



Significantly, Lopez's despair takes place inside the train as he returns to London after his unsuccessful electoral campaign, with the railway space throughout *The Prime Minister* reflecting Lopez's social, political, and financial shortcomings. However, it is at Tenway when his failures truly overtake him. This is captured by James Pope-Hennessy when he describes Tenway as 'a great spider's web of steel rails which in some way seems to represent the complex horrors of the commercial world that had killed [Lopez]'.<sup>68</sup> Notably, Pope-Hennessy uses the same spider web image that Dickens used to capture the spatiality of *Mugby* and Cruikshank used to show the volatility of railway investment, symbolising the entrapping nature of the contemporary marketplace and the spaces it produces. In the same way as Dickens in *Mugby Junction*, Trollope shows the railway space as defining and reflecting the nature of the individuals using it. A failure in business and a failure in Parliament, Tenway Junction embodies both of these distinct spaces, cruelly highlighting Lopez's inability to fit in with either one of them. In so doing, it also reflects Lopez's failure to integrate with industrial modernity more widely.

Despite the seeming chaos of Tenway, there is a structure that enables the smooth running of the trains, even if it initially lies obscured. 'But they all do get properly placed and unplaced', writes Trollope, 'so that the spectator at last acknowledges that over all this apparent chaos there is presiding a great genius of order'.<sup>69</sup> Trollope's use of 'spectator' mirrors that of Dickens when Jackson was staring down at the network from the bridge. It implies a sense of spectatorship and visual consumption on the part of the onlooker inside the machine ensemble. Out of the seeming chaos and bawling of Parliament, laws are introduced and order is maintained. Out of the chaos of exchange, deals are wrought and commodities transferred. So too out of the chaos of Tenway Junction are passengers successfully convened

---

<sup>68</sup> James Pope-Hennessy, *Anthony Trollope* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), p. 331.

<sup>69</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 517.

onwards to their destinations. Paul Fyfe captures this chaotic order when he writes that, ‘Tenway seems to have a genius loci [...] it reveals itself in the aggregate of apparent disorder. At Tenway, chaos becomes cosmos’.<sup>70</sup> At Tenway, chaos is merely a guise for the rigid order going on behind the scenes, provided that one blindly surrenders oneself to the governance and control of the railway officials. In Trollope’s schema the passengers do successfully integrate into the whirling capitalist modernity that the junction space signifies, it just takes time for the ‘spectator’ to recognise the patterns of the station and to begin to decode that which is initially incomprehensible. Once the passengers learn how space operates at Tenway, just as Jackson did at Mugby, they can successfully negotiate it and by extension, they can navigate modern society too.

The fact that the station space, despite initial appearances, does have an order to its chaos only makes the confused isolation felt by Lopez more striking. As I indicated above, the junction space is associated with parliament and commerce in the novel: the two careers Lopez failed at. Just as he was unable to navigate a career in the industrialised world, so too is he unable to navigate the station as a product of modern society. In a similar way to Jackson, his inner turmoil, isolation, and failures are spread out before him in the railway space and his lack of direction and sense of exclusion are shown clearly:

At Tenway Junction there are half-a-dozen long platforms on which men and women and luggage are crowded. On one of these for a while Ferdinand Lopez walked backwards and forwards as though waiting for the coming of some especial train.<sup>71</sup>

Lopez’s act of walking aimlessly up and down the platform closely mirrors that of Jackson in the opening parts of *Mugby Junction*. As it was by Dickens, the power of the machine ensemble is shown by Trollope to reduce individual behaviour to reproducible

---

<sup>70</sup> Fyfe, p. 186.

<sup>71</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 518.

mechanisation. However, Lopez's attempts to industrialise his body are met with failure as he attracts the suspicion of the railway workers:

The crowd is ever so great that a man might be supposed to walk there from morning to night without exciting special notice. But the pundits are very clever, and have much experience in men and women. A well-taught pundit, who has exercised authority for a year or two at such a station as that of Tenway, will know within a minute of the appearance of each stranger what is his purpose there, - whether he be going or has just come, whether he is himself on the way or waiting for others, whether he should be treated with civility or some curt command, - so that if his purport be honest all necessary assistance, may be rendered him.<sup>72</sup>

Rather than being helped and aided as Jackson was by Lamps, Lopez has a hostile relationship with the railway operators at Tenway. The emphasis on cunning and observation on the part of the 'pundits' highlights the hidden aspects of control inherently built into the railway environment. Part of their knowledge and training is not just to understand how the junction functions, nor to simply assist passengers with their wayfinding, but also to ensure control and order are upheld within the station. To this end, the 'pundits' read the passengers' purpose within the space and whether they should be assisted politely and efficiently, or whether they should be issued a 'curt command' to bring their behaviour back in line with the dictates of the space. Rather than recognising the patterns of interconnectivity offered at the station and finding his redemption through them, Lopez continues to resist in the face of modernity. He refuses to align himself to the railway space and through his antagonistic relationship with the 'pundits', only removes himself further from capitalist society.

As Lopez continues his exploration of Tenway he further rejects any hope of reconnection, arousing suspicion by running:

A few yards along the platform [...] [and] reaching a spot that was unoccupied: - and there he stood fixed. And as he stood the express flashed by. 'I am fond of seeing them pass like that,' said Lopez to the man who had followed him.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 518.

<sup>73</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, pp. 518-19.

For Lopez, his engagement with the station once more becomes one of transgression, with his refusal to obey the rules of Tenway mirroring his refusal to operate within the appropriate moral and economic framework throughout the novel. His physical location, too close to the platform edge, is evocative of his positioning on the thin line between respectability and criminality, law and disobedience. Meanwhile, Lopez's act of taking pleasure in watching the trains passing by at speed is a further projection of his own inner nature and status, drawn out inside the all-revealing environment of the Junction like the train of life that Jackson witnessed at Mugby. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, 'fast' had become a frequent term of criticism for those who lived their lives in a reckless and immoral fashion. As Anna Vadillo explains, '[f]astness alludes to a new way of experiencing and seeing the city, one which relates to the speed of travelling, to the restless movement of the metropolis, and to the sexually stigmatised'.<sup>74</sup> The concept of 'fastness' rose in tandem with accelerated methods of modernity and associated those who lay on the margins of social respectability with the 'restless[ness]' and speed that the railway network fostered. Ferdinand Lopez is the epitome of a fast individual. He is ethnically ambiguous, a quality that is frequently used against him within the narrative. He is also associated with sexual licence and presented as an adventurer whose exploits take place almost exclusively within the urban environment.

When Lopez first attracts the attentions of Emily Wharton, he is described by Emily's father as being 'in no degree fast or flashy'.<sup>75</sup> Of course, this initial evaluation is entirely incorrect and for a readership used to Trollope's frequently rakish male characters, the irony of Mr Wharton's remarks would most likely not be lost. Lopez is living an accelerated, 'flashy', and 'fast' consumeristic lifestyle that he is unable to sustain. The fact that he stands on the platform at Tenway and takes pleasure in the passing of the express trains is a further

---

<sup>74</sup> Vadillo, p. 118.

<sup>75</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 72.

extension of his fastness, with the expresses serving as an externalisation of his inner pursuit of pleasure, movement, and money. Instead of tapping into the opportunities of mobility and connectivity the junction offers, as Jackson learnt to do, Lopez is associating himself with its more disquieting elements of speed, power, and a breakdown of moral respectability.

Just as Lopez was ostracised from society for living beyond his means, so too does his association with the passing steam trains result in his expulsion from the station. He lies and pretends that he is waiting for someone, only to be told there is no train that they could arrive by until later in the afternoon, gentlemen ‘can’t wait here all day, sir. The horders is against waiting on the platform’.<sup>76</sup> Tenway Junction as an environment of exchange and movement has a defining system of social practice governing it. As such, loitering on the platforms or aimlessly waiting are forbidden under the tight structures of onward movement that the space facilitates. Whereas Jackson took time to pause at Mugby and, through forging connections with the station inhabitants, learned to read the opportunities for connection offered by the network, Lopez makes no such efforts to re-assimilate into modern society. Continuing to ignore the governing forces of the station space, Lopez:

Walked towards the edge of the platform. But now it was not exactly the edge that he neared, but a descent to a pathway – an inclined plane leading down to the level of the rails, and made there for certain purposes of traffic.<sup>77</sup>

The slope at the end of the platform allows the railway staff to access the tracks for repairs or to retrieve objects on the line, but in walking down it himself Lopez further demonstrates his inability to comply with the rules of the junction. He transitions from the space of the platform to the forbidden site of the tracks, highlighting the differing spaces inside the junction and the clear sense of exclusion that the tracks embody. Whilst the railway lines run

---

<sup>76</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 519.

<sup>77</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 519.

parallel to the platform, they represent an entirely different and dangerous spatiality, a site prohibited for those external to the system.

Seeing his action, the ‘pundits’ call to Lopez to desist:

But Lopez heeded not the call, and the rush was too late. With quick, but still with gentle and apparently unhurried steps, he walked down before the flying engine – and in a moment had been knocked into bloody atoms.<sup>78</sup>

Even facing imminent destruction, Lopez’s behaviour is measured and calculated. There is no dramatic act of hurling himself in front of the train in the sensationalist vein, instead his death is notable through its lack of textual detail. Lopez has not just been killed, but completely disintegrated, reduced to the very atoms of his construction. As a man who subverts the norms of society, who refuses to conform to the railway, who resists becoming a product of the station, and who cannot fit into the tight structures of the railroad; total annihilation of his corpus is the only possible outcome. Even to the last Lopez resists the ‘call’, the voice of control managing the station space. Instead, his suicide becomes the ultimate act of transgression within the railway environment, reflecting his failures to assimilate into the modern world.

The two ‘Barbox’ stories from Dickens’s *Mugby Junction* and Trollope’s *The Prime Minister* are texts with a great deal in common. All concern men who are unsuccessful in their attempts to integrate into the world of commerce and exchange. Lopez fails in his speculations and political career due to a lack of skill, whilst Jackson fails because of his untrustworthy business partner. As a result of this, both Jackson and Lopez become increasingly isolated from society and turn to the railway network as a mechanism of escape. However, their arrival into major junctions confronts them with their lack of social cohesion. From this point, their narrative trajectories are as disparate as the tracks spreading out from the junction. Jackson talks to others, integrates himself into the railway network and in so

---

<sup>78</sup> Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, p. 520.

doing, integrates himself back into society, even though this ultimately means aligning himself with the structures of industrialism. Meanwhile, Lopez consistently rejects the sense of connectivity that the railway embodies, ignoring its rules and regulations, leaving violent destruction inside the network as his only possible outcome. Whilst Jackson's integration into the structures of modern capitalism at Mugby Junction may not be a straightforwardly positive outcome, in the context of the railway space it is framed as the only successful one. The alternative, as Lopez so vividly demonstrates, is catastrophic. The railway space is an inescapable and omnipotent force in these texts. It confronts its users with their relationship to others and to modern society and insists on integration and obedience, leaving those who resist it isolated at best, violently destroyed at worst.

## Chapter 3 – ‘Glaring out of the Dark Abyss’: The Metropolitan Railway as Non-Place in the Periodical Press

### Introduction

The world’s first underground train system, the Metropolitan railway, debuted in 1863. The fact that the Underground was produced in a previously inhospitable locality, conceived solely for the purposes of exchange and flow and possessed of a radically different infrastructure of unbroken tunnels, underground stations, and ventilation shafts meant that it was recognised in the 1860s and 70s as an entirely different type of railway space to the surface trains that preceded it. As well as symbolising the skill of the nineteenth-century engineers and the connectedness and mobility possible in the modern urban centre, the new Underground railway also represented the very worst attributes of industrial capitalism. It was constructed in the dark spaces beneath the city, was defined by spatial similitude, and smelt of sulphur due to the ‘accumulation of smoke and steam in the long tunnel’.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Underground was widely seen as de-individualising, geographically confusing, and physically removed from the patterns and histories of the city above.

In this chapter, I explore how writers and illustrators in the 1860s and 70s periodical press code the London Underground in terminology consistent with Marc Augé’s theory of non-places. Before I set out this analysis below, I first need to establish what Augé means by non-places and why I read the Underground as represented in this way. Like Lefebvre, Augé was a twentieth-century French philosopher who was heavily invested in spatial theory. He wrote *Non-Places* in 1995 to define the spaces of supermodernity that resist traditional spatial categorisation. ‘Non-place’ might seem to suggest a space that is spaceless, and therefore not produced, but this would be an erroneous assumption. Instead, Augé argues that if ‘a place

---

<sup>1</sup> Anon., ‘The Metropolitan Railway’, *The Standard*, 12 Jan 1863, 6. The new trains were meant to swallow their smoke and only release it when in suitably ventilated areas. However, the technology never worked leading to smog-congested tunnels from the very beginning.



can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place'.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the sites of modernity bring together the historical and current, the non-places of Augé's supermodernity are devoid of history, with the Underground removed from the city above and the patterns of the past that formed it. For Augé, non-places are alienating. They trigger identity crises, are defined by their uniformity, and are produced solely for the exchange of capital. As Mirjam Gebauer et al write, 'by non-places [Augé] means places which facilitate significant aspects of modern life, but do not allow for their user to satisfy important human needs'.<sup>3</sup> Despite their name, these are not spaces that are lacking in definition or boundaries, nor are they sites that sit outside of the broader patterns of production. Instead, they are spaces designed solely for consumption and exchange where one is 'often communicating with a counterpart which is a machine or a person wearing a uniform and fulfilling a job function – rather than communicating with persons who are perceived as unique fellow beings'.<sup>4</sup> This is one of the ways that the non-place robs people of their identity, reducing its operators to quasi-machines, devoid of personality and selfhood, whilst preventing the users from partaking of essential needs beyond consumption.

Gebauer et al also attempt to define the differences between spaces and non-places, writing that non-places are dependent on the individual remaining stationary within them. 'Any movement tends to form the place into space, which for Augé functions as a kind of synonym for the non-place'.<sup>5</sup> I disagree with this interpretation. Augé does not read space and non-place as synonymous. Instead, he argues that '[p]lace and non-place are rather like

---

<sup>2</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Mirjam Gebauer, Helle Thorsøe Nielsen, Jan T. Schlosser, and Brent Sørensen, 'The Absence of Place and Time: Non-Place and Placelessness' in *Non-Place: Representing Placelessness in Literature, Media and Culture*, ed. by Mirjam Gebauer, Helle Thorsøe Nielsen, Jan T. Schlosser, and Brent Sørensen (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 2015), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gebauer et al, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Gebauer et al, pp. 10-11.

opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly written'.<sup>6</sup> In a similar way, Augé follows De Certeau in refusing to 'oppose "place" and "space"'.<sup>7</sup> For all three of these terms, their definitions are not stable, nor are they simple oppositions. Augé follows the definitions of place and space that I established in my introduction, arguing that place is space that has become grounded and imbued with meaning. In a similar way, non-places are a specific and extreme type of space; one that is too new to have history, fails to integrate with existing localities, is alienating, deindividualising, and entirely mercenary.

Augé wrote about the experience of Underground travel in his work *In the Metro* (1986), focusing on the subterranean system beneath twentieth-century Paris.<sup>8</sup> Yet he resists seeing the Parisian Metro as possessing the attributes he would later use to define non-places. This is because he approaches the Metro from his position in the late twentieth century. By exploring a space with nearly a hundred years of history, Augé enters a locality that had time to build its history and traditions, integrating it into the narrative of the city.<sup>9</sup> However, as I show through my analysis across this chapter, these historical associations were not yet established for the London Underground during the nineteenth century. By focusing on the twentieth-century metro, Augé is typical of the literary and critical responses to the Underground, which are more closely associated with Modernism and the early 1900s, rather than the 1860s. As Andrew Thacker foregrounds:

Narrative conclusions and glimpses from the [Tube] train window raises the question of how we evaluate the impact of the experiences of the railways upon modernist writing, where 'uncompleted' endings are often the norm, and texts by writers such as Woolf and Joyce often focus upon a panoply of 'smaller happenings'.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Augé, *In the Metro*, trans. by Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> The Paris Metro first opened in 1900.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Thacker, 'Uncompleted Life: The Modernist Underground', in *The Railway and Modernity*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 101.

The Tube journey mirrors Modernism's poetics of estrangement, alienation, fragmentation, isolation from the city, and fleeting impressionism, precisely why it emerges so frequently in literature from the early twentieth century by writers such as Virginia Woolf and Ezra Pound. Expanding on this further, Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman write in their introduction to *The Railway and Modernity* that:

[On] the world's first proper 'tube' railway, passengers were conveyed in largely windowless padded 'cells', without route maps or mechanical indicators inside them to reveal where on their journey they were. Travel on such lines thus became a journey into spacelessness.<sup>11</sup>

These early Tube carriages had no outside view, no indication of one's position on the route, and thickly cushioned walls. This led to the Tube being perceived as a novel and disorienting space unlike any that travellers would have entered previously, save perhaps for a padded cell in an asylum that gave these trains their nickname.

Because the Underground is so closely associated with Modernism, there is a strong sense amongst critics that it is only after the deep-level Tube lines were introduced in the 1890s that writers began to see the Underground as an unnerving site of identity-loss and fragmentation.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the 1860s Underground was coded as a mere continuation of existing surface-level lines. This is voiced by David Welsh who writes that George Gissing initially, 'did not regard the underground as distinct from the already established steam railways that had carved out new routes into London from the 1830s'.<sup>13</sup> It is not until the late

---

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman, 'Introduction', in *The Railway and Modernity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> John Lancaster explains, 'the first Underground lines were not tubes; that's because they were not, in the strict sense, tunnels [...] They were made using the "cut and cover" method: not a tunnel, but a hole dug straight down into the ground, laid with tracks and brick walls, and then covered back up. All the first lines were "cut and cover" lines: the Metropolitan, beginning in 1863, then the District, which opened in 1868, then the Circle, which opened in 1884'. In contrast, the 1890s Tube was much deeper with improved tunnel-boring techniques and electrification negating the need for such regular ventilation shafts. Furthermore, electrified locomotion also enabled the tube trains to be smaller and fit through narrower tunnels. (See: John Lancaster, *What We Talk About When We Talk About the Tube* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 35.)

<sup>13</sup> David Welsh, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 21.

1880s and 90s when the aforementioned deep-level tube lines first opened that Gissing ‘offered a very different account of the construction of the underground’, seeing it as hellish, noxious, and noisy, a living embodiment of Dante’s inferno beneath the city.<sup>14</sup>

The Tube of the 1890s and the Metropolitan railway of the 1860s were constructed very differently, but in spatial terms I see these two environments as far more similar than dissimilar. I argue that the reason why the Underground is associated with Modernism is not a reflection of the spatiality of the 1890s Tube, but it is instead the same phenomenon that I charted in the introduction to this thesis. Namely, that it takes time for novelists to respond to and understand the spatial significance of new localities. In what follows, I demonstrate that the attributes that the 1890s Tube became known for and that were highlighted above by Beaumont, Freeman, Thacker, and Welsh (darkness, confusing localities, claustrophobic carriages, fragmentary identities) were already associated with the 1860s Metropolitan railway. However, it is not novels of the 1860s and 70s that offer these accounts but rather writers in the periodicals. This is because the periodical press is agile when it comes to mapping social and industrial changes and is well-placed to describe the non-places of supermodernity.

In the following analysis, I trace six specific areas through which I argue that periodical writers identify the 1863 Metropolitan railway as a non-place with all the unnerving attributes of the 1890s Tube. In the first, I highlight how the Metropolitan railway was identified as expanding the commodification of space by charging to enter its locality, accelerating the flow of money around the capital, and perpetuating consumption. Secondly, I explore the concern in the press surrounding the Underground’s destruction of private spaces and how it was understood as re-shaping the domestic fabric of the city by facilitating large scale housing demolition. For some writers this was a positive for it enabled slum clearance

---

<sup>14</sup> Welsh, p. 22.

and better housing for the poor, for others it was symptomatic of the worst violence of industrial capitalism. I next build on this to show how the non-place makes the user feel at home in its bounds in an attempt to mask its anti-domestic reality. What it creates instead is an artificial and illusory vision of domestic space that can never free itself from the shackles of spatial production. In the fourth section, I show how the Metropolitan railway is identified as an un-historic environment with little or no relation to existing spaces. Next, I expand the discussion of individuality from the previous chapter and consider the non-place's impact on identity construction and how writers recognise its de-individualising and isolating influence on the workers and the traveller as he or she passes through it. Finally, I consider how the Metropolitan railway is presented in terms of spatial disorientation and sameness, erasing the clear sense of location that exists in the surface world. It produces instead an abstract sense of space where the user of the non-place must rely on aural information, and their imagination, to locate their place in the network and its relation to the world above.

### **Consuming space**

[The non-place is devoted to] abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeing, the temporary and ephemeral.  
 Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 63

The city in its entirety, even those parts buried underground, becomes under modernity a commodity available to generate value for the productive forces of capitalism. With the surface world becoming congested with omnibuses and existing urban railway tracks, engineers and investors turned to the hidden world, the city beneath the city, to continue producing networks of capital flow. The writer of an 1863 article in *The London Review* captures the economics of the Underground clearly. *The London Review* was published across the 1860s before being incorporated with *The Examiner*. It sought a middle-to-upper class

readership with its wide variety of articles on philosophy, literature, and science.<sup>15</sup> The journal engaged frequently with the railway space, carrying regular advertisements for new lines and holiday promotions as well as publishing penetrating and insightful articles on railway expansion and accidents. I return to this journal in Chapter Five to explore its representations of the 1861 Clayton Tunnel crash. Despite regularly carrying advertisements for the railway companies, *The London Review* was frequently critical of their practices. This is perhaps unsurprising considering that the publication was edited by Charles Mackay. Mackay notably supported the railways during the railway mania of the 1840s and played a large part in the subsequent crash, encouraging the public to continue investing in what he saw as a safe market despite the obvious signs of the bubble bursting.<sup>16</sup> With his earlier railway ‘delusions’ in mind, it explains why in later life he superintended a newspaper that was extremely critical when it came to the economics and safety practices of the railway system.

Turning to the article itself, the writer comments:

The managers of the Great Western, in their competition with two or three other main lines, thought it wise to draw nearer to the heart of London. Instead of waiting for goods and passengers to flow to Paddington, they determined to push out and meet their passengers on the road. They were helped in this scheme by powerful and interested allies.<sup>17</sup>

This writer is clear that the underground railway is first and foremost a financial construct, funded by the Great Western Railway and other ‘powerful and interested’ allies to further integrate the capital city into the machine ensemble. Its function in easing urban commuting and assisting the movement of people across the capital is secondary to its role in facilitating the ‘flow’ of ‘goods and passengers’ into Paddington. Rather than waiting for these flows to

---

<sup>15</sup> Alvar Ellegård, ‘The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory’, *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 3-22 (p. 10).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Odlyzko, ‘Charles Mackay’s Own Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Railway mania’, *University of Minnesota* (2012) <<http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/mania04.pdf>> [Accessed 22 September 2020].

<sup>17</sup> Anon., ‘The Underground Railway’, *The London Review*, 17 Jan 1863, 64-65 (p. 64).

occur naturally, the railway operators are presented as manipulating the process of economic exchange, building the Underground railway to ensure passengers are filtered more easily into or from the Great Western's network at Paddington. It is no coincidence that the original 1863 Metropolitan railway ran from Farringdon Street to Paddington via Kings Cross (see illustration below), with the line connecting the financial City of London to two major stations, solidifying the machine ensemble's network inside the capital and beyond.

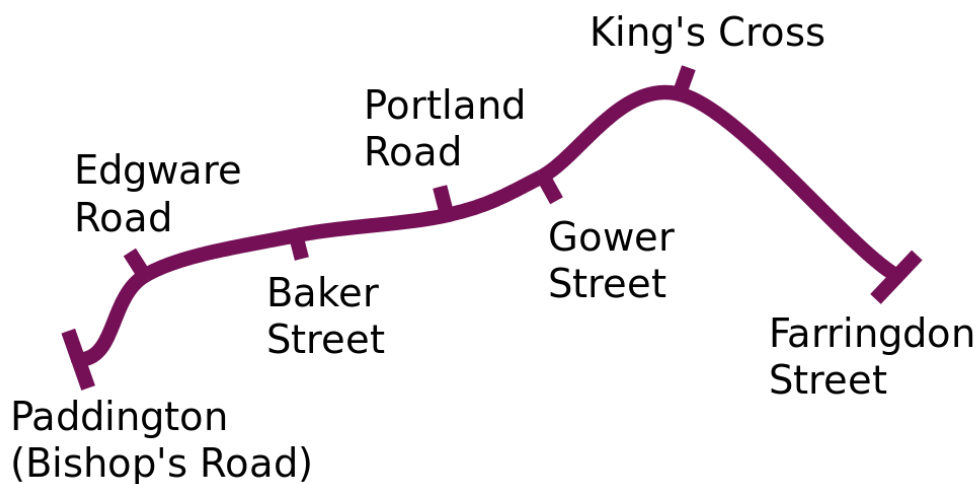


Figure 2. 'Metropolitan Railway 1863', *Wikimedia Commons* (2012)  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metropolitan\\_Railway\\_1863.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metropolitan_Railway_1863.svg)> [Accessed 14 April 2021]

The mercenary purposes of the Underground railway are represented in an article in *London Society* too, albeit in a markedly different way to the *London Review* piece. *London Society* was a magazine published monthly between 1862 and 1898 and as its subtitle, 'An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation' reveals, this was a periodical with a focus on entertainment rather than education. Priced at a shilling it was also a relatively expensive magazine, further placing its audience firmly in the middle and upper classes.<sup>18</sup> *London Society* was primarily intended to be written for and about the moneyed elite at play with a focus on the latest fashions and events. This is to its very core a magazine about consumption and consumer culture (as well as consuming culture, with art

<sup>18</sup> Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (Ghent: Academia Press and London: British Library, 2009), p. 376.

shows and opera depicted for their social rather than edifying importance), highlighted by its initial publication in 1862 as sensationalism and spectatorship flourished. ‘London Society Underground’ was published alongside articles on visiting Brighton on Easter Sunday, the arrival of spring in London, the university boat race, and the latest fashions of flowers, all articles directly or indirectly concerned with leisure, spectating, and being spectated out and about in society.

Notably, ‘London Society Underground’ is the only article that *London Society* explicitly published on the Metropolitan railway, in stark contrast to other journals that regularly updated their readership on the progress of the Underground works. It is also an article I will keep referring to throughout this chapter as it is unusual in providing a lengthy, double-columned seven-page account of many of the different aspects of Underground travel. Although *London Society* did publish other pieces on the railways, they were generally light stories. For example, ‘Aunt Tabitha’s Railway Adventure’ (1864) which features an account of the narrator’s rather eccentric aunt who assaulted a potential attacker in her carriage.<sup>19</sup> Or ‘Perplexities of Bradshaw’ (1869) which reflects on the history of Bradshaw’s guide.<sup>20</sup> Whereas *The London Review* presented the mercenary aspects of the Underground from the perspective of economic inquiry, *London Society* does so as a travel and information guide for its middle and upper-class readership. The writer begins by reflecting on meeting a gentleman at dinner who decrees in no uncertain terms that we ‘live in an age of progress’.<sup>21</sup> He then compares the Metropolitan railway to anaesthetic, gas, and photography. For all the wonders of medical, scientific, and artistic advancement, for this gentleman it is the new Underground that truly embodies the future; ‘look at the Metropolitan Railway’, he demands,

---

<sup>19</sup> Anon., ‘Aunt Tabitha’s Railway Adventure’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, Nov 1864, 417-22.

<sup>20</sup> Anon., ‘Perplexities of Bradshaw’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, Jun 1869, 506-13.

<sup>21</sup> C.L.E., ‘London Society Underground’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, May 1863, 407-14 (p. 407).



describing it as ‘a wonderful and awe-inspiring fact that man in the nineteenth-century can be thus transported from – yes, from the Edgware Road to Farringdon Street in twelve minutes for sixpence’.<sup>22</sup> The conflation of time with capital here (‘twelve minutes for sixpence’) immediately highlights the role the Metropolitan railway plays in facilitating the purchasing of time and space itself. There is not the in-depth analysis of the economic structures or construction costs of the Underground here, but there is an explicit observation that the Metropolitan railway is a space inseparable from its functionality as a site of financial consumption.

The visible conflation of space and capital is also identified by Ana Parejo Vadillo. She writes in her work on urban aestheticism that the ‘introduction of urban transport brought about the radical concept of space as a commodity item, where passengers had to pay in order to occupy a seat’.<sup>23</sup> As I have seen in my analysis over the previous two chapters, this was true of the railways from the very beginning with the companies charging passengers to occupy a seat and turning space into a consumable commodity. Why then does Vadillo see this process as applying especially to urban transport? Firstly, it is a matter of visibility with the populace becoming more aware of the true nature of railway capitalism by the 1860s. Secondly, the arrival of the railways into and under the city had a direct impact on urban perception. Vadillo states that, because ‘the passenger paid for the length of his/her journey, this in effect meant that passengers paid to be transported from one point in the city to another. In this sense urban transport transformed the metropolis into a commodity’.<sup>24</sup> Alongside the changes in perception to the railway space, the arrival of the Underground signalled a marked change to the city by transforming urban space into capital. Whilst this had occurred in the provinces and across the nation from the early years of the railway, and

---

<sup>22</sup> C.L.E., ‘London Society Underground’, p. 407.

<sup>23</sup> Vadillo, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> Vadillo, p. 28.

was visible too in the lines of rail encircling London, it was the arrival of the Metropolitan railway that rendered this process widely visible within the city limits.

The visibility of the railway's consumption of time and space is emphasised further as the narrator of the *London Society* article enters the station and finds 'the traditional pigeon-holes, labelled respectively "1<sup>st</sup> class," and "2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class"' .<sup>25</sup> As soon as one steps inside the station, the familiar class system of Victorian life emerges with separate ticket windows available depending on one's fare. Even before one has entered the carriage, space is demarcated and classified. Lefebvre writes that, 'nothing and no one can avoid trial by space – an ordeal which is the modern world's answer to the judgement of God or the classical conception of fate'.<sup>26</sup> Space becomes the location in which people and things assume meaning and take their relative location in the structure of society. This is apparent in the ticket office of the Metropolitan railway. More than just in appearance, dress, mannerisms, and speech, class is written through one's geographical positioning within the ticket hall; class becomes spatial.

The writer of the *London Society* article decides that it 'must be a singular fate, I say, to stand empanelled in that ugly room, looking out upon mankind from a pigeon-hole'.<sup>27</sup> In the 1860s one can see the foundations of a society increasingly defined by impressions and isolation, the ticket seller locked away in a dark and unattractive room, staring out at mankind as they flit past the narrow window. This is what Gebauer et al were discussing above, recognising that the non-place reduces individuals to uniformed ticket sellers at the cost of their humanity, with interactions mediated through the pigeonhole of commerce as social formalities are replaced by an impressionistic glance culture. The ticket seller, emblematic of the fundamental role of the Metropolitan railway as a business generating capital, is placed at

---

<sup>25</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 408.

<sup>26</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 416.

<sup>27</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 408.

the heart of the spectacle and observed by the countless faces buying tickets. But he is also a spectator, constantly watching through the window as the customers line the ticket hall ready to buy their access to supermodernity. Space is never benign or emptied out of the power systems that govern and construct it. To travel by Underground requires one to pay one's fare and surrender to the rigid series of structures and by-laws whilst reducing people to their roles as buyers and sellers.<sup>28</sup>

The Metropolitan railway's inseparable links to consumption emerge in other ways too in this article. For instance, the writer talks to an omnibus driver who he recognises from his travels down Oxford Street who is quick to explain the devastation to retail that he imagines the underground railway will cause. Imagining a man waiting on Oxford Street for his bus, 'he's not in a hurry, the cove isn't, but he waits a bit and vawks [*sic*] on. Well, in course, by valking on he comes to look in at the shops'.<sup>29</sup> In the consumerist moment of the 1860s, for the individual awaiting his omnibus on Oxford Street, the temptation to browse the shop windows and eventually purchase a handkerchief is simply too great to resist. The brilliant displays and consumerist mecca of the West End during the decade of spectacle culture, combined with individuals waiting for buses, creates the perfect environment for observing and consuming commodities. The busman asks, 'can a cove act like that in this 'ere blessed tunnel?'.<sup>30</sup> Of course the answer is no, but the busman's anxieties are entirely unfounded, quite the reverse in fact.

The reality is an extremely strong association between the growth of the Underground and 1860s West End leisure and commerce. The writer of an 1863 article taken from *The*

---

<sup>28</sup> The role of the ticket hall as a place for facilitating the consumption of space did not always run smoothly. The author of an 1863 article published in the *Standard*, shortly after the Metropolitan railway first opened, highlights, 'It appears that at several, if not all the stations, only one man is appointed to give out the tickets for the three different classes'. As the writer continues to explain, the fast-track benefits of travelling in first class are entirely elided when one has to stand and wait in a hot and crowded ticket hall, with one man frantically providing tickets to the different classes simultaneously. (See: Anon., 'The Metropolitan Railway', *The Standard*, 12 Jan 1863, 6.)

<sup>29</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 414. 'Cove' is slang for a male customer.

<sup>30</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 414.

*London Review* writes that, the ‘great drawback [...] of the Metropolitan Line is, that it runs far away from the points to which Westenders are mainly bound’.<sup>31</sup> These desirable points specifically being ‘Regent’s-circus’, ‘Knightsbridge’, ‘Kensington-Gardens’, ‘Hyde-park’, ‘Piccadilly’, and ‘Leicester-square’.<sup>32</sup> What unites all these localities are their roles as sites of leisure or consumption as well as their financial wealth. These are the areas passengers wish to travel to, not the ‘cholera district’ of the slums.<sup>33</sup> As Brent Shannon argues, the ‘transformation in retailing and consumer practices during the half century between 1860 and 1914 were nothing less than a revolution’, picking out the ‘emergence of large-scale department stores in the 1860s and ‘70s’ for particular note.<sup>34</sup> In so doing, Shannon emphasises these two decades as the foundation of modern consumer culture. The increasing importance of high street shopping and the rise of the department store in the 1860s and 70s and the Underground railway share many traits in common. Both are spaces for consumption, for social mingling without co-existing, and both lack individuality as well as masking the forces of capitalism through transit-culture. The non-place moves the consumer onwards towards their destination (or their next purchase) at such rapidity that there is no time to stop and ponder the forces that produced the locality in the first place. All the non-place demands is that one buys access, whether through a train or plane ticket or through the consumption of goods in a shop.

George Dodd is another writer and journalist who is keenly aware of the links between West-End consumerism and the Underground. He wrote extensively on railways, steamships, and in 1862 a book titled *Where do we get it, and how is it made?* This was a text with a direct interest in the flow of capital and the production of commodities. Dodd wrote an

---

<sup>31</sup> Anon, ‘Railways and City Population’, *The London Review*, 21 Mar 1863, 299-300 (p. 299).

<sup>32</sup> Anon, ‘Railways and City Population’, p. 299.

<sup>33</sup> Anon, ‘Railways and City Population’, p. 299.

<sup>34</sup> Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain 1860-1914* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 54.

article in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1866 entitled ‘The Metropolis and the Railways’. *The Fortnightly Review* was a liberal magazine and still under the editorship of George Henry Lewes in March 1866. In a departure from other periodicals, it insisted its reviews be signed.<sup>35</sup> Like *London Society*, *The Fortnightly Review* had relatively little interest in the Metropolitan Railway, although it did publish a piece on French tunnel building by Ed Gould Buffum alongside Dodd’s article. This piece highlights the difficulty of constructing a tunnel through mountains, with the immense ‘subterranean caverns and yawning chasms, and abysses reaching down to Hades itself’ drawing obvious comparisons with the frequently hyperbolic language used to capture the engineering of the Underground railway.<sup>36</sup> Dodd’s article however does not focus on the engineering, but rather the social impact of the Metropolitan railway. He writes that:

The vendor of small wares decently (and most of them *do* behave decently on railroads, more so than the fast young men in first-class carriages) takes his place in a train, and deems it worth while to pay a trifle as a means of reaching his round of streets quickly; the lady takes the rail to go shopping with her daughter, and children to visit aunt and uncle a mile or two off; crinolined women, high and low, find more room for their expansive dresses in the railway carriages than in omnibuses; and in dirty weather there is an escape from the discomfort of standing in the mud, ‘waiting for a ‘bus.’ All other considerations give way to these. The darkness of the tunnels, the heat of the gas-lighted carriages in summer time, the sulphurous odour down in the stations, the fear of unknown and indefinite dangers – all give place to the great fact that the railway renders services which cannot be rendered by any other agency.<sup>37</sup>

Conditions on the Metropolitan railway during its early days could certainly be unpleasant, but the foul air, claustrophobic darkness, and heat all fade into insignificance when one reflects on the reasons people chose this transportation method above any other. Three out of four of the specific examples Dodd gives pertain to capitalism and 1860s consumer culture. For the street seller, it is worth paying to use the Underground for the advantages in speed,

---

<sup>35</sup> John Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 229.

<sup>36</sup> Ed Gould Buffum, ‘In the Mont Cenis Tunnel’, *The Fortnightly Review*, 15 Mar 1866, 338-49 (p. 339).

<sup>37</sup> George Dodd, ‘The Metropolis and the Railways’, *The Fortnightly Review*, 15 Mar 1866, 359-68 (p. 366). Italics in original.

allowing him to rapidly reach his sales site and continue the process of exchanging goods.

The mother and daughter are travelling by train to go shopping, whilst the ‘crinolined’ lady is driven by necessity of her in-vogue dress to seek a mode of transport suitably mud-free and spacious enough to accommodate her outfit. The Metropolitan railway is a network where sellers and buyers are brought together in space, but it is also a key driver of capital flow around the city as the century advances. Whether these are physical goods, as in the case of the street-seller and his products, service goods in the form of the tradesmen who flooded the line each morning and evening, or the passengers paying to visit their relatives.

### **The underground railway and domestic space**

The railway, which often passes behind the houses making up the town, catches provincials off guard in the privacy of their daily lives, behind the façade.

Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 80

In addition to its impact on the economic fabric of the city, the Metropolitan railway’s existence as a non-place had a profound impact on the domestic realm too. This is demonstrated by a *Punch* illustration from 1866:

## PUNCH'S ALMANACK FOR 1866.



THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAYS.

*Stoker.* "VERY SORRY TO DISTURB YER AT SUPPER, LADIES, BUT COULD YER OBLIGE ME WITH A SCUTTLE O' COALS FOR OUR ENGINE, AS WE'VE RUN SHORT OF 'EM THIS JOURNEY?"

Figure 3. Anon., 'The Underground Railways', *Punch*, 6 Jan 1866, n.p.

The illustration shows a family at dinner in a modest house. The floorboards are suddenly opened by an engine driver from the Underground who asks for coal to re-fuel his engine as he has run out in a tunnel. The image is farcical, but it does show the anxiety that the Metropolitan railway might unsettle the sanctity of the home by inserting its spatiality just a few feet below the domestic sphere, fragmenting the distinctions between public and private space. Whilst this is a comic piece highlighting irrational anxieties, the Underground had a more violent and destructive relationship with the domestic sphere too. This iconoclastic destruction can be seen vividly in the below photograph taken at Bayswater during the Metropolitan railway's expansion towards South Kensington in 1866, the same year as the *Punch* illustration above.



Figure 4. Photograph of Metropolitan railway expansion, taken from Francesca Gillett and Ella Wills, 'Fascinating black and white photos of Tube being built in 1863 released for London Underground's 155th birthday', *Evening Standard* (2018) < <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/fascinating-black-and-white-photos-of-tube-being-built-in-1863-released-for-london-underground-s-155th-birthday-a3736956.html>> [Accessed 10 February 2021]

In this photograph, the large block of housing is physically sliced in two as the Underground railway is constructed beneath it, with scaffolding supporting the remaining two sides of the building. This photograph demonstrates the produced nature of the railway space as a locality removed and apart from existing sites, replacing the pre-standing structures with a spatiality defined by its industrial uniformity.

Urban housing destruction by inner-city railways became a hot topic of contention across the 1860s. A major reason for this was the number of subterranean railways proposed by the middle of the decade in response to the successes of the Metropolitan railway. In 1864, the year after the line opened, 328 different schemes for inner-London railways were



presented before Parliament.<sup>38</sup> This led to a tangible anxiety that the railway companies would “‘cut and carve, and hack, and hew” the metropolis at their pleasure’, as one *London Review* writer phrased it.<sup>39</sup> As a result, a plethora of articles appeared around this time concerned with the perceived assault on London. For instance, the article below taken from the *Journal of the Society of Arts*. With members including Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, and Adam Smith, the society naturally leaned towards acknowledging and fighting social injustice and recognising issues of urban spaces.<sup>40</sup> The writer quotes a Parliamentary account of the impact on housing in 1865 in which:

His lordship stated that the houses for demolition of which notice had been given under the bills before Parliament in the present session amounted to 3,500, containing a population of 20,000 persons. Although a large number of these houses will not actually be destroyed [...] the numbers give some, though an imperfect, idea of the vast amount of inconvenience and distress such works must produce among the poor.<sup>41</sup>

This is a worst-case scenario. As a wider culture of city-remodelling was occurring at the time, not all the houses highlighted above needed to be destroyed by the expansion of the Underground. Nevertheless, it goes some way to showing the impact of urban railways on the fabric of the city. The houses, the rooted symbol of stasis, family life, security from the outside world, and living in community are consumed by the subterranean railway, demonstrating its dual function as a space that is both consumed by its travellers as well as consuming the city in return. A writer in *Chambers’s Journal*, a publication aimed at a largely working and middle-class readership, reflects this in 1868.<sup>42</sup> The writer says:

The gropings and cuttings of the Metropolitan railway [...] have necessitated the pulling down of vast numbers of dwelling-houses, the inhabitants of which have had to seek homes outside the City [...] there can be little doubt that this process will continue – making the City a concentrated place of business only.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Anon., ‘London Railways and London Streets’, *The London Review*, 23 Jan 1864, 80-82.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., ‘Parliament and the Metropolitan Railways’, *The London Review*, 13 Feb 1864, 161-62 (p. 161).

<sup>40</sup> Henry Trueman Wood, *A History of the Royal Society of Arts* (London: John Murray, 1913), p. 357.

<sup>41</sup> Anon., ‘Demolition by Railways &c.’, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 12 May 1865, 480.

<sup>42</sup> Brake and Demoor, p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., ‘Where do the Citizens Sleep?’, *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 11 Jul 1868, 439-41 (p. 439).

This writer captures the productive nature of railway construction, re-modelling the city by robbing it of its inhabitants, creating a metropolis solely designed for monetary exchange. Once again, the language of railway construction is inherently violent, exploitative, and capitalistic with the railway contractors groping the city and cutting the urban space, replacing the communities of houses with a city built only for the benefit and use of businesses. This is mirrored by returning to George Dodd's *Fortnightly Review* article too. In it, he writes of the 'invasion of the metropolis by an army of excavators and bricklayers' and 'the apparent abrogation of the comfortable old saying that "every man's house is his castle"''.<sup>44</sup> Even the London slums that are being demolished here, although they are far from the image of the domestic, idealised Victorian hearth, are still a locality of strongly felt community. As a site of rest and sanctuary from the world, they are a 'castle' of sorts. Yet the Metropolitan railway with its cold, commercial non-place undermines both literally and metaphorically these surface structures of homeostasis and community. It builds instead a network that captures the individual in a transit system of constant onwards movement.

Whilst the writers above express sadness and frustration at the housing being destroyed, other writers saw urban railway expansion as an opportunity for improving the lives of the inner-city poor and regenerating urban space. A writer in the politically neutral, middle to upper-class *Saturday Review* reflects that:

If next week, like Aladdin's palace, a whole network of cheap cottages were to be extemporised by the Metropolitan Railway, accompanied by a tariff of cheap fares, how many of the evicted of Cripplegate would occupy them? The fact is, the great social change which is coming over London connected with railways is a gradual one; and though it may produce temporary inconveniences, it will sooner or later change the tastes and habits of the people of London, and changing, will improve them. The evils will cure themselves. Ultimately, we believe, the artisan will find out what the professional man and shopkeeper have already found out [...] that it is cheaper as well as healthier to live out of London.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Dodd, 'Metropolis and Railways', p. 359.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., 'Railway Extension and the Poor', *Saturday Review*, 16 Mar 1861, 268-69 (p. 268).

This writer celebrates re-modelling the city because they see it as affording new opportunities for the urban diaspora. Far from being an act of iconoclastic destruction, this writer perceives the changing structure of the urban space to be a necessary and inevitable consequence of industrial progress. Whilst the tearing down of houses may be a ‘temporary’ inconvenience, it will bring social benefits with the displaced urban poor establishing a new life in the suburbs, enjoying the healthier air and cheaper prices that such relocation affords. In this, the writer anticipates the growth of Metroland, proving that many of the tropes of the twentieth-century railway were already established by the nineteenth.<sup>46</sup> Significant to both Metroland and the trend of urban displacement that the *Saturday Review* writer highlights, is the reliance on the Metropolitan railway for commuting. The railway destroys the houses of the inner-city residents, moves them to the suburbs, and then charges fares to re-access the environments they used to reside in. John Ruskin writing in the 1860s, labels these suburban railway districts as ‘tank temples for serpent worship’, the Satanic serpent being the railways.<sup>47</sup> Whilst Ruskin finds this process of ‘worshipping’ the forces of destruction problematic, comparing the rise of the suburbs to the temples built around the holy tanks of Indian temples, the *Saturday Review* writer does not have any objection to this urban displacement, seeing it instead as an opportunity for a better quality of life outside the city centre.

An article approving of the displacement of the poor by the forces of modernity is by no means typical of the journalism in *The Saturday Review*. This journal published frequently on the railways, both above and below ground, during the 1860s from a variety of perspectives. This was in large part the result of the *Review*’s editor John Douglas Cook, who oversaw the journal from its founding in 1855 to his death in 1868. During this period, it

---

<sup>46</sup> Metroland’s name was coined in 1915. See, Adam Forrest, ‘Metroland, 100 Years On: What’s Become of England’s Original Vision of Suburbia?’, *The Guardian* (2015) <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/10/metroland-100-years-england-original-vision-suburbia>> [Accessed 26 March 2021].

<sup>47</sup> John Ruskin, *The Cestus of Aglaia and The Queen of the Air with Other Papers and Lectures on Art and Literature: 1860-1870*, ed. by E.T Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1905), pp. 60-61.

would go onto become one of the most widely read and successful publications of its day. Unusually, it also enjoyed readership on both sides of the political spectrum. This was because Cook celebrated quality writing and penetrative analysis above all other concerns, leading to a broad church of a newspaper where opposing political and social opinions would often appear side-by-side.<sup>48</sup> For instance, the writer of an 1866 article calls for ‘some little resistance to the encroachments of the [railway] Companies before their power becomes too well consolidated to admit of attack’.<sup>49</sup> Far from seeing metropolitan destruction as a natural part of progress, this writer takes issue with these developments, seeing them as symptomatic of railway companies becoming far too powerful. In a similar way, the writer of another *Saturday Review* article entitled ‘Railways in London’ (1864) reflects with relief that, ‘the map of London is beginning to emerge once more from the net-work of railway projects in which it was encaged’.<sup>50</sup> For this writer, the proposed inner-urban railways were too great in scope, encaging the city within iron bars reminiscent of the encircling of tracks at Tenway in Trollope’s *The Prime Minister*.

As well as displacing the urban poor, the Metropolitan railway was also seen as having an impact on the less desirable factions of the city. For instance, a writer in *The London Journal* reflects that the process of building a:

Railway and a station, and doing away with blocks of houses for that object, has been a social benefit to the parish of Marylebone, in both a sanitary and moral point of view; and we believe that the Vestry of Marylebone are ready, if required, to tender a hearty vote of thanks to the company for the good they have done in effectually and for ever ridding that neighbourhood of a contaminating rookery of thieves, and every sort of improper characters.<sup>51</sup>

*The London Journal* was a penny publication aimed at a working-class audience and it specialised in sensationalistic tabloid stories. In the article above, the writer sides squarely

---

<sup>48</sup> H.S Jones, *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Don* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., ‘The Poor versus the Railways’, *The Saturday Review*, 24 Feb 1866, 228-29 (p. 228).

<sup>50</sup> Anon., ‘Railways in London’, *The Saturday Review*, 12 Mar 1864, 308-09 (p. 308).

<sup>51</sup> Anon., ‘The Metropolitan or Underground Railway’, *The London Journal*, 7 Jun 1862, 365.

with the railway contractors in their efforts to improve the sanitation and crime rates of London's morally dubious districts. The railway is celebrated as a powerful vehicle for social cleansing, displacing the undesirables who are seen as 'contaminating' the Marylebone environment. In this way, the vexed attitudes towards the Metropolitan railway within the periodical press are clearly visible. For some writers, it is associated with consumption and urban destruction. For others, it is seen as a way of positively re-modelling the urban centre, displacing the poor and criminal alike.

### **At home away from home**

People are always, and never, at home.  
 Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 87

After destroying the urban housing, the Metropolitan railway replaces it with a new and deceptive type of domestic space. This can be seen through the interior design of the carriages, especially in first-class, where the designers took their cues from the fabrics and patterns of the parlour. Returning to 'London Society Underground' from *London Society*, the speaker reflects that the comfort of the carriage with its luxuriously padded first-class seat, helped one to forget 'that you have twenty feet of earth above you'.<sup>52</sup> The interior of the railway carriage with its 'well-cushioned, comfortable seat' and 'good steady light from the gas-burner above', has all the creature comforts of any middle-class home.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the traveller is buried beneath the earth in a resolutely inhospitable locality. This was not just a trend of the Metropolitan railway, with the carriages of most railway lines taking their inspiration from existing domestic environments in an attempt to soothe and placate their travellers. Charlotte Mathieson comments on this, proposing that the upholstered carriage-space works to 'literally cushion the body by containing it within a safe, familiar

---

<sup>52</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 410.

<sup>53</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 410.

space that provides both comfort and the illusion of safety'.<sup>54</sup> The railway space is illusory in nature. It is a mirage designed to reproduce all the trappings of the domestic space to distract the travellers from what is a fundamentally alien environment. Whilst this was true of all Victorian railways, in the Underground the disparity between the well-lit padded carriage and the smoky dark tunnels buried beneath the ground was all the more striking.

As part of its attempt to create an artificial sense of domesticity, the Underground stations also took inspiration from pre-existing spaces. This can be seen in the engraving below taken from the *Penny Illustrated Paper* in 1863.

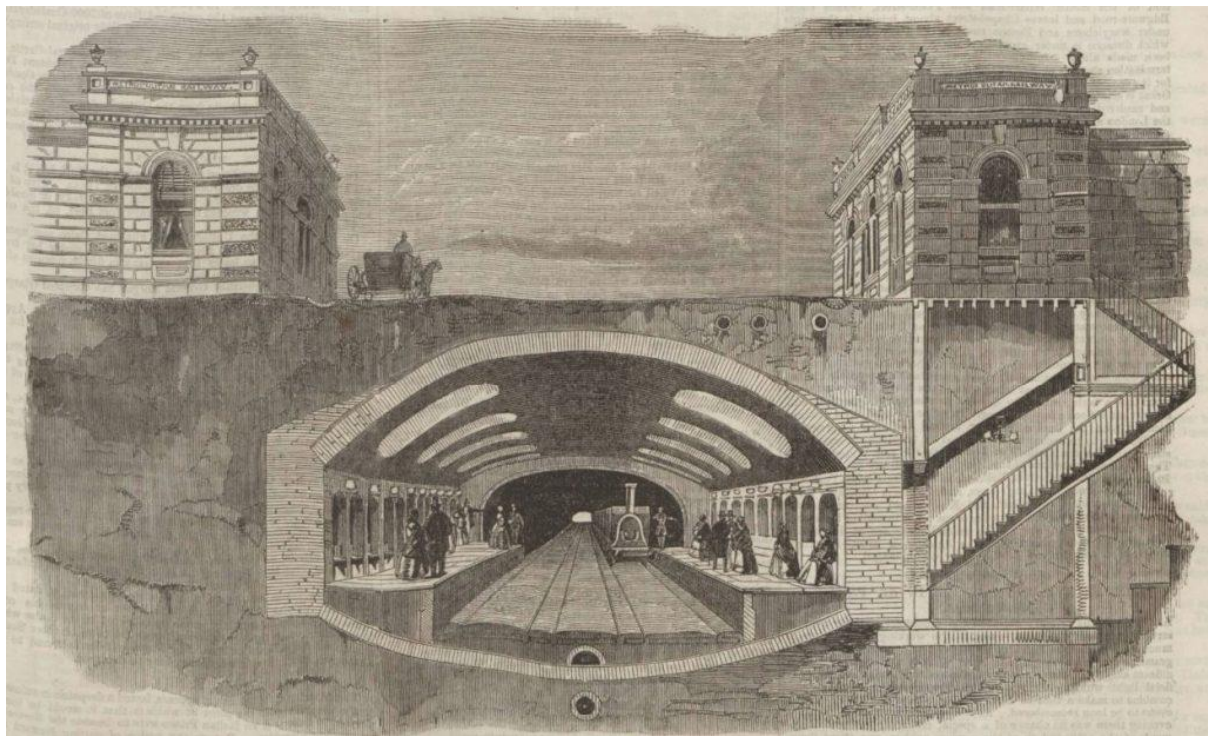


Figure 5. Anon., 'Baker Street Station', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 10 Jan 1863, 14

This illustration shows the spatial positioning of the new railway station beneath the existing structures of urban, surface-level life, with the horse-drawn cart symbolic of old methods of transportation passing overhead. I explore how this positioning beneath the city removes the non-place from pre-existing urban spaces in my a-historic localities section below. In this section, I want to focus on how, despite the novel placement of Baker Street station, this

---

<sup>54</sup> Mathieson, p. 81.

illustration emphasises its apparent comforts. It has the familiar architectural flourishes of arches and overhead windows, designed to lessen anxiety around travelling in this newly produced environment. This illustrator shows the station as empty, in contrast to the reality of Underground travel with its overcrowded platforms. Baker Street station is also very well-lit in this image, with light being a notable concern of writers during the early period of the Metropolitan's opening. The author of an 1863 article from *The Morning Post* also emphasises the well-lit nature of the stations. They reflect on being taken on an inspection of the line by its directors prior to its opening:

On arriving at each station the company alighted and inspected the arrangements – that for lighting especially calling for warm admiration – more especially at Baker-Street and Gower-Street, where, though the stations are under the roadway, there are a variety of shafts running in angles from the sides of the tunnel, which are coated with white tiles and covered with glass, through which the light is reflected, and has a very cheerful effect.<sup>55</sup>

Complete with 'cheerful' lighting, and luminous tiles to give the platforms both a domestic feel as well as allowing the natural diffusion of light, the stations are warm and familial for the travellers of this article. Indeed, 'warm', 'light', and 'cheerful' are the key words within this rather idealised extract and gesture towards the positive and homely feelings that the new subterranean stations fostered. However, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch has observed in *Disenchanted Night*, a work exploring the industrialisation of light in the nineteenth century, this process of designing artificial lighting is not necessarily a positive transformation. For Schivelbusch, the transition from candle or paraffin lighting to centralised gas lighting signals power moving to 'a distance beyond the control of the paterfamilias'.<sup>56</sup> Instead of taking ownership over one's own space, the industrialisation of light represents a surrendering of control to external forces. Even in the lighting of the stations and of the carriages, one can see further evidence of the lack of domesticity inside the non-place. No longer lit by natural

---

<sup>55</sup> Anon., 'Opening of the Metropolitan Railway', *The Morning Post*, 10 January 1863, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth-Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 28.

means or governed by individuals with their own lamps, light becomes another commodity controlled by centralised forces, even as it offers the illusion of comfort and warmth.

Whilst this *Morning Post* article is superficially positive, five days before it was published another article appeared in the same journal that was far less complementary in tone. The writer of this earlier piece identifies the engineering challenges of building the new railway, but they also comment on the fact that ‘sewers run above, below, and around the great tunnel’, associating the new railway with discharge and filth, rather than light and warmth.<sup>57</sup> In addition, they also reflect on the fact that passengers ‘would not, and could not, travel in a tunnel which was continually filled with the sulphurous smoke and steam from the engines which would run so frequently’.<sup>58</sup> Again, far from establishing the comforting elements of the space, this writer imagines the perils and pollution of the line. The fact that the Metropolitan railway directors took journalists down into the Underground to show them the line first-hand, is almost certainly a direct response to articles such as this which built and perpetuated the negative perceptions of the Underground prior to its opening. The railway directors even illuminated the tunnels during these early press trips, going some way to explain why the stations appear so well lit in these early illustrations and why the early travellers commented on the bright, cheery, and homely conditions. As soon as the line opened for regular passengers, the tunnel lights were extinguished to save costs. These tactics only further emphasise the illusionary nature of domestic comfort within the non-place of the Underground. The network not only tries to provide an artificial sense of cosiness through architecture and materials, but the railway directors even provide additional lighting during the trial runs to ensure positive reports in the press.

---

<sup>57</sup> Anon., ‘Completion of the Metropolitan Railway’, *The Morning Post*, 5 Jan 1863, 3.

<sup>58</sup> Anon., ‘Completion of the Metropolitan Railway’, p. 3.



## Un-historic localities

[Non-places] do not integrate with earlier spaces.

Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 63

Alongside their mercantile function, their unsettling of the home, and construction of an illusory kind of domesticity, another crucial element of Augé's theory of non-places emerges through the un-historic nature of the localities he describes. These spaces do not interweave old and new as modernity does. Instead, supermodernity 'makes the old (history) into a specific spectacle'.<sup>59</sup> This is shown in 'A Journey Underground', an 1862 article published by James Hain Friswell in the middle-class illustrated magazine *Once a Week*. Friswell was a notable essayist and published across the periodical press on a wide variety of subjects from barristers to communism to ghosts. Much like the *London Society* article on the opening of the Underground, Friswell's work is more indicative of the fascination and intrigue surrounding the Metropolitan railway than reflective of a general interest in railways on his part. This article is another journalistic response to the maiden journey for the press and shareholders on 30 August before the line opened to the public the following day. Friswell's article highlights the radical and unique nature of the newly produced Underground space, comparing it to intergalactic travel in terms of its novelty and marvel. He asks, had 'not old landmarks disappeared, and was not the very site of "King George's statue at King's Cross" tumbled up and down in railway barrows, and all for this gigantic undertaking?'.<sup>60</sup> One can see the historic existing in spectacle form clearly here in the symbol of the statue torn down by the forces of modernity. In this way, the lack of integration between past and present is notable. Far from amalgamating the historic (the statue and landmarks) with the new (the underground railway and stations), they are presented as irreconcilable with history destroyed

---

<sup>59</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> James H. Friswell, 'A Journey Underground', *Once a Week*, 20 September 1862, 361-63 (p. 362).

like the houses of the poor as King's Cross becomes known, not as the site of King George's statue, but as a site of railway interchange instead.

In a similar way, the author of an 1865 article from Dickens's journal *All The Year Round* writes:

It is lucky, in these days of continual change – of metropolitan railways plunging through streets and squares, and knocking whole neighbourhoods to pieces [...] that there are industrious compliers who preserve for us the records of the past. Old London will soon exist only in books, excepting for a few such buildings as Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall.<sup>61</sup>

*All The Year Round* published frequently on the railways and was often critical of their greedy practices and urban destruction. In this, the magazine's publications on the railways closely mirrors Dickens's own ambivalences towards the network, a topic that I charted in the previous chapter. Once again, one can see how the Metropolitan railway is perceived as impacting existing spaces and places, destroying housing and demolishing public squares. For this writer, the destruction of the urban makeup is part of a wider movement towards stripping London of its historic heart, reminiscent of the anxieties of Friswell's article as well as Augé's observation that in the non-place, there 'is no room for history'.<sup>62</sup> Historic London, and Westminster in particular, is made a spectacle with its unique status as the seat of governmental power and constitutional history marking it apart from the modern city. This writer displays a tangible anxiety that the London of the past will soon be lost entirely and will exist only in printed words and images. In this way, the historic is given a specific position in opposition to the non-place, with the railway turning history into a commodity to be viewed and consumed in the pages of books.

Beyond its destruction of historical sites, the very spatiality of the non-place exists as a locality removed from history. As David Ian Hanauer writes in a chapter on identity, 'a

---

<sup>61</sup> Anon., 'London in Books', *All The Year Round*, 14 October 1865, 270-76 (p. 271).

<sup>62</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 83.

supermodern non-place is divorced from the history and narrative within which it is physically situated'.<sup>63</sup> This is emphasised by the writer of an 1863 article from the *Radical Daily News*. This was another periodical with links to Dickens, being founded by him before he handed it over to John Forster less than a year later who ran it until 1870. This writer imagines opponents of the railway from previous decades and asks what they must 'think when they see man [...] circulating rapidly with bag and baggage in the bowels of the earth, whilst cab and omnibus are sauntering listlessly and lazily, and comparatively empty of occupants, right above him?'.<sup>64</sup> This writer suggests that the subterranean passengers are buried away in the 'bowels of the earth', removed from the people travelling above in a space that is isolated from the existing structures of surface life.

Despite its ambivalence towards the Metropolitan railway, this article joins many others in the 5 January 1863 issue of *The Daily News* pertaining to railways and steam travel. The newspaper even boasts its availability in 'the railway stations' across the UK supplied by W.H. Smith, placing it directly in the environment of exchange and commodification embodied by the railway network. The front cover is littered with articles and advertisements on railway stock prices, information on engineering programmes, and the latest developments of steam trains and steam ships. It even carries a small advertisement (included below) informing the reader of the opening of the Metropolitan railway in five days' time, adding to the sense of anticipation surrounding this newly produced space. Even as the press criticised

---

<sup>63</sup> David Ian Hanauer, 'Non-Place Identity: Britain's Response to Migration in the Age of Supermodernity', in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, ed. by Gerard Delanty, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 211.

<sup>64</sup> Anon., 'Opening of the Metropolitan Railway', *The Daily News*, 5 Jan 1863, 5.

railway practices, they were still complicit in promoting them.

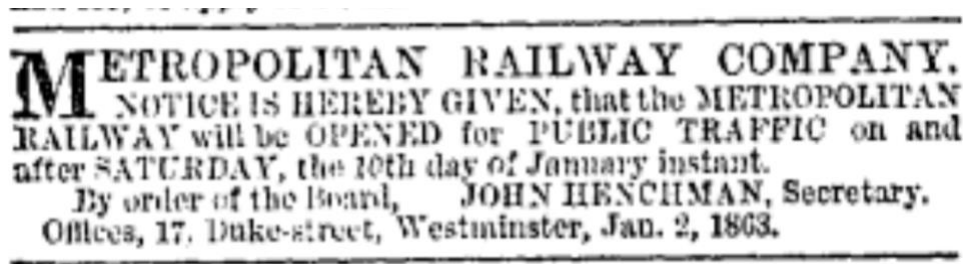


Figure 6. Anon., 'Metropolitan railway company', *The Daily News*, 5 Jan 1863, 1

The un-historic nature of the Underground can be witnessed in other ways, too. For instance, in an 1867 article from *The London Review*, a newspaper that, as I established, was often critical of the railways. This piece is no different with the article titled 'Underground Perils', suggestive immediately of the terrors and dangers of the subterranean space. The author considers how the traveller on his:

Very first step downwards [...] encounters an atmosphere of hot sulphurous vapour, which parches his tongue and lips, and impedes his breathing. This increases in intensity till he reaches the platform, by which time, though partially acclimatised, he experiences a sickening flavour of lucifer-matches in his mouth, and finds respiration a thing of some difficulty.<sup>65</sup>

This writer does not show the relationship between the Underground and existing history, nor its unnerving positioning removed from the city above. Instead, they foreground the novel and disturbing elements of the Underground space itself. These disquieting and noisome aspects are asserted from the traveller's very first step as he is hit by the noxious atmosphere produced by the steam-trains within the narrow tunnels. In this dark and 'sulphurous' environment breathing becomes difficult. The non-place of the Metropolitan railway is a space where even the most fundamental elements of human existence become challenging. This air even leaves a foul taste on one's lips akin to 'lucifer-matches'. Lucifer matches, as well as evoking hellish imagery, were also unpredictable during their early years and prone to

---

<sup>65</sup> Anon, 'Underground Perils', *The London Review*, 31 Aug 1867, 233-34 (p. 233).

explode violently. This invites comparisons with the unreliable locomotives and further parallels with the hostile and diabolical nature of the Underground, a space where taste and sensation are replaced by artificial commodities.

In using hellish imagery this writer is by no means unusual. I saw in the previous chapter how Dickens used infernal language to capture Jackson's initial impressions of Mugby Junction, an environment that was strange and novel to him upon his arrival. In a similar way, infernal semantics were frequently coined to capture the a-historic aspects of the Underground. The writer of the *London Society* article that I introduced earlier in this chapter describes the train as 'glaring out of the dark abyss behind with two great fiery eyes'.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, James Payn, the editor of *Chambers's Journal*, writes in 'Melibæus Underground' (1862), part of the 'Melibæus' series, that:

It was arranged that we should first run down to the station at Edgware Road and back again, to test the qualities of the dragon, and accordingly, he ceased his fizzing and fuming, restrained his feelings, condensed his steam, and pushed us smoothly backwards into the tunnel.<sup>67</sup>

The 'puffing' and snorting engine, the 'glaring' locomotive, the 'dark abyss', and the 'fiery eyes', the 'fizzing', 'fuming', and 'dragon' like appearance, all anthropomorphise the Metropolitan railway space into a demonic beast bearing down upon the platform dwellers from amongst the mist, highlighting the strange nature of the space being traversed. As David Welsh writes, the 'quotidian world of the underground with its cavernous stations, sulphurous atmosphere and raucous steam locomotives offered comparisons with infernal and Gothic landscapes'.<sup>68</sup> Welsh is again thinking of Gissing here and the influence of Dante on his depictions of the hellish underworld of the late Victorian railway. However, one can see similar tropes in the examples above with the space of the underground coded as a threatening and unnerving environment of quasi-supernatural terror. The invocation of

---

<sup>66</sup> C.L.E., 'London Society Underground', p. 410.

<sup>67</sup> James Payn, 'Melibæus Underground', *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Jan 1862, 26-29 (p. 27).

<sup>68</sup> Welsh, p. 3.

paranormal elements to capture the spatial quality of the underground railway forces one to confront its unprecedented spatial elements, with the narrator required to use mystical semantics to capture the preternatural nature of the underground environment. As the network is unable to assimilate with history, so too is it unable to integrate with the realist mode of description. Instead, the only spaces that bear comparison with the artificially produced Underground are the spaces of terror and wonder that defined the Gothic and supernatural imaginations.

### **Identity (de)struction**

The only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard, in the silent dialogue he holds with the landscape-text addressed to him along with others, are his own: the fact and voice of a solitude made all the more baffling by the fact that it echoes millions of others.

Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 83

Space and identity are richly interconnected terms, constructing and defining one another. As I saw in the previous chapter, the railway space is particularly important in not only forming the user's individuality but also revealing their relationship with the broader patterns of industrial modernity. In my discussion of *Mugby Junction* and *The Prime Minister*, I charted how the bodies of passengers and workers alike become mechanised inside the junction space, but what happens to identity inside the non-place? How does our geographically constructed sense of self become challenged within a space designed solely for conformity, 'circulation, consumption and communication'?<sup>69</sup> According to Augé, passengers experience 'a shared identity conferred on them by their common occupancy of the place'.<sup>70</sup> Passengers lose their independence inside the non-place as they are reduced to an unintelligible mass of travellers. Whilst they may be inhabiting space together, there is neither community nor

---

<sup>69</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. viii

<sup>70</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 54.

individuality here. Instead, as Sarah Sharma highlights, all that ‘the non-place asks of you is to plug in and pass through’.<sup>71</sup>

The breakdown of identity in the non-place can be seen in ‘London Society Underground’, the article from *London Society* I explored above. After describing the station, the writer heads to the platform and reflects on the ‘unmistakable smell [...] of railway steam’ and how ‘a dense fog filled the place when I was there, and as the people waiting for the trains were seen wandering up and down the platform, one might have imagined them ghosts of the great unwashed’.<sup>72</sup> Not only is the fog odorous but it obscures vision too, turning the platform dwellers into veiled figures of the surface world haunting the subterranean platforms. In this way, the users of the Underground are stripped of their identities in exactly the way Augé identified, emphasised through the writer’s description of his fellow passengers’ ghostly appearances. The fact that they are moving ‘up and down’ the platform invites comparisons with *Mugby Junction* and *The Prime Minister*, suggesting that the passengers have become mechanised by their contact with the machine space, their movements regulated and industrial.

Instead of forming relations with each other, the passengers instead enter a bond with the forces responsible for the non-place. As Augé writes, alone ‘but one of many, the user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the powers that govern it)’.<sup>73</sup> This can be seen in the illustration below, *The Workmen’s Train* (1872) by Gustave Doré.

---

<sup>71</sup> Sarah Sharma, ‘Baring Life and Lifestyle in the Non-Place’, *Cultural Studies*, 23 (2009), 129-48 (p. 131).

<sup>72</sup> C.L.E., ‘London Society Underground’, p. 409.

<sup>73</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 82.

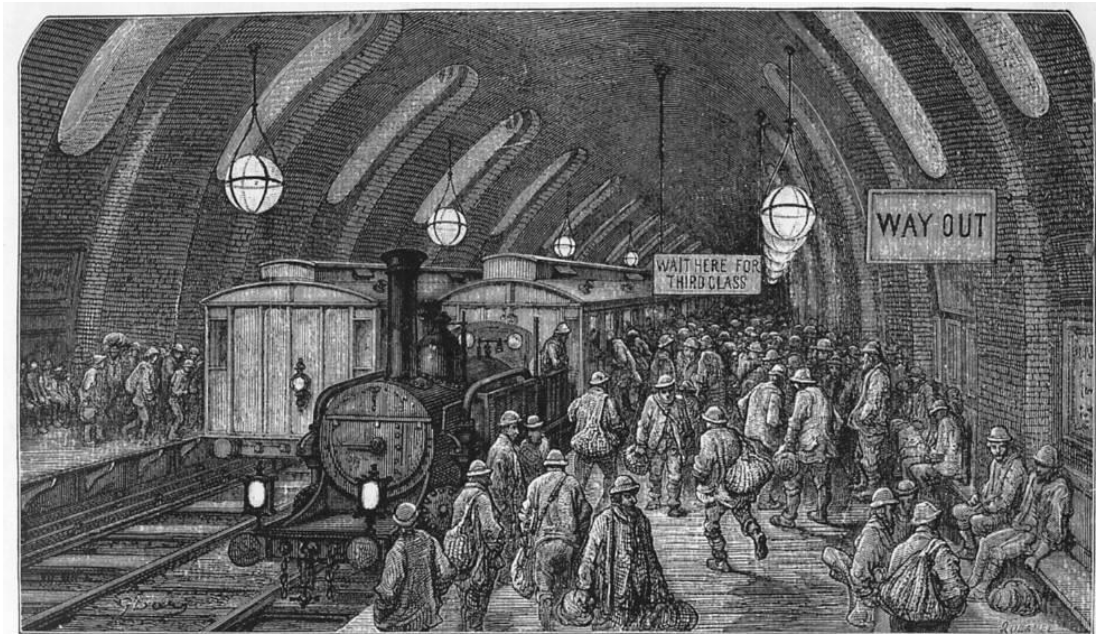


Figure 7. Gustave Doré, 'The Workmen's Train', *The Victorian Web* (2014)  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/dore/london/32.html> [Accessed 28 October 2020]

This illustration is taken from William Blanchard Jerrold's *London: A Pilgrimage* (1868-72), a collaborative project with Doré that took four years to finish and explored contemporary life in London. Jerrold wrote for *The Daily News*, *Illustrated London News*, and *The Athenæum*, before becoming the editor of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, a position he inherited from his father.<sup>74</sup> In this illustration, the signs on the platform advising of the 'way out' and telling passengers where to stand for third-class are clearly visible. The direction boards and signage might seem benign tools to help the passengers navigate the space. However, these are precisely the contractual relations that Augé was foregrounding. He says the proponents of these type of instructional signs:

Are not individuals but 'moral entities' or institutions [...] sometimes their presence is explicitly stated [...] sometimes it is only vaguely discernible behind the injunctions, advice, commentaries and 'messages' transmitted by the innumerable 'supports' (signboards, screens, posters) that form an integral part of the contemporary landscape.<sup>75</sup>

Signs are the visible signifiers of state power. They serve to regulate and control the passengers inside the ensemble, robbing them of their individual authority and identity. This

<sup>74</sup> Brake and Demoer, p. 318.

<sup>75</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 78.



is captured in a letter to the editor of *The Times* in 1878. The American writer comments, the ‘Underground railway, with its numerous stupid regulations and arbitrary rules, is a disgrace to civilised London’.<sup>76</sup> Arbitrary and ridiculous, this writer identifies the overabundance of rules governing the subterranean railway. Whilst he argues that it is a disgrace to the capital city, he forgets that the Underground railway was not produced in the image of ‘civilised London’. Instead, it was produced in the image of state power, perpetuating all the regulations of the modern system and forcing its users to obey the rules governing the space, even if that came at the cost of their own individuality.

As well as robbing its users of their identities and forcing them into contractual relations with the railway operators, the Underground also has a profound effect on its employees. The writer of an 1879 article from *The Examiner*, a newspaper that published frequently on railways, foregrounds how the non-place undermines its workers’ identities as rational, calm individuals. The writer of ‘Sauciness in the Sewer’, like so many others at the time, conflates the Underground with the sewerage system, highlighting their negative perceptions of the subterranean railway. The writer comments that many frequent travellers on the Metropolitan railway must ‘have noticed a growing disposition on the part of some of the understrappers connected with the line to be as uncivil as they can well be’.<sup>77</sup> The Underground workers are perceived as losing their commonplace civility and subservience, gaining a new identity as impolite and transgressive within the non-place. They are complicit in the ephemeral transit culture of the Underground and as a result, become abstract identity-less ‘understrappers’ whose function is purely to aid the non-place in the rapid transport of commodities (people) around the network.

---

<sup>76</sup> Anon., ‘The Underground Railway’, *The Times*, 15 Apr 1878, 7.

<sup>77</sup> Anon, ‘Sauciness in the Sewer’, *The Examiner*, 14 June 1879, 761-62 (p. 761).

As the article continues, *The Examiner*'s writer explicitly links these individuals' increasing hostility with the atmosphere in which they work:

Certainly, there are great allowances to be made for them; for, living from morning till night in an atmospheric combination of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal, it is not to be wondered that they should exhibit signs of occasional explosions, especially when aged ladies will not or cannot understand that *every* train is not for their own especial benefit, and that science has as yet been unable to accomplish the task of making the same carriage go two ways at the same time.<sup>78</sup>

For the workers, the sulphuric atmosphere and the perpetual night of the subterranean world are directly linked to their increased 'sauciness', emphasising the impact of spaces on human nature. The writer suggests that the Underground fragments the identities of its operators, replacing them with a character that mirrors the non-place. This is highlighted through their 'occasional explosions', which has direct echoes of the railway itself and the engines' propensities for boiler explosions, sub-textually comparing the workers' natures to the machines on which they operate. This invites further parallels with *Mugby Junction* and *The Prime Minister*, where the impact of the railway space on its operators was to mechanise them into its own image. The writer suggests that the aged ladies and their selfish use of the system is justification for the frustrations of the operators, however it is important to see things from their perspective. Surrendering one's individuality to become part of the simultaneously shared and isolated experience of the non-place must have been strange, disorienting, and deeply frustrating for a generation used to the more leisurely pace of previous transportation systems.

### **Spatial disorientation and geographic sameness**

There is nothing to be seen: once again, the spectacle is only an idea, only a word.  
 Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 84

Whereas the passenger on the mainline can see his or her train pulling into the station and can perceive the presence of the town even before the name sign is visible on the platform, on the

---

<sup>78</sup> Anon, 'Sauciness in the Sewer', p. 762. Italics in original.

Metropolitan railway station names are obscured with only the porter's call to identify one's location. In this way, place names on the Underground can only ever be abstract signifiers of an imagined locality in the city above. The call for Baker Street requires the traveller to imbue the place with meaning, to imagine their arrival into Baker Street and their relative geographical location beneath the capital. As Augé emphasises, specific place names in the non-place have no meaning without the active imagination of the traveller.<sup>79</sup> As a result, spatial confusion and geographic placelessness became pressing issues for many passengers, especially those inexperienced in Underground railway travel like the aged ladies highlighted above.

The short story 'Of a Respectable Couple Who Met with an Accident on the Underground Railway', displays the spatial disorientation of the non-place vividly. This is taken from *Tinsley's Magazine* in 1870. Aimed at a family audience, Edmund Downey explains that *Tinsley's* 'was not in the first rank of shilling magazines, nor did it pretend to be'.<sup>80</sup> Like some of the other periodicals I have considered in this chapter, its focus was instead squarely on entertainment and light literature with an element of melodrama too. The story considers the fictional Mr and Mrs Gandy and the latter's reluctance to travel by train, 'in the matter of railway-travelling, her indisposition to trust herself amounted to horror. Tunnels were things to fear; the screeching of steam-whistles was shocking to her tympanum as well as to her nerves'.<sup>81</sup> There is no sense of wonder or curiosity in the new spaces for Mrs Gandy. Instead, the screeching whistles and dark tunnels signify a threatening locality of horror and dread. This sense of terror in the face of Underground travel is only extended as she enters the subterranean world:

---

<sup>79</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>80</sup> Edmund Downey, *Twenty Years Ago: A book of Anecdote Illustrating Literary Life in London* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905), p. 242.

<sup>81</sup> Anon., 'Of a Respectable Couple Who Met with an Accident on the Underground Railway', *Tinsley's Magazine*, Jan 1870, 55-63 (p. 56).

Trains come in every two minutes, every one apparently independent of its predecessor, and going to a different destination. With that curious facility for vocal mystification which seems to be part of the idiosyncrasy of the railway porter specifically developed, no human ear can ever distinguish the names of the places to which the trains are going, as they are yelled shortly, or muttered out gruffly, by those whose business it is to guide the errant wayfarer to the carriage which should bear him to his destination.<sup>82</sup>

Although each of the Metropolitan railway's stations featured different designs, this rarely helped travellers, at least during the early stages of its opening, to find their place in the system. Instead, the traveller had to rely on the guard's call to identify his or her arrival at the appropriate station. When the call was drowned out by the noise of the trains or the guard had a faculty for 'vocal mystification', then the station's name became obscured. The very people responsible for aiding navigation through the network by adding distinctiveness to the impossible sameness of the non-place only emphasise further the Underground's spatial disorientation. The act of vocalising, albeit unclearly, the locality ties into another of Augé's concepts of non-places. Augé writes that announcements 'are addressed simultaneously and indiscriminately to each and any of us'.<sup>83</sup> The routine announcements of non-places not only imbue abstract spaces with a sense of meaning, but through their generality they further break down individual experience. They reduce people into a collective unit travelling through space together and given the same intelligence at the same time, bringing them together under a shared system of information and obedience. Anna Despotopoulou reads the *Tinsley's* article in terms of gender, writing that 'Mrs Gandy would have been spared such troubles if she had just assigned all these mystifying and confusing duties to her husband'.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that in the chauvinistic minds of periodical writers, women are especially prone to getting lost in the Underground. Perhaps unsurprising, considering the non-place is

---

<sup>82</sup> Anon., 'Of a Respectable Couple', p. 56.

<sup>83</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 81.

<sup>84</sup> Despotopoulou, p. 28.

diametrically opposed to the domestic space that was widely accepted as the woman's sphere in the mid-nineteenth century.

The position of women on the Metropolitan railway can be seen further in 'Mrs. Brown on the Underground Railway', another short story taken from an 1866 edition of the highly satirical working-class periodical *Fun*. This story further highlights the ability of the Underground to reduce physical places to nonconcrete place names. It is intriguing that it is primarily in comic material that the Underground's sense of spatial sameness is most clearly established. The scope for getting lost and wandering endlessly in a confusing system naturally lends itself to humorous periodical writing. Under the editorship of Tom Hood, *Fun* turned frequently to the railway system for humour, with one of the magazine's railway illustrations even displayed in a gallery at Cornhill, such was its popularity.<sup>85</sup> Mrs Brown was a regular and popular feature in the magazine, and in this story the titular matriarch wishes to travel to 'Marrybone for to see a party as had come home from Canady'.<sup>86</sup> As Mrs Brown travels by Underground, a fellow passenger strikes up a conversation with her:

'We gets a fine view of the country, mum, don't we?'

'Well,' I says, 'you may on your side, but I can't see nothing but darkness wisible, as the saying is.' Just then we came into the light, and I see he was a-jeerin' at me.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the lightness of the exchange, it raises an interesting question as to how one perceives the space one traverses. The Metropolitan railway broadly followed existing road infrastructure in the city, with the surface traffic often literally passing overhead. However, the experience of travelling through the city is different in almost every way. In the surface world one passes familiar streets, shops, and landmarks. Even in a city that one is not entirely familiar with one can, to a greater or lesser extent, locate one's place within it with the aid of only rudimentary navigational cues. Similarly, even though the experience of railway travel

---

<sup>85</sup> Anon., 'Mems of the Month', *Sharpe's London Magazine*, Aug 1865, 94-96 (p. 95).

<sup>86</sup> Anon., 'Mrs. Brown on the Underground Railway', *Fun*, 12 May 1866, 87.

<sup>87</sup> Anon., 'Mrs Brown', p. 87.

at surface level provides a rapidly accelerated view from the window, one can still broadly locate one's place in the network by the changing scenery. In the Underground, sight plays no role in perceiving one's place in the fabric of the urban. This is shown in another article from *Fun*, also from 1866, which features an illustration of the 'view' from the Metropolitan train window.

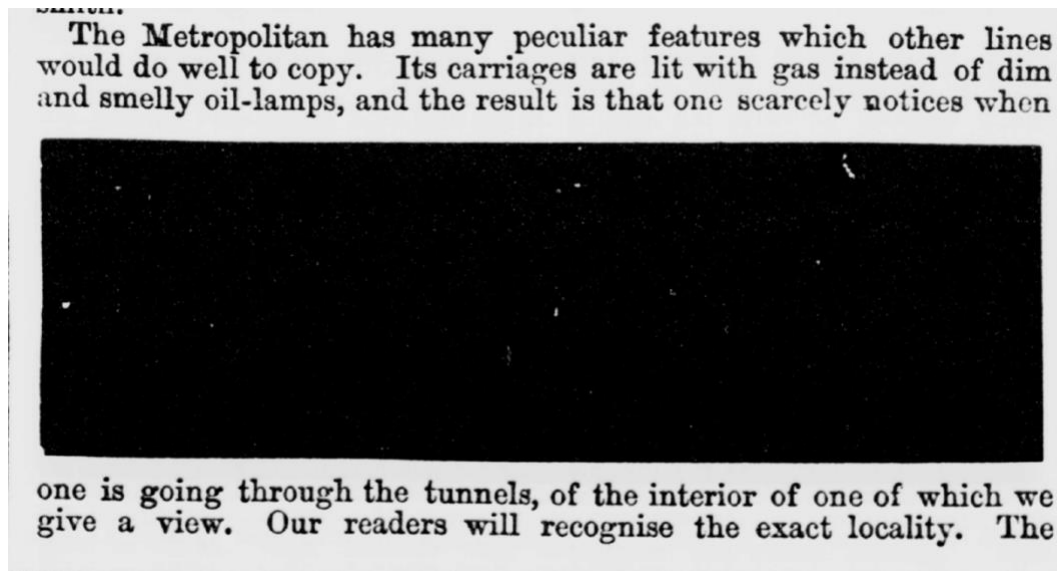


Figure 8. Anon., 'The Guide to the Metropolitan Railway', *Fun*, 15 Sep 1866, 13

This writer nods towards the spatial disorientation present in the non-place of the Underground by suggesting that the reader will recognise the 'exact locality' that this black image is meant to represent. Of course, far from providing any sort of identification, the dark tunnel system instead isolates the individual further within the consumer culture that the non-place signifies. As Despotopoulou argues, 'we see the beginnings of this fissure in communication traditions, as passengers struggle to reconcile their own customs of sociability with new institutional hierarchies of interaction imposed by anonymous authorities'.<sup>88</sup> The railway space, and the non-place of the Underground in particular, sever traditional modes of communication, with institutionally produced systems of conversation

---

<sup>88</sup> Despotopoulou, p. 15.

and announcements taking their place. It is this abstraction of space and increased control over all aspects of the urban fabric (lighting, communication, housing) that made travel by Underground such an economically, culturally, individually, and geographically disorienting experience within so many of the accounts that I have explored in this chapter.

All these articles and writers demonstrate the overwhelming sense that the Metropolitan railway was a space unlike any other. The Underground of the 1860s attracted curiosity, excitement, fear, confusion, and frustration in nearly equal quantities. To capture the novelty of the subterranean railway, writers in the periodicals of the 1860s and 70s present the network in a way that anticipates Augé's concept of the non-place. It is a space built purely for the exchange of goods and finances, it destroys homes and replaces them with an artificial type of domesticity, it is incapable of integrating with existing spaces and histories, it undermines and re-shapes identities, and replaces geographical belonging with oblique localities. The Underground railway of the 1860s signals the birth of supermodernity and a new type of produced space, one that echoes many of the tropes of the wider machine ensemble whilst also extending and strengthening them by bringing them to the very heart of the modern industrial capital. These attributes have traditionally been seen as the reserve of the late nineteenth-century Tube and subsequent Modernism. However, as I have set out here, these spatial elements of confusion, fragmentation, abstraction, and isolation were already recognised as fundamental aspects of the Metropolitan railway experience in the years following its opening. To locate these accounts during the 1860s and 70s one just has to turn away from novels and read the periodicals instead.

## Chapter 4 - Life on the Line: Reclaiming the Railway Space in Alexander Anderson's *Songs of the Rail* (1878)

### Introduction

In this chapter, I move out from the arrival of the railway space, station space, and the non-place of the Underground, to the space of the railway tracks and the workers located on them. It is also in this chapter where the literary responses I chart begin to shift from foregrounding the production and solidification of the railway space, towards seeking renegotiation instead. I explore how Alexander Anderson's 1878 poetry collection *Songs of the Rail* is a heavily politicised work. Although Anderson consistently identifies the network as a product of capitalism and commerce and recognises the natural world as a resource to be used by mankind, this is unproblematised. Instead, the railway space signals the apex of what humanity can produce. To this end, he encourages a renegotiation, rather than rejection, of the terms of spatial production, moving power away from the operating companies and back into the hands of the workers by foregrounding front and centre their role in producing and operating the machine ensemble.

In Chapter One, I charted how Eliot and Gaskell tread a middle path to progress, between identifying the railway space as a necessary vehicle of change whilst still expressing sadness towards the people and customs left behind. There is little sense of such nostalgia in *Songs of the Rail*. Anderson is clear that society is defined by 'Farther progress, higher culture, and the touch of purer thought'.<sup>1</sup> This is not a collection that looks backwards other than to prove just how far society has progressed. As part of the unbroken chain of progress between past and future that Anderson asserts, he recognises that the labourers' work endures through the spaces they have built. Anderson also draws parallels between the railway

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Anderson, 'In the Vanguard', in *Songs of the Rail*, ed. by Alexander Anderson (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co, 1881), l. 14.



workers and poetry, suggesting that both can transcend death through the immortality of their work, whether that work is verse or viaduct.

In what follows, I explore the publication history and reception of *Songs of the Rail* alongside the preface where Anderson sets out his ambitions with the collection. I then analyse ‘To My Readers’, ‘A Song of Labour’, ‘The Spirit of the Times’, and ‘Finis’, four poems that explicitly frame the worker at the heart of the industrial revolution. By doing so, these poems seek an alternative vision of the machine ensemble; a vision that always looks to the future and celebrates the role of the worker in a narrative that is always moving upwards. Next, I explore Anderson’s invocations of Classical mythology in ‘A Song for My Fellows’, ‘The Gods and the Wind’, and ‘On The Engine Again’. I approach these poems as case studies for mapping the Classical imagery that appears throughout the collection. By referencing the Classics, Anderson further elevates his colleagues by comparing their work to the gods of antiquity whilst also uplifting his collection more broadly. I then consider ‘The Cuckoo’, ‘The Dead Lark’, and ‘The Violet’, three poems that are unusual in their focus on nature. However, nature in these poems functions as a mirror to reflect human behaviour back to the speaker. Anderson uses the dead lark and the violet not for their own sake, but as metaphors for the oversight of the workers that he aims to redress in the collection. Finally, I turn to Anderson’s poems of railway accidents, focusing on ‘Behind Time’, ‘Rid of His Engine’, and ‘Blood on the Wheel’. Whilst the tone of these poems is considerably bleaker than the others in the collection, Anderson’s perspective is centred around the workers on the line. He shows the dangers they encounter inside the machine ensemble and their fearless dispositions in facing them.

## A thousand paths to progress: publication, preface, purpose



Figure 9. 'Alexander Anderson' in *Songs of the Rail*, ed. by Alexander Anderson (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co, 1881), p. 1

This photograph of Alexander Anderson is embedded at the beginning of the first edition of *Songs of the Rail*, before even the frontispiece, table of contents, dedication, or introduction. It ensures that the first element that the reader encounters is a picture of a man proud of the tools of his trade and embracing his role as a railway worker inside the ensemble. Anderson first garnered attention by publishing in *The People's Friend* of Dundee, initially writing 'nursery poems' that suited the family-oriented nature of the journal.<sup>2</sup> It is significant that it

---

<sup>2</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 84.

was Dundee where Anderson found a voice, as it was a highly poetic city in the mid to late-nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> He published under the pseudonym ‘Surfaceman’, a moniker he kept throughout his career in a clear signal that his identities as poet and as railway worker were inseparable, as demonstrated by the inclusion of the photograph above.<sup>4</sup> Following Anderson’s publication in the local newspapers, *A Song of Labour* was his first full collection published in 1873 at the Advertiser Office in Dundee. The collection built on themes of labour, manual work, and industrialisation, themes that had already become cornerstones of Anderson’s oeuvre, as well as featuring many of the poems that would be revived in his later and exclusively railway-focused *Songs of the Rail*.

After *The Two Angels and Other Poems* in 1875, *Songs of the Rail* was Anderson’s third published collection, appearing in 1878. Both later collections were published by Simpkin, Marshall and Co in London and John Menzies in Edinburgh. *Songs of the Rail* was well-received, going into a second edition the same year and entering three editions by 1881. Working-class poems of labour were popular in Scotland throughout the nineteenth century and although Anderson was not the only railway poet in Scotland at this time, he was the most famous with his work still anthologised in collections of Scottish verse. Kirstie Blair writes in her ground-breaking study into lesser-known working-class Scottish poets that:

Britain had a very substantial number of poetry-writing railway workers, in all the different grades and types of the profession. In Scotland, however, by far the most famous was Alexander Anderson, or ‘Surfaceman’, author of *Songs of the Rail* (1878). Anderson [...] was a friend of Murdochs’, and of many other contributors to the ‘songs of labour’ subgenre popular in the Scottish press.<sup>5</sup>

Blair’s monograph proves an invaluable resource in helping to read Anderson within his Scottish literary context and I reference it throughout this chapter. As Blair foregrounds,

---

<sup>3</sup> Kirstie Blair, ‘A Very Poetical Town: Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee’, *Victorian Poetry*, 51 (2014), 89-109.

<sup>4</sup> A surfaceman was the Scottish term for a platelayer on the railway, the person responsible for maintaining the tracks.

<sup>5</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 168.

working-class engine poets were common in Scotland, with many publishing accounts of their labours in the regional periodicals to appeal to their local working-class readership. Indeed, Anderson dedicates his collection to ‘My fellow-workers on the railway’. Through this, he emphasises that this is a collection written by a man on the inside of the network for those workers whose lives and careers have often been overlooked. As he writes in his preface to the first edition:

I send out this volume, like former ones, in the hope that it may interest my fellow-workers on the railway, and heighten to some degree their pride in the service, however humble may be their position. I trust that its perusal may lead the engine-driver, among others, to look upon his ‘iron-horse’ as the embodiment of a force as noble as gigantic – a force which has opened up for commerce and industry a thousand paths that otherwise would have remained undiscovered: a power destined, beyond doubt, to be one of the civilisers of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Anderson’s prefatory note establishes his objectives with *Songs of the Rail*. He seeks to elevate the railway network and the lives of those who work within it by recognising the ‘iron-horse’ as a fundamental part of the wonderful Victorian age. Anderson also places the railway space in the history of human development as a ‘force’ that has civilised the modern world. He equates the railway explicitly with ‘commerce and industry’, seeing it as a direct product of capitalism. This is unproblematised for Anderson, as he sees commerce and consumption as an intrinsic part of the ‘thousand paths’ of progress and therefore something to be celebrated.

Anderson directly addresses the workers, but the question remains as to whether the collection is solely for the benefit of his fellow labourers, or whether it is also aimed at a wider readership, with the poems published to inform the general public of life on the tracks. I propose that there is a dual vision operating within *Songs of the Rail* with Anderson aiming his verse towards his fellow workers and the wider public simultaneously. This is emphasised through his direct address to some of the recent critics of his work who found his poetry

---

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, ‘Prefatory Note’, pp. 5-6.

exaggerated. He writes, in ‘reply to these criticisms, I beg to remark that nearly all my railway poems are founded upon facts’.<sup>7</sup> This address is aimed, not at his working-class colleagues, but at readers outside of the network who may be unfamiliar with the realities of industrial life. This may also explain why he is comparatively more famous than his contemporaries who, as Blair suggests, ‘primarily set out to represent the experience of industrial labour and landscapes to their own working communities’.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, by aiming his verse at those inside and beyond the machine ensemble simultaneously, it ensures a wider readership for the collection and furthers Anderson’s attempts to change people’s perceptions of the railway space by celebrating the work of his peers.

Further evidence of Anderson’s ambitions in targeting a broader readership can be seen through the composition of his railway verse in English, rather than the Scots of his earlier nursery poems. He also published individual poems in the London periodicals *Chambers’s Journal*, *Good Words*, *Cassell’s Miscellany*, and *The Quiver* amongst others.<sup>9</sup> In 1879, a selection of Anderson’s poems were published specifically for the English market by Macmillan and Co under the title *Ballads and Sonnets*. This collection was comprised of a mixture of poems from *Songs of the Rail*, as well as some of his earlier work too. The fact that the anthology was re-named suggests that it was framed in general terminology for an English readership unused to the working-class industrialised verse that was common in Scotland. Despite his attempts at exposing a wider audience to his working-class community, *Ballads and Sonnets* received mixed reviews in the English press. A writer in *The Athenæum* comments that the ‘originality of Alexander Anderson really lies in his verses about the railway and the trains that thunder along the modern iron high roads. In his case familiarity,

---

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, ‘Prefatory Note’, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Brown, ‘Biographical Sketch’, in *Later Poems of Alexander Anderson*, “Surface-Man”, ed. by Alexander Brown (Glasgow: Frasher, Asher & Co, 1913), p. xxii.

so far from breeding contempt, has inspired awe and admiration'.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, a writer in *The Westminster Review* wrote that all 'is from the outside. Whether he is describing a steam-engine or a flower, he paints only the exterior'.<sup>11</sup> *Ballads and Sonnets* did not get a second edition in England, suggesting that despite his celebrity and publishing successes in Scotland, England's readers were not ready for a poetry collection centred so strongly around industrial life in Dumfriesshire, even as Anderson tried to dilute his industrial collection through an alternate title and broader cross section of poems.

### **A link in the chain of advancement**

After the introduction and dedication, the first poem in *Songs of the Rail* is 'To My Readers'. This poem builds on the themes of the introduction, and further establishes Anderson's aims with the collection. The poem begins explicitly with a worker on the railway tracks:

A worker on the rail, where, day by day,  
The engine storms along,  
And sends forth, as he thunders on his way,  
Wild strains of eagle song.<sup>12</sup>

By commencing with a 'worker on the rail' standing inside the railway space and next to the thundering locomotives, Anderson emphasises the direct contact between man and machine that will underpin the project. He also highlights the regulation at the heart of the railway space through the 'day by day' as the train repeatedly passes the same place. In a similar way, the workers carry out the same work repetitively. This invites implicit comparisons between the locomotive and the labourers by suggesting that both operate within a system defined by linearity and regularity. In this way, Anderson furthers the mechanisation of the workers that I saw in the previous chapter, as well as Dickens's and Trollope's vision of the railway personnel in Chapter Two.

---

<sup>10</sup> Anon., 'Book Review', *The Athenæum*, 16 Aug 1879, 204-05 (p. 205).

<sup>11</sup> Anon., 'Contemporary Literature', *The Westminster Review*, July and October 1879 (London: Trübner & co, 1879), p. 268.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, 'To My Readers', ll. 1-4.

As well as the ‘wild strains of eagle song’ that define the engine, the train is also possessed of ‘fire-fed sinews’ and ‘wild vigour’.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Anderson emphasises the muscular power of the engine whilst giving it an inherently animate quality. Tamara Ketabgian writes that:

Victorian machines were not simply soulless, lifeless, predictable, and unidimensional; not simply opposed to organic feeling and vitality; and not simply reductive material objects – if objects are ever so. They lead a rich figurative life, yielding a broad literary array of habits, feelings, communities, and subjectivities.<sup>14</sup>

Trains are not passive objects. Instead, they are possessed of a variety of characteristics and sounds that would be intimately familiar to anyone who spent their life working alongside them. To capture the animacy of the engines, Anderson draws comparisons with a variety of creatures beginning with the ‘wild strains’ comparable to the shrieks of eagles, the ‘fire-fed sinews’ which have an infernal quality, whilst the train’s ‘vigour’ animates it in distinctly human terms. Hellish, animalistic, and human whilst still a machine, Anderson employs an opposing and contradictory linguistic framework to represent the competing and overwhelming energies of the engine, again reminiscent of Dickens’s portrayal of *Mugby* and many of the periodical writers’ vision of the Underground.

At the same time as establishing the raw power of the engine, Anderson is also clear that the machine is subservient to the humans operating it, highlighting the strength of those who can control such a powerful beast. He writes of ‘the great energies that kneel like slaves’.<sup>15</sup> Bound to its track to serve its users, Anderson presents the machine ensemble as a space produced for the benefit of humanity for whatever and wherever ‘men have need’ of it.<sup>16</sup> Power for Anderson operates at the nexus of the machine and the worker, with the two sharing a bi-directional relationship as each is reliant on the other. This works to further

---

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, ‘To My Readers’, ll. 11-13.

<sup>14</sup> Tamara Ketabgian, *The Lives of Machines: The Industrial Imaginary in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, ‘To my Readers’, l. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, ‘To my Readers’, l. 72.

elevate the workers, suggesting their power in taming a machine that is defined by such violence and aggression. This is emphasised further as Anderson shows the role of the workers in producing the railway space, as well as operating it. He writes:

And swift as thoughts fling arches over space  
In some worn giant's dream,  
He rushes, crown'd with flame, upon his race,  
The god of fire and steam!<sup>17</sup>

The train is not only reliant on mankind for its continued operation, but for the production of the tracks and viaducts it needs to operate in the first place. The railway infrastructure of 'arches' are produced directly by the thoughts of the engineers as Anderson shows the breakdown of the boundaries between man and space that occur inside the machine ensemble. Like Manning's father in *Cousin Phillis* 'working out his own thoughts into steel and iron' or Jackson in *Mugby Junction* who merged with the space surrounding him, the railway is seen as a direct product of the workers' minds as their thoughts become the arches conquering space. By describing the engine as a 'god of fire and steam', Anderson further emphasises the power and might of the locomotive as a divine entity brought to rule by the men inside the network. Anderson reflects how, 'Dreaming I hear in all the tramp of feet | The steady march of mind'.<sup>18</sup> As his speaker stands in the city and listens to the footsteps surrounding him, he hears the rhythms of change and feels the 'march of mind' echoed in those around him. The railway space and its workers are situated at the frontier of progress as Anderson captures the excitement of living through a period of such unprecedented change. In so doing, he moves power away from the forces of production and back into the hands of the workers and engineers responsible the railway space's construction.

The poem ends in much the same way that it begins, with the speaker stating:

What marvel, then, that seeing, day by day,  
The engine rush along,

---

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, 'To my Readers', ll. 37-40.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, 'To my Readers', ll. 51-52.



That I send you, from out the ‘four-feet way,’  
This book of railway song.<sup>19</sup>

In the final stanza, Anderson again emphasises the ‘day by day’ operations of the machine, returning to the linearity at the heart of the railway space. By using reverberation between the first and final stanzas, Anderson traps his poem and reader alike within a repetitive framework emblematic of the linear rhythms governing the railway. This verse also establishes the direct relationship between poetry and the railway that will be reiterated as the collection continues. Blair captures this when she observes that Aitken, another Victorian Scottish railway poet, and Anderson both ‘seek to imagine what it is like to *work* to the beat of unstoppable machines, and repeatedly emphasise that their verse is inspired by direct contact’.<sup>20</sup> This is apparent as Anderson frames *Songs of the Rail* as actually produced by the railway. Out from the ‘four-feet way’ came this ‘book of railway song’, he writes. The boundaries between the railway tracks and Anderson’s poetry fragment, with the collection framed as a direct product of the machine ensemble; itself a product of the labourers constructing and operating it. Therefore, in capturing the lives and energies of the engines, Anderson captures the lives and energies of the workers and operators too.

In ‘A Song of Labour’, the second poem in the collection, Anderson builds on many of the themes he established in ‘To My Readers’. The poem begins with a dedication to ‘my fellow-workers with pick and shovel everywhere’, framing this as a poem for and about Anderson’s colleagues in keeping with the broader aims of the collection.<sup>21</sup> After this, he includes an epigraph from Thomas Carlyle, ‘Let each man honour his workmanship – his can-do’.<sup>22</sup> Anderson’s engagement with Carlyle is a topic I explore later in my discussion of Anderson’s ‘The Spirit of the Times’. For now, it is sufficient to acknowledge that Carlyle’s

---

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, ‘To my Readers’, ll. 73-76.

<sup>20</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 171. Italics in original.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, p. 13.

quotation captures the sense of pride in railway work that underpins Anderson's project. He encourages his colleagues to recognise the elevating nature of their labour and to embrace their 'can do' identities as the backbone of the machine ensemble. This is reflected within the first two lines of the poem itself. Anderson writes, 'Let us sing, my toiling Brothers, with our rough, rude voice a song | That shall live behind, nor do us in the after ages wrong'.<sup>23</sup> Whilst their song may be 'rough' and 'rude', Anderson asserts the edification of the workers who add their voices to its chorus. Even after death, it will function as an epitaph to those who dedicated their lives to constructing and operating the railway network.

As the stanza continues, Anderson moves from elevating the workers' labours, to asserting the equality that he sees existing within humanity:

I have never heard that Nature changed the colour of the heart –  
For the God above hath made us one in flesh and blood with kings,  
But the lower use is ours, and all the force of rougher things.<sup>24</sup>

The workers may share blood and body with kings, but Anderson also stresses the different nature of their labours with the railway workers defined by their 'rougher' and 'lower' enterprises. Lower in social and economic terms, this does not mean lower in terms of history as Anderson is at pains to accentuate. Instead, the labours of the railway workers are as fundamental 'in the arch of life' as the 'keystone'.<sup>25</sup> Through this image, Anderson merges the workers with the railway infrastructure, suggesting that they are not only industrialised by the railway but part of it. Whilst the workers may remain undistinguishable within the brickwork of modernity, Anderson calls to re-evaluate their purpose and draw attention to the fact that the world could not progress without the fundamental role played by each labourer. In this, the poem reflects Gaskell's engagement with Samuel Smiles, a topic I explored in

---

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, 'A Song of Labour', ll. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, 'A Song of Labour', ll. 6-8.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, 'A Song of Labour', l. 12.

Chapter One, and how the workers form part of an unbroken chain of progress, leaving behind their work for the subsequent generations to develop and expand.

When it comes to questions of progress and spatial production, Henri Lefebvre writes that ‘what they took for progress was merely growth in the productive forces’.<sup>26</sup> Progress, the zeitgeist of nineteenth-century economic, industrial, and scientific development, was simply the solidification of modern capitalism. In this way, the labourers are serving an idealised vision of improvement that was merely a guise for further economic expansion. Anderson would likely agree with this, as he never loses sight of the railway space’s mercenary aspects. However, he would not find it troubling in the way Lefebvre does. For instance, Anderson labels the railway as the ‘Jove of Commerce’.<sup>27</sup> In so doing, he presents it as a god of consumption. This lacks the negative connotations of commerce and capitalism that defined the vision of many of his contemporaries and their representations of the railway. Instead, Anderson once again turns to the workers to offer a reappraisal of the modern economic system, placing them at the heart of the capitalist endeavour. He emphasises how his colleagues are ‘Welding city unto city’, as they build an interconnected network spanning the nation.<sup>28</sup> Whilst the meta-drivers of commerce and industry create the economic conditions that allow the railway to thrive, Anderson is clear that it is the workers who are ultimately producing the iron pathway. ‘Let us shape the iron pathway’, he writes, with a stress on ‘us’.<sup>29</sup> As the railway is produced by the workers, he writes that it is ‘Worthy of our love and wonder, and the throbbing out of praise’.<sup>30</sup> The network is not just an impersonal and de-individualising space but is an environment built in the image of the workers who constructed it.

---

<sup>26</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 82.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, l. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, l. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, l. 34.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, l. 30.

Anderson is aware that not everyone will share his optimistic outlook on the machine ensemble. He quotes one fellow worker who says, ““Progress comes with tardy footsteps, and can do the grave no good””.<sup>31</sup> We may strive towards producing a world that is better than the one that preceded it, but that is meaningless to the worker who will not live to see the results of their labour. Anderson does not share this view. Labelling such individuals as cynical, he is quick to provide the rebuttal:

Deeming I am all but godlike in the holding of a link.  
And this link for ever widens, as their restless spirits teach,  
Till it forms a chain of union ringing from the heart of each;  
Break it and a gap arises never seen until it broke<sup>32</sup>

The labourer may play a comparatively small part in modernity, but in holding a single link in the chain of progress one is ‘godlike’, assured eternal life and the power of a deity. In this way, the railway space endures as a memorial to the people who created it. Even if one dies without seeing one’s work finished, the network will continue as an eternal tribute to individual labour. For Anderson, progress is inherently optimistic. Like a railway line meeting the horizon, progress stretches onwards, with his fellow workers each playing a small but important role in building the networks of the present that will secure their place in the future.

Progress and the role of the workers are also notable concerns of ‘The Spirit of the Times’, a poem that appears around the middle of *Songs of the Rail* and reflects extensively on what it means to be a Victorian at the heart of the industrial revolution. The poem begins conventionally for Anderson with a plea to elevate and celebrate the status of the railway workers:

Come, fling for a moment, my fellows,  
The pick and shovel aside,  
And rise from the moil of our ten hours’ toil  
With a heart beating high with pride.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, l. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, ‘A Song of Labour’, ll. 122-25.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, ‘The Spirit of the Times’, ll. 1-4.

The double stress of the first two words is evocative of the train starting, slowly gathering speed towards the end of the line. Although the line lengths vary, the alternating stressed/unstressed beats reflect the regular motion of the wheels and pistons as the poem captures the rhythms inherent in the network. Whilst Anderson's workers recognise the 'moil' of their 'toil', capturing the drudgery of their ten-hours of labour, Anderson encourages them to feel pride in what they are working towards. This is only extended as the poem continues and the speaker turns against those who object to industrial progress, writing: 'Yet shame on that bosom that will not throb | To the spirit and march of the times'.<sup>34</sup>

Anderson frames those who resist modernity as shameful for refusing to match its beats. To be part of the 'Spirit of the Times', Anderson suggests that his readers must mould themselves to the railway space. I saw in 'To my Readers' how Anderson emphasises the repetitive rhythms of the workers alongside their positioning as part of the railway infrastructure. Here he once again emphasises that to successfully live a life on the rail, the worker must integrate directly into the machine ensemble. One must make a cyborg of oneself and be driven onwards, not by the movements of the organic, but surrender wholly to the industrialised rhythms of the modern world.

By naming his poem 'The Spirit of the Times', Anderson is drawing comparisons with Thomas Carlyle's 1829 essay 'Signs of the Times', published in *The Edinburgh Review*. Anderson had met Carlyle in the mid-1870s and even wrote a poem named after the Scottish sage.<sup>35</sup> In it, he reflects:

I too can feel a pride to think I stand  
A worker on a dusty railway here,  
Pointing to this man with a feeble hand,  
As one by whom the weaker ought to steer.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 7-8.

<sup>35</sup> David Patrick, 'Alexander Anderson', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Lee Sidney (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1912), p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Anderson, 'Carlyle', in *Later Poems of Alexander Anderson, "Surface-Man"* ed. by, Alexander Brown (Glasgow: Frasher, Asher & Co, 1913), ll. 80-84.

In this poem, Anderson once more places himself on the ‘dusty railway’, imagining himself as part of the cohesive railway space. From this position, he thinks of Carlyle, a poet he labels as a great teacher who one should set out to emulate. Despite this respect, Anderson’s views on industry deviate significantly from the earlier writer. In ‘Signs of the Times’, Carlyle writes, were ‘we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical age’.<sup>37</sup> Carlyle argues that the age has become a repetitive and regulated time period, not of thought and imagination, but governed by machines instead. As part of this, Carlyle famously coins the line, ‘Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart’.<sup>38</sup> Anderson would not disagree with this. But for Anderson the increased dependence between man and machine is something to celebrate, not a source of anxiety, just as the consumerist impulse of the railway is not a threat, but a natural part of industrialisation. He shows that mapping one’s body to the railway space and allowing oneself to become mechanised is not a natural or automatic process and some people are incapable of regulating their body in this way, or else deliberately choose not to match their rhythms to that of the machine. Therefore, becoming ‘mechanical in head and in heart’ is something Anderson commends as a further signifier of the workers’ achievement. It shows a successful negotiation of the challenges of modernity and a progressive assimilation with future technology.

There are further key differences between the two Scottish writers. Carlyle’s vision of labour is one that favours individuality in keeping with his Conservatism. He warns:

They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions, for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their

---

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Carlyle, ‘Signs of the Times’, in *Carlyle’s Miscellaneous Writings, Vol 2*, ed. by Thomas Carlyle (London: James Fraser, 1839), p. 146.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, p. 150.

whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.<sup>39</sup>

Two of the most troubling aspects of Victorian industrialisation for Carlyle are the movement away from the individual towards the collective, and the corresponding movement towards Mechanism as a new type of religion. These are arguments Anderson has little patience for. For the 'Surfaceman', anything less than a posthuman merger with abstract space can only ever be shameful as he paints the opportunities that arise from functioning as a collective workforce. In a similar way, far from existing in opposition to religion, Anderson celebrates the ties between industrial production and God. He writes:

Shame rest on the bigot that thinks in his heart  
She flings a blight on our creeds,  
And darkens the light that we keep to guide  
As we rush from the fable to deeds.  
Out on such croakers! With one white hand  
She lifts her miracle road  
And strikes wherever we wish, while the other  
Holds on by the garments of God.<sup>40</sup>

In these lines, Anderson uses the pronouns 'we' and 'our' to capture the unity of those labouring together to turn 'fables' into 'deeds'. Anyone who falls outside of this is labelled as an old-fashioned and regressive 'croaker', with no place in modernity. The speaker is especially critical of those who perceive the railway to be in opposition to religion and longstanding ideas of divinity. Far from being a secular force or blighting 'our creeds', Anderson presents the forces of production as directly tied to God and part of His plan. He even labels the railway as a 'miracle road' bringing unity and spirituality wherever it is placed in the nation. The fact that 'She', who symbolises the nineteenth century, lays the railway tracks with one hand whilst holding onto God with the other, suggests that the railway is a direct product of the heavens. In this way, the workers too are elevated to the

---

<sup>39</sup> Carlyle, p. 150.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 57-64.

position of modern deities functioning under a new, mechanised doctrine and forming a new world of iron and steam.

As part of Anderson's argument that God intends for man to build the railway, nature also enters the network of commodification and production. Anderson writes that:

[...] This rough firm earth of ours,  
Like a lion half-roused from his den  
She wakes up, and cries, while we whisper in fear,  
'Let us hush her to sleep again.'  
But a voice from the very footstool of God  
Cries, 'Break her away from her thrall,  
That our fellows may toss her from hand to hand,  
As a juggler tosses his ball.'<sup>41</sup>

The image of the earth protesting the domination inflicted upon it by mankind, is disturbing and violent; the natural world offered for sale in the network of exchange as it becomes a commodity tossed from one 'juggler' to the next. It is unsurprising that some wish to 'hush her to sleep again', in a desire to return to the pre-industrial past. However, Anderson argues that this is not what God intends. Instead, the speaker declares 'Make way for the tools and the man' as the natural world is remodelled beneath the beating tools of mankind.<sup>42</sup> For Anderson, nature is presented as another resource to be consumed by a society pushing ever-onwards towards the progressive future. In this, Anderson positions himself clearly in the context of his fellow Scottish labouring poets as Blair writes:

For local working-class poets, Scotland's countryside is highly valued for its beauty and meaning, yet in terms of how these can be used and accessed, how the natural environment can profit the working man and woman – including through literary endeavours. As they sought to reform and improve themselves, for both personal and political ends, so they also sought to reform and improve their land.<sup>43</sup>

There is no sadness in Anderson's poem for the ecological violence imposed by the railway. Instead, and like many of his peers, the landscape exists as a commodity for human use. This is emphasised as the poem continues, with Anderson writing:

---

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 9-16.

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', l. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 108.



Fling the span of the bridge o'er the foam of the sea,  
 Run shafts to the centre of earth,  
 Wrench the coal from her grasp to the light of the sun,  
 That the giant of steam may have birth.<sup>44</sup>

'Fling' is suggestive of the violence associated with the railway space and the disregard for the natural world, with the metal spatiality of the railway cast upon the bucolic seemingly without care or regard. In a similar way, the sea is presented as a space to be navigated and subjugated, whilst large pits are sunk into the earth to 'wrench the coal from her grasp', pulling the earth's natural resources out of the ground and using them to give birth to the railway space. Lefebvre argues that space 'in its entirety enters the modernised capitalist mode of production, there to be used for the generation of surplus value'.<sup>45</sup> For Lefebvre, nothing is safe from industrial capitalism. The earth, the air, light, and the resources buried underground, all become raw materials to be used for the generation of capital. Once again, this is an anxiety for Lefebvre, but not for Anderson. On the contrary, Anderson celebrates it as further evidence of man's strength and domination over natural resources, offering a resolutely anthropocentric view of the world. One in which mankind and his productions serve as the only symbols of progress, with nature consigned to a surplus product for human usage.

As well as signalling a stark difference to Lefebvre's view of spatial production, Anderson's portrayal of nature is another major departure from Carlyle too. The latter writes, that the 'time is sick and out of joint'.<sup>46</sup> Far from progress being a source of universal good and a transition from the dark ages to a period of knowledge, Carlyle sees the world as diseased and corrupted. It is out of joint as industry renders untold damage onto the careful balance of the ecological system. For Anderson, far from being off kilter, this new world serves mankind and signifies a proud environment to work for and in. Later in the poem,

---

<sup>44</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 25-28.

<sup>45</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 347.

<sup>46</sup> Carlyle, p. 170.

Anderson further emphasises the necessity of embracing industrialisation to avoid a regressive return to the dark ages. The speaker declares:

Let us work in our growing strength;  
For the earth in her cradle, since Adam died,  
Is up from her slumber at length.  
Ay, up! In the cities that roar and fret  
With the toil and the tread of men;  
And the sun shall be hurl'd from his course ere she sinks  
To her second childhood again!<sup>47</sup>

The speaker is clear that the world was in a state of 'childhood' as the 'ages behind look like infants in sleep'.<sup>48</sup> The pre-industrial world was a time of slumber before the world found its pace and place. In contrast, the present age of the cities and the railway is defined by its 'roar and fret'. This is a marked change in the tone of the stanza that occurs with 'Ay, up!', an imperative altering the poem from the comforting and soporific imagery of innocence and sleep to the noise, bustle, and work of the urban. In another poem the juxtaposition of sleepy past and noisy present would favour the old places, celebrating the innocence and calm of the pre-industrial realm. Or, at the very least, would present a vision like Eliot and Gaskell's, emphasising the necessity of change whilst still expressing sadness for what had been lost. But in Anderson's verse, any desire to go back to the old ways is seen as regressive and ignorant. His is the manmade world appropriate for the modern age and Anderson is clear that the sun will leave its orbit before the world enters a 'second childhood'. Like Eliot's *Middlemarch*, progress is presented as inevitable as the orbit of the stars.

Cosmological imagery emerges elsewhere in the poem too as Anderson celebrates the power and might of science:

O, fellows, but this is a wondrous age,  
When Science with faith in her eyes,  
Springs up in her thirst from this planet of ours  
To the stars in front of the skies.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 82-88.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', l. 65.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, 'The Spirit of the Times', ll. 41-44.

The speaker once again asserts that this ‘wondrous age’ is driven on by the abstract ideals of ‘Science’, capitalised to underline its quasi-divine status. There is a further absorption of religion here, with the old theological systems becoming a gleam on the glittering eyes of logic and mechanical advancement. These lines also allude to ‘Part Twenty-One’ of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1849):

A time to sicken and to swoon,  
When science reaches forth her arms  
‘To feel from world to world, and charms  
Her secret from the latest moon?’<sup>50</sup>

Anderson considered Tennyson amongst his favourite poets in his younger years, although later in life his favour had waned in Anderson’s eyes.<sup>51</sup> The narrator of *In Memoriam* is imagining the telescope reaching out from earth like an artificial arm and embracing the moons and stars overhead. Anderson uses the same image in his poem, science reaching forth and grasping at the stars. For Tennyson, this leads to sickness and fainting as man is overcome by his scientific progress, a viewpoint comparable to Carlyle’s outlined above. In contrast, for Anderson, he presents men as possessing an insatiable thirst for knowledge and seeking to quench that thirst through always striving upwards.

This is not the only reference to Tennyson that Anderson makes. ‘Move Upward’, a poem that appears around halfway through *Songs of the Rail*, takes its title and features an epigraph from *In Memoriam*, ‘Move upward, working out the brute, | And let the ape and tiger die’.<sup>52</sup> These lines are taken from ‘Part One-Hundred and Seventeen’ of *In Memoriam*, a highly ecological section detailing the destruction of the earth and extinction of the animals due to mechanical and scientific advancement. Whereas Tennyson highlights the environmental and social cost that comes with progress, Anderson’s poem is a call to ‘move

---

<sup>50</sup> A.L. Tennyson, ‘Part XXI’, *In Memoriam* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1861), ll. 17-20.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, ‘Biographical Sketch’, p. xxx.

<sup>52</sup> Tennyson, ‘Part CXVII’, ll. 27-28.

upward still'.<sup>53</sup> For Tennyson, progress means a loss of faith and a sense of despair in the cruelty of the world. For Anderson, such progress is a source of pride and hope.

The final poem, 'Finis', returns to the themes established throughout the collection, with Anderson clearly framing *Songs of the Rail* in terms of memorialising the workers and their roles in producing the network. He writes:

The swart smoke geni [*sic*] with his heart aglow,  
And all his giant strength and vigour strung,  
To help our toiling lower gods below –  
He still remains unsung.<sup>54</sup>

Anderson compares the engine to a jinni, evoking the mystical and supernatural elements of the technology with its obscure and magical energies. He is also quick to assert its 'giant strength and vigour', once again emphasising the power and vitality of the machine.

Anderson restates his argument that the relationship between the locomotive and the workers is a symbiotic one. As much as the railway requires the workers to build its infrastructure, manage, and regulate it, so too does the locomotive 'help our toiling lower gods below'. This not only elevates the labourers' work by giving it an immortal and divine quality but emphasises the inherent holiness of manual toil.

Despite his ambitions to capture the railway space in *Songs of the Rail*, Anderson concludes that the engine 'still remains unsung'. Instead:

I have but caught, in leaping to the side  
To let him pass in smoke and thunder, dim,  
Faint half-heard echoes from that rushing tide,  
Of song which follows him.<sup>55</sup>

The speaker visualises himself leaping to the side of the locomotives, implying that he is standing on the tracks and waiting until the last moment before evading the oncoming train.

As he does so, it passes in smoke and thunder. This adds greater immediacy to the poem and

---

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, 'Move Upward', l. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, 'Finis', ll. 1-4.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, 'Finis', ll. 5-8.

echoes the first piece in the collection, suggesting that the poems emerge out of the ‘four-feet way’ as direct productions of the railway.

However, this is also the problem. By ‘leaping’ out of the way, he is left with ‘faint half-heard echoes’. Despite his life inside the railway space, working in daily proximity to the engines, Anderson is still unable to get close enough to truly do the locomotives poetic justice. This does not bring Anderson sadness. Just as he encouraged the workers, who lament that they would not live to see their work finished, to see the bigger picture and their place within history, so too does Anderson place his poetry in the broader context of human development. His poetry is just one link in the continual chain of progress. He writes:

But the keen years that for our coming kind,  
Keep greater triumphs than to-day we claim,  
Will bring a poet in whose heart the wind  
Of song will leap like flame.<sup>56</sup>

Whilst Anderson may struggle to do justice to the sounds of the ensemble, later generations will bring a poet who can accurately hear the sounds of the network and capture them in verse form. For this poet, ‘song will leap like a flame’ as he or she writes in ‘music worthy of that soul of fire’.<sup>57</sup> This is an idea he takes into the final stanza of the poem, and thus the last lines of the collection. He writes that his own verse:

Will fade and sink, as sinks a fitful wind,  
Before the grander music, wild and strong,  
Of him who comes behind.<sup>58</sup>

Anderson’s poems are like a gentle breeze that will fade and sink as the years pass on. In contrast, he recognises the coming of a ‘grander music’ that is ‘wild and strong’ like the trains themselves. He may have built the foundation for railway verse, but he anticipates another generation coming in his wake who will capture with greater accuracy the strains of the network. In this way, Anderson draws explicit comparisons between the world of manual

---

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, ‘Finis’, ll. 9-12.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, ‘Finis’, l. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, ‘Finis’, ll. 22-24.

work and poetry. The poet and labourer both producing a network (either of tracks or poems) that lays the foundation for still greater innovations ahead. The world is always moving upwards, and one plays a small part within it. But in playing that small part, one is securing one's place in the history of progress. For Anderson, this is the best monument one could ever hope to build.

### **The gods and Classical allusions**

As part of his efforts to reclaim the network for the workers whilst elevating their oft-maligned labours, Anderson turns to Classical imagery throughout *Songs of the Rail* by comparing the workers and locomotives to the gods of antiquity. Alongside his knowledge of French, German, Italian, and Spanish, Anderson also had a rudimentary grasp of Latin and Greek, with David Herschell Edwards writing, 'he seems to have had particular friends among the heathen deities, so familiarly does he discourse and rhyme about the heroes of Homer, and the titular divinities of old Rome'.<sup>59</sup> This can be seen in 'A Song for my Fellows', a poem with clear parallels to 'A song of Labour'. Anderson writes:

Then, brothers, let us rise up from our fears,  
No anvils are we, but men  
Who can wield that sledge-hammer, like mystic Thor,  
For the daily battle again.<sup>60</sup>

Anderson begins this poem with a quotation from Goethe, 'Ambos oder Hammer sein'.<sup>61</sup> The quotation, translated as 'either a hammer or anvil be,' is a fitting epigraph for the poem.

Society might imagine the railway workers to be the anvils, constantly beaten upon by the forces of modernity. However, as Anderson is keen to emphasise, he and his fellow workers are instead like 'mystic Thor', users of the great hammer Mjölnir. Anderson evokes 'Thor' to

---

<sup>59</sup> David Herschell Edwards, *One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets with Biographical and Critical Notices* (Brechtin: D.H Edwards, 1880), pp. 158-59.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, 'A Song of Labour', ll. 25-28.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, 'A Song of Labour', p. 40.

stress that these are not poorly educated workers, but comrades and ‘brothers’ in arms replacing the gods as the new fathers of the modern world.

The most explicit reference to Classical folklore can be found in ‘The Gods and the Winds’. Here Anderson writes of how:

The still gods, though they move apart  
From interchange of thoughts with men,  
Yearn to come down, and, in the mart,  
Rub shoulders with them once again.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the vast difference in age, in experience, and in thought, the gods of antiquity long to return to earth, ‘rub shoulders’ and speak now with mankind in the markets as they did in the days of yore. They are so impressed with man’s industrial labours that they want to witness first-hand the new spaces they have built. Not only are the gods impressed with the new machines, but Anderson argues that they are vastly inferior to them. The speaker states:

‘Keep to your halls,’ the rough winds say,  
‘Nor overstep your starry pale,  
Ye could not for one moment play  
With the wild engine on the rail;

‘Nor even match, Though keen and strong,  
And all aglow with swiftest fire,  
That silent speed which hurls along  
The far word lightnings of the wire.’<sup>63</sup>

Anderson conjures two competing forms of speed and locomotion inside the railway space.

One is the visible ‘wild’ power of the engine, blasting along the rails. The other is the invisible speed of the telegraphs carried over the wires. This technology, although silent, is arguably the most impressive, taking words and reducing them into invisible ‘lightnings’, transmitted through the overhead wires.<sup>64</sup> Although the old gods may be ‘aglow with swiftest fire’, this does not compare to the fire of the engines or the lightnings of instantaneous

---

<sup>62</sup> Anderson, ‘The Gods and the Winds’, ll. 1-4.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, ‘The Gods and the Winds’, ll. 21-28.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson includes ‘The Wires’ in *Songs of the Rail*, a poem that imagines the conversations being carried overhead by the telegraph system.

communication that define the accelerated speed of the railway space. He warns the gods, 'keep to your halls'. There is no place for gods such as these in the modern world. Man has taken their place. As the gods look down upon the nineteenth century they declare, "'We won our godship far too young"''.<sup>65</sup> Now it is mankind with the power and the gods can but look on powerlessly and reflect on their ineptitude against the machine ensemble that the workers have produced.

One of the recurring allusions Anderson makes throughout *Songs of the Rail* is to Prometheus. In 'On the Engine Again' Anderson continues the Classical and literary allusions with a direct reference to the Titan:

Then I whisper, the bloodless fear on my lip,  
As the flame tongues flicker and dance –  
'God, he too has a fire round his heart, like those kings,  
In the Eblis hall of romance!'  
But this fire within him is the nerve in his limb,  
And his pulse's hurry and shock,  
As he toils, a man-made Prometheus, bound  
To the rail instead of the rock.<sup>66</sup>

The reference to the 'Eblis hall of romance' is an allusion to William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786). In this Gothic novel, the titular Caliph Vathek descends into hell, ruled over by the demonic Eblis and is punished by wandering aimlessly and speechlessly for all eternity with an insatiable fire burning in his heart. The steam engine is directly compared to Beckford's protagonist, a fire burning perpetually in its heart as it is doomed to spend its life speechlessly wandering the iron roads before it. He develops this image further by referencing the Prometheus myth, the train bound not to the rock, but rather to the track. The cause of the punishment is nonetheless comparable. Prometheus was disciplined for giving fire to humans and enabling their evolution, while the steam train represents an industrialised evolution through its finessing of primordial fire. This is a new gift for humanity that will revolutionise

---

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, 'The Gods and the Winds', l. 56.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, 'On the Engine Again', ll. 53-60.



life in exactly the way fire did for the early humans. Just as Prometheus was bound in consequence, so too is the train bound to the tracks in punishment for progressing the world. However, the Prometheus of the train is ‘man-made’. By suggesting that this Titan was built by humanity, this further elevates the workers to the position of the gods. In this way, Anderson insists on reclaiming the railway space away from the forces of production, placing it back into the hands of the deified workers who manufactured it.

These Classical allusions elevate the labours of Anderson’s fellow workers, but they also elevate his railway poems, making the collection stand shoulder to shoulder with the intellectual heft of his peers’ publications. Ensuring that his work was suitably edifying to conform to the lofty expectations of poetry must have been a concern for the entirely self-educated Anderson, as it was for many of his contemporaries. Blair writes that all the poets she scrutinises ‘explicitly or implicitly question why – and whether – poetry might be fit for the representation of industry’.<sup>67</sup> This was a notable anxiety amongst writers at the time, not just in Scotland, but internationally. For instance, Arthur Hugh Clough writes that if poetry is to continue its dominance in the face of new industrial and social novels, then it must do more than focus on the ‘limited spheres of action’ that have hitherto been its domain.<sup>68</sup>

Instead:

There is a charm, for example, in finding, as we do, continual imagery drawn from the busy seats of industry; it seems to satisfy a want that we have long been conscious of, when we see the black streams that welter out of factories [and] the dreary lengths of urban and suburban dustiness.<sup>69</sup>

Clough encouraged drawing poetic inspiration from the realities of Victorian industrialism and would have approved of Anderson’s attempts to capture the songs of the rail. However, many critics found themselves on the opposite side of this debate. For instance, a reviewer in the *Glasgow Herald* in 1878 writes of Anderson’s poetry, the ‘subjects themselves don’t

---

<sup>67</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 139.

<sup>68</sup> Arthur Hugh Clough, ‘Recent English Poetry’, *North American Review*, July 1853, 1-30 (p. 3).

<sup>69</sup> Clough, p. 4.

contain the elements of high poetic inspiration'.<sup>70</sup> This was a vexed debate during the mid-nineteenth century. Should poetry modernise and aim to capture the modern experience of industrial life? Or is industrial life inherently unpoetic? Anderson negotiates this debate by placing his collection squarely in modernity as he unapologetically works to capture the sounds of the machine ensemble and reclaim the subjectivities of the workers. At the same time, by using Classical allusions he works to elevate his collection and in so doing elevate his colleagues too. An 1879 writer in *The Examiner* observes that in 'surveying Mr. Anderson's volume as a whole, we are struck less by its lyrical spontaneity than by its extraordinary exhibition of intellectual culture'.<sup>71</sup> If this was Anderson's intention, it certainly seemed to work, at least amongst certain reviewers. Whilst this writer found Anderson's verse middling, they were impressed by the intellectual heft of his project. This was essential if Anderson was to succeed in elevating the workers, allowing them to stand equally with the operators and shareholders who were more typically seen as the fathers of the network.

### **Nature and the machine**

I explore above how 'The Signs of the Times' presents nature as a resource to be used by humans in spatial production. However, the three poems below, 'The Cuckoo', 'The Dead Lark', and 'The Violet', all seem to present an alternative view of nature, at least on an initial reading. All three appear to frame the natural world as a space of innocence away from the violent industrialism of modernity. As I saw above, the *Glasgow Herald* writer may argue that Anderson's poems of industry lacked appropriate subject matter, but they also write:

There are three pieces among these Songs of the Rail, and yet not of them, 'The Cuckoo', 'The Dead Lark', and 'The Violet,' shows Mr Anderson in his finer and more natural moods. To our mind 'The Cuckoo' is poetically the best piece in the volume.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Anon, 'Poetry and Verse', *The Glasgow Herald*, 15 April 1878, n.p.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., 'Mr Anderson's Poems', *The Examiner*, 13 Sep 1897, 1188-90 (p. 1189).

<sup>72</sup> Anon., 'Poetry and Verse', n.p.

If industry does not serve as a suitable subject for poetic meditation, at least for some of his reviewers, Anderson finds himself in more familiar territory with these three poems. They express the ‘more natural moods’ that critics expected from nineteenth-century verse.

However, on closer reading it becomes clear that Anderson does not surrender his anthropocentric world view. Instead, he celebrates nature not for its own sake, but because of its relationship to the humans within it.

The first of these poems is ‘The Cuckoo’, and begins:

Amid the sounds of picks to-day,  
And shovels rasping on the rail,  
A sweet voice came from far away,  
From out a gladly gleaming vale.<sup>73</sup>

Anderson begins with the ‘sounds of picks’ ‘rasping on the rail’, with the sibilant sounds suggestive of the scraping noises of railway construction. In contrast, the ‘sweet voice’ of the bird with the alliterative ‘gladly gleaming vale’ evokes a softer, calmer, more natural environment. Anderson’s poem clearly owes a debt to Wordsworth’s ‘To the Cuckoo’ (1807), particularly both poems’ emphasis on the cuckoo’s cry taking the respective speakers back to the innocence of their boyhood. As Wordsworth writes:

The same whom in my schoolboy days  
I listen'd to; that Cry  
Which made me look a thousand ways  
In bush, and tree, and sky.<sup>74</sup>

In a strikingly similar way to Anderson’s:

I knew his well-known sober flight,  
That boyhood made so dear to me;  
And, blessings on him! He stopp'd in sight,  
And sang where I could hear and see.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, ‘The Cuckoo’, ll. 1-4.

<sup>74</sup> William Wordsworth, ‘To the Cuckoo’, in *The English Poets, Vol. IV The Nineteenth Century: Wordsworth to Rossetti*, ed. by T.H Ward (London: Macmillan and Co, 1883), ll. 17-20.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, ‘The Cuckoo’, ll. 25-28.

Anderson loved Wordsworth's poetry and read it avidly throughout his life.<sup>76</sup> However, as I saw with Carlyle, just because Anderson admired a poet did not mean he necessarily agreed with their politics or attitudes towards progress. Whilst Anderson is inspired by Wordsworth, his poetry diverges from his significantly. Wordsworth is looking 'a thousand ways' for the cuckoo of his youth, but for Anderson it is visible, 'He stopp'd in sight, | And, sang where I could hear and see'. For Wordsworth, the cuckoo remains obscured and is symbolic of a rural, natural childhood that has been lost. In contrast, for Anderson the cuckoo remains visible, implying that despite his railway labours, and the noises of the rail, he has not lost sight of the natural signifiers of his youth. There is a further difference between these two ornithological poems in their meter. Wordsworth's poem is written in the ballad form with the alternating trimeter and tetrameter, whereas Anderson's is composed in a consistent tetrameter. The rhythmic similitude of Anderson's poem is highly appropriate for a work produced in the abstract space of the machine age, the unabating, repetitive eight syllables evocative of the droning intensity of the steam engines, even in what initially seems a nature poem. This is in contrast to the soft undulation of Wordsworth's poem, befitting the uneven rhythms of the pre-industrial, natural world.

As the speaker listens to the cuckoo, nature assumes a new significance as 'The primrose took a deeper hue, | The dewy grass a greener look'.<sup>77</sup> As well as nature seeming fresher and more beautiful through the presence of the bird, the speaker is also transported back to his boyhood days, to his 'purer life, now dead'.<sup>78</sup> This could be a Romantic return to the innocence of a youth spent in nature, before mechanisation took hold. In a poem by Wordsworth this would certainly be the case. But for Anderson, the return to youth signals a different transformation. Instead, he says 'Dear God! The earth is always young, | And I am

---

<sup>76</sup> Brown, 'Biographical Sketch', p. xxx.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, 'The Cuckoo', ll. 13-14.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson, 'The Cuckoo', l. 37.

young with it today'.<sup>79</sup> The cuckoo places the speaker within the context of evolution and change as he is not only transported to his own childhood, but the childhood of the Earth too. For Wordsworth, the bird suggests the unity of man and nature. In contrast for Anderson, a writer who repeatedly asserts the upwards progression of humanity, the speaker's return to youth in tandem with the Earth serves as a reminder that every society is young in the face of future progress. In this way, the cuckoo is a metaphor for the broader patterns of advancement that Anderson charts throughout *Songs of the Rail*, reminding the speaker of his small place in the evolution of the world and its technologies.

The fact that the poem begins in the railway space only signals further that this is not a traditional nature poem. Crucially, it is 'amid the sounds' of the tracks that the speaker hears and sees the cuckoo. Whilst nature and industry are resolutely different, they sit side by side and share the topography in Anderson's schema. There is not the violent disruption to nature that Wordsworth envisioned in 'On the Projected Kendal and Windemere Railway' (1844).<sup>80</sup> Instead, and even as he sees nature as the raw materials for production, Anderson seeks to draw continuity between these spaces, showing that even amongst industrial labour, one can still be alive to the continued presence of the pre-industrial world.

'The Cuckoo' is followed immediately in *Songs of the Rail* by 'The Dead Lark', with the latter poem forming something of a dark twin to the former, their back-to-back placement inviting direct parallels between the two. 'The Dead Lark' begins:

On the slope, half-hid in grass, and right beneath the sounding wire,  
Lay the Lark, the sweetest singer in the Heavenly Father's choir,  
Dead, no more to thrill the heavens with his music long and loud,  
Coming from the sunny silence, moving on the fleecy cloud.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Anderson, 'The Cuckoo', ll. 31-32.

<sup>80</sup> In this poem, Wordsworth famously asks, 'Is there no nook of English ground secure | From rash assault?'. (See: William Wordsworth, 'On the Projected Kendal and Windemere Railway', *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth* (Ware, Wordsworth Editions: 1994), ll. 1-2.)

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, 'The Dead Lark', ll. 1-4.

Like 'The Cuckoo', 'The Dead Lark' opens in the railway space. The sloping grass is suggestive of the banks surrounding the railway line in either a cutting or a raised section of track and the 'sounding-wire' is a reference to the telegraph cables at the side of the rails. However, this is not clear from an initial reading of the poem, with the lack of clarity turning the reader's focus away from the railway network and back into nature. This is fitting in a poem about taking pause, reflecting on the relationship between man and animal, and the relationships within nature and humanity. By turning the reader's eye away from the network, Anderson forces us to observe what his fellow railway workers have overlooked. Next to the tracks, 'Lay the Lark'. In 'The Cuckoo', the bird is very much alive, singing in the distance and connecting the speaker to the past and future. Here, the bird is dead by the side of the railway lines. No more able to 'thrill the heavens', the bird presumably, although not explicitly, killed by a speeding train lies dead and ignored inside the railway space.

The dead lark does inspire reminiscences for the speaker, as the cuckoo did in the previous poem, but whereas the cuckoo inspired feelings of a 'wondrous realm of early joy', the dead lark offers no such consolation.<sup>82</sup> Instead:

O what melodies unutter'd, lyrics of the happiest praise,  
 Lay within my hands, forever useless to the summer days.  
 Then I thought a want would wander, like a strangely jarring tone  
 Through the singing choir, and only to be mark'd of God alone.  
 For we muffle up our vision, seeing not for earthly stain  
 All that He in wisdom fashions for His glory and our gain.  
 And as still I stood and held him, in the sunshine overhead  
 Sang and shook his merry fellows, heedless of their brother dead<sup>83</sup>

The dead lark signals a life and experience lost. 'Melodies unutter'd' and 'lyrics of the happiest praise' lying silent in the speaker's hands. The lark's song has fallen 'useless', which places the lark's melodies in the wider context of use, toil, and productivity that Anderson builds throughout the collection. Things are only beautiful in Anderson's poetry in

---

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, 'The Cuckoo', l. 33.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, 'The Dead Lark', ll. 7-14.

as far as they are productive. Despite its demise, the bird's fellows carry on 'merry' and 'heedless of their brother dead'. This observation has a profound effect on the speaker as his 'heart was stirr'd within me as I heard them at their song'.<sup>84</sup> Seeing the larks continue to wheel in the sky and sing brings a wider recognition for the speaker:

And my tears came slowly upward, as a low sweet undertone  
Whisper'd to me, 'thus forever sing the thoughtless of thy own  
Far into the realms of Fancy soar they in their sounding flight,  
Heeding not below some brother with a wing of feebler might.'<sup>85</sup>

As the speaker reflects on the detached nature of the birds, his mind wanders to the obliviousness of his fellow men who would overlook their own weakened or injured brother. In this way, the dead lark becomes a metaphor for the wider themes of *Songs of the Rail*. Whilst the railway features only slightly in this poem, Anderson uses the dead bird and its uncaring brothers to symbolise the lack of care and attention occurring for the workers inside the machine ensemble. Like the lark, killed by a speeding train, so too are countless workers killed each year with their bodies left on the tracks. So too does society carry on regardless, failing to acknowledge the sacrifice that the labourers make to ensure the continued construction and operation of the train lines.

This neglect occurs not out of spite, but because of the pressures of the industrial space. Just as the birds must carry on their song, so too must the workers carry on their labours, leaving neither time nor space for grief. By the end of the poem, the necessity of labour has caught the speaker too, as he laments:

Waking up, the day's set labour still'd the fancies in my breast,  
So I laid the fallen minstrel into his unnoticed rest,  
Left him and the music with him lying in his grassy bed  
To the carol of his fellows and the sunshine overhead.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Anderson, 'The Dead Lark', l. 15.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson, 'The Dead Lark', ll. 17-20.

<sup>86</sup> Anderson, 'The Dead Lark', ll. 31-34.

The final quatrain begins ‘waking up’, highlighting the dream-like state of the speaker before the pressures of work call him away from his trackside reflections. There is no time for idle thoughts in the modern world of labour and so the speaker too must move on. Leaving the bird to his ‘unnoticed rest’ he must return to the ‘day’s set labour’. Anderson established in his introduction that his aim was to elevate his fellow workers, to make them feel pride in their labours. ‘The Dead Lark’ approaches this theme from another and more subtle angle by comparing the workers to the birds, lying dead and ignored inside a network that overlooks their role in producing and operating it.

The penultimate poem in *Songs of the Rail* is ‘The Violet’. Like the other two poems, ‘The Violet’ also begins in the artificially produced space of the railway present:

On the down line, and close beside the rail,  
A tender violet grew,  
A sister spirit, when the stars grew pale,  
Gave it a drink of dew<sup>87</sup>

The riveted metal of the permeant way is in entire contrast to the ‘tender violet’, soft, fragile, and ephemeral. The speaker is aware of the disparity between the two, reflecting on how the flower was so ‘pure and sweet, and yet so near the spot | Where wild trains thunder by’.<sup>88</sup> In ‘The Cuckoo’, Anderson drew the parallels between nature and industry, suggesting their ability to lie side by side. However, in this poem, the natural, unfettered space that the violet inhabits initially appears to exist in total opposition to the regulated, thundering rhythms of the steam engines. It is almost incomprehensible to the speaker that these two objects can exist in such proximity.

As the speaker continues his observations of the flower, his imagination once more takes a hold:

For fancy working in its quiet ways,  
Sometimes would change the flower

---

<sup>87</sup> Anderson, ‘The Violet’, ll. 1-4.

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, ‘The Violet’, ll. 47-48.



Into a maiden of those iron days,  
When might was right and power

And up and down the lists of gleaming rail  
With echoing clank and shock,  
Rode the stern engines in their suits of mail,  
Like knights with plumes of smoke.<sup>89</sup>

Onomatopoeic words such as ‘clank and shock’ enable Anderson to capture the aural soundscape of the railway and evoke the artificial sounds of the engines. In contrast, the flower inspires the speaker’s imagination, triggering reminiscences of the chivalric and Arthurian past. The speaker, as he did in ‘The Cuckoo’, begins to assimilate the world of nature and the world of the railway by taking time to pause and reflect. However, this ‘fancy’ is a chauvinistic one, the flower equated with damsels due to their fragile femininity whereas the steam engines are recast as ‘knights’ with their feathery plumes replaced by ‘plumes of smoke’, conflating the two as symbols of masculine strength. In an age where the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, and John Ruskin were encouraging a return to a medieval aesthetic to counter industrial capitalism, Anderson reworks this relationship. Rather than seeing the chivalric past as an antidote to modernity, Anderson instead integrates these two disparate time periods, suggesting that the railway signals a continuation and re-shaping of the past rather than a severance from it. In contrast to the present where industrial power is met with hostility and suspicion, Anderson observes that in the past ‘might was right and power’. By using Medieval imagery, Anderson encourages, not a reactionary return to the past, but an adoption of chivalric attitudes where masculine strength was celebrated and power and might were seen as heroic.

Like the lark, the violet also meets its destruction inside the railway space. Anderson writes:

But one sweet morning, when the young sunshine  
Laid long soft arms of light

---

<sup>89</sup> Anderson, ‘The Violet’, ll. 17-24.

Around the earth, I found this flower of mine  
Stricken as with some blight.

For like a fallen spot of heaven grown pale,  
It lent its dropping head  
Against the cold touch of the careless rail,  
Wither'd, and shrunk, and dead.

Thus some rare soul, toiling for purer gains,  
Sinks in the night alone,  
While the hoarse world, like the iron trains  
Unheeding thunders on.<sup>90</sup>

For the speaker, the violet instilled hopes of reconciliation between the two competing spaces but the gap between them cannot be bridged. The trains continue to thunder on the 'cold' and 'careless' rail, whilst the flower lies dead and blighted. Now it has withered, it becomes clear that the only link between the flower and train was their physical positioning. The speaker briefly allowed himself to look back and imagine the past integrating with the present, but now he recognises that is impossible. After this, the flower assumes a new significance as the speaker's 'restless fancy' changes the flower from its historical femininity into serving the same purpose as the lark, as a signifier for how the workers are overlooked.<sup>91</sup> Anderson is clear that there are those 'rare souls' who are 'toiling for purer gains', like the innocent beauty of the flower. However, they are rare in the world and like the violet are doomed to fade away unseen and uncelebrated.

These three poems stand out in the collection for their focus on nature. However, Anderson offers an alternative framing of the natural world that resists the expectations of nature poetry. Just as nature served as the raw materials for the production of the railway space in 'The Sign of the Times', so too does it function as the raw material for poetic composition in these three poems. Anderson looks to the cuckoo, the lark, and the violet, and all reflect his own position in the world and the position of his fellow-labourers in the

---

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, 'The Violet', ll. 49-60.

<sup>91</sup> Anderson, 'The Violet', l. 29.

unbroken history of human development. Ultimately, the lark and violet signify a furthering of Anderson's political intentions, symbolising humanity's propensity for ignoring the sacrifices and labours of one's fellow man. In a collection that consistently seeks to recast the relationship with the forces of production and recentre the workers at the heart of the railway space, nature in these poems similarly functions as a symbol for how often people, and their role in furthering the world, are overlooked.

### **Death in the railway space**

Throughout *Songs of the Rail*, railway accidents unsettle the worker's place in the network and reveal the physical and mental strength needed to operate inside the railway space day after day. Blair observes that '[e]leven out of thirty-four poems in *Songs of the Rail* involve accident or death'.<sup>92</sup> For Anderson, death in the railway space signals a further opportunity to elevate the labourer and show the sacrifices they make in taming the mighty energies of the machine. This can be seen in 'Behind Time', which begins with the engine driver Harry ordering the stoker Bill as follows:

'More coal, Bill,' he said, and he held his watch to the light of the glowing fire;  
'We are now an hour and a half behind time, and I know that my four months' wife  
Will be waiting for me at the doorway just now, with never a wish to tire;  
But she soon will get used to this sort of thing in an engine-driver's life" <sup>93</sup>

The opening command of 'more coal' immediately pulls the listener into the action inside the locomotive, with the driver asking his stoker to add more fuel to the furnace to increase the speed of the engine. As he does so, Harry holds his pocket watch to the blaze of the fire, revealing the time constraints the operators are under, foreshadowed by the poem's ominous title.

Lefebvre writes that the more a space is regulated by time, the more it remains a victim of domination and the less it allows itself to be re-appropriated by the forces of

---

<sup>92</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, p. 170.

<sup>93</sup> Anderson, 'Behind Time', ll. 1-4.

revolution. 'It is removed from the sphere of lived time', Lefebvre writes, 'from the time of its "users", which is a diverse and complex time'.<sup>94</sup> In this way, the railway space seeks to replace duration or lived time with regulated, controlled, fixed time. Anderson uses these two competing temporalities to show the impact on the workers who try to regulate their lives in accordance with the machines they are responsible for operating. This is not a causal or haphazard practice but requires mental fortitude and physical strength. Moreover, the pressures of working to a timetable impact everyone, not just the workers in the cab but the wife too, waiting at home for her husband's return and not used to the time constraints of the railway. The wife is described as 'a little timid, poor thing' who could 'never rest when her husband was late'.<sup>95</sup> Anderson suggests that functioning to the constant pressures of the timetable is something that only certain people will be strong enough to withstand. The 'little timid' and 'poor' wife is unable to endure against these pressures. She is a Phillis or Ellinor figure, living outside the railway space, with her fragility directly associated with her gender, suggesting that in Anderson's schema, women are too weak to survive the temporal strains of the machine. This in turn impacts her husband's ability to safely function in the machine space as he tries to account for his wife's concerns.

These time pressures cause Harry and Bill to push the train to the very limits of its capabilities, 'We were now dashing on at a headlong speed, like the sweep of a winter wind'.<sup>96</sup> The pressures to reshape their mortal time to the monumental time of the railway space proves catastrophic, with a 'beam in one of the trucks' on a neighbouring train, also behind time, working its way loose before it 'Crash'd through the storm-board, swift as a bolt, striking Harry full in the heart, | And sent him into the tender with death lying white on his manly face'.<sup>97</sup> Anderson emphasises the nobility of the workers who operate on the

---

<sup>94</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 356.

<sup>95</sup> Anderson, 'Behind Time', ll. 17-18.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson, 'Behind Time', l. 21.

<sup>97</sup> Anderson, 'Behind Time', ll. 26-27.

railway by showing their power in controlling the wild energies of the engines, and their heroic sacrifice when they are unsuccessful. Whilst Harry's death is accidental, it also shows what happens to an individual who is unable to surrender entirely to the railway space. It is his heart that proves his undoing. His romantic heart is the source of his love and concern for his wife, emotions that cause him to push the locomotive beyond its limits. It is his physical heart that causes his death when it is impaled by the timber of the passing train. His heart kills him both literally and figuratively, suggesting there is no room for such sentimentality on the railway tracks. As Anderson repeatedly shows, the only way for a railway worker to survive is to map himself to its energies, to become machine-like.

'Rid of His Engine' similarly details the catastrophic power of the steam train over the human body. Like 'Behind Time', it details the frustrations felt by Jack and Bill as they try to keep their locomotive to the strict timetable imposed upon them. As Jack, the speaker of the poem declares, 'We never ran time, and were always late'.<sup>98</sup> Like 'Behind Time', the time constraints of the network place unprecedented demands on the humans operating inside it. Every time Jack and Bill try and make up time, 'something went amiss | With that creaking confounded engine still'.<sup>99</sup> Not only do the workers have to operate according to the strict demands of the timetable but they must deal with the engine too, an engine that often runs into mechanical issues. In frustration, Bill declares 'I wish I was rid of this engine', his cry more than one of mere annoyance, but also a plea to separate himself from the machinery his life has increasingly become entangled with.<sup>100</sup> As Jack and Bill accelerate through the night, they see a coal train ahead that has been shunted onto the tracks. The result is inevitable:

'What a smash!' said the guard, and I ask'd 'Where's Bill?'  
He turn'd, and the light of his lamp was cast  
On a form at my feet, lying stiff and still:  
Bill had got rid of his engine at last.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Anderson, 'Rid of His Engine', l. 5.

<sup>99</sup> Anderson, 'Rid of His Engine', ll. 3-4.

<sup>100</sup> Anderson, 'Rid of His Engine', l. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Anderson, 'Rid of His Engine', ll. 37-40.

Bill asked to be rid of his engine, but the only way for him to achieve such a separation of himself from the railway space is through his death. Bill almost seems to be punished for desiring to be rid of his locomotive. In craving retreat from his labours, he is struck down by them. Like Lopez's death in *The Prime Minister* for refusing to assimilate into the network, one may try to resist the modern machinery but, as Anderson shows, one can never free oneself without resulting violence.

'Blood on the Wheel', with its ominous title, also foregrounds the destructive potential of the railway environment:

'Bless her dear little heart!' said my mate, and he pointed out to me,  
Fifty yards to the right, in the darkness, a light burning steady and clear.  
'That's her signal in answer to me, when I whistle, to let me see  
She is at her place by the window the time I am passing here.'<sup>102</sup>

The engine driver has made a pact with his newly betrothed fiancé that as the train passes her house, he will whistle as she holds a steady light to the window to let him know that she is thinking of him. In this way, the railway communications of whistles and lights extend into the domestic hearth, implying that the railway transcends its narrow tracks and spreads its regulated, ideological system into all aspects of nineteenth-century society. Even the bride-to-be, located within her cottage, cannot escape the omnipotence of the railway space.

Moreover, it further suggests the mechanisation of human interactions, the natural exchanges of love replaced by an industrialised system of whistles and signals as those living and working in the railway space are forced to adapt to the railway's structures. As the train passes the window a second time, 'no light rose up at the sound' of the driver's whistle, highlighting that something is wrong.<sup>103</sup> It is not long before they realise what, for as:

[...] He turn'd to whistle again, there rose on the night a scream,  
And I rush'd to the side in time to catch the flutter of something white;  
Then a hitch through the engine ran like a thrill, and in haste he shut off the steam,

---

<sup>102</sup> Anderson, 'Blood on the Wheel', ll. 1-4.

<sup>103</sup> Anderson, 'Blood on the Wheel', l. 27.

While, turning, we look'd at each other, our hearts beating wild with affright.<sup>104</sup>

Once again, Anderson draws a heavily gendered representation of the railway space with the women, and many men, presented as too fragile to withstand the pressures of the assembly. The contrast between the woman, her dress fluttering in white, and the engine is stark. One weak, vulnerable, organic, the other strong, powerful, and artificial. She is like the violet, her fragile form unable to withstand the metallic power of the railway. The speaker reflects that the woman was killed because 'in haste she had taken the line'.<sup>105</sup> Her action of rushing onto the tracks to see her fiancé was rushed and unplanned, suggesting that to enter the railway space outside of the approved stations one needs to take time to understand its dangers. If one enters it quickly and without due care, then it is all too easy to be crushed beneath its metal spatiality. After running over his fiancé, Joe dies too from the grief and is buried next to his partner. Like Harry in 'Behind Time', Joe is painted as a man unable to withstand the pressures of the machine age with fatal consequences.

By portraying accidents, Anderson proves that mapping one's body to the pressures of the machine is not an easy process. To successfully build a life in the railway space, either as a worker or the spouse of a worker, requires regulating one's body, conforming to the unnatural time constraints, following the rules of the network, and functioning as a machine-like individual without emotion. Accidents show all too clearly what happens when an individual is unable to do these things. Blair argues that railway accidents in Anderson's poetry are a call for change. She writes:

Anderson, Aitken, and the other railway and engine poets trace a complicated relationship between poet and machinery, poetic metre and the rhythms of industry [...] they also use the resources of poetry to draw attention to particular, contemporary issues in professions that they know from the inside, in order to make a case for change.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, 'Blood on the Wheel', ll. 29-32.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, 'Blood on the Wheel', l. 47.

<sup>106</sup> Blair, *Working Verse*, pp. 172-3.

Whilst I certainly agree that Anderson shows the challenging and dangerous relationship between humanity and machinery, I am not convinced that he does so to make a case for reform. In *Songs of the Rail*, Anderson petitions for a change in perception, rather than a change in working conditions. He shows the potential for violence inside the machine, but he does so to elevate the workers operating inside such challenging conditions, demonstrating that not everyone is strong enough to survive this environment. As he says in the prefatory note, he wants the collection to 'heighten to some degree [his colleague's] pride in the service, however humble it may be'. He has the perfect opportunity to call for social change and industrial reform in his introduction, should he wish to. But change and reform are not part of Anderson's agenda. Instead, he wholeheartedly celebrates the railway space and calls for a re-evaluation of the workers. He seeks to commemorate their labours, to elevate their toil, and to recognise that for every labourer who thrives in the network there is another who meets their death due to their inability to assimilate.

Throughout *Songs of the Rail*, Anderson aims to re-evaluate the railway space from within. He is consistent in recognising it as a product of mid-Victorian capitalism, perpetuating its ideologies of commerce. However, he celebrates the spirit of enterprise that produces the machine ensemble, whilst presenting the natural world as a product to be used in social expansion and to illuminate human experience. Furthermore, Anderson presents those who object to industrial progress as shameful 'croakers' in complete contrast to Eliot, Gaskell, and to some extent Dickens and Trollope, who show with sympathy those who sit outside of progress, even as their reactionary positioning is presented as unviable. Where parallels can be drawn with Gaskell, Eliot, and Dickens is through Anderson's recognition that everyone has their role to play in the progress of humanity and we are all just small parts of a much larger web. As Dorothea learns the necessity of small acts of progress behind the scenes, as the Mannings learn to improve existing technology for the benefit of all, and as



Jackson successfully identifies his role in the larger network, so too does Anderson encourage his fellow labourers to see their positioning in the infinite roadmap of progress. But Anderson differs from these other writers by offering none of their nostalgia. Instead, *Songs of the Rail* shows that every society is always better than the one that preceded it, with Victorian Britain sufficiently advanced to make even the gods of antiquity jealous. Anderson started this collection to capture the sounds and songs of industry, and he recognises that he has only been partially successful. But for Anderson that does not matter. He has laid the groundwork and those who follow in his wake will do better, get closer to the truth, and write with more fidelity. For Anderson, that is exactly how it should be, with power not operating on a meta level but the micro level of a Scottish surfaceman, living in the manufacturing heart of the country and touched by the muse of the rail.

## Chapter 5 - Going off the Rails: The Railway Accident and the Breakdown of Railway Space

### Introduction

Her majesty has written to some of the railways centred in London, to call the attention of the directors 'To the increasing numbers of accidents which have lately occurred upon different lines of railways, and to express her Majesty's warmest hope that the directors of the — will carefully consider every means of guarding against these misfortunes, which are not at all the necessary accompaniments of railway travelling'

Anon., 'The Queen Upon Railway Accidents', *The London Review*, 28 Jan 1865, 117

The complaint against railway Directors really comes to this – that they carry on a business of a very dangerous kind, a very simple accident in which may produce the most terrible consequences

Anon., 'The Railways Again', *The Saturday Review*, 31 Jan 1874, 137-38 (p. 137)

For Alexander Anderson, accidents show what happens to the workers who are unable to assimilate into the machine space, thereby elevating those who successfully negotiate the power of the engine. Anderson also emphasises that, in addition to his and his colleagues' experiences, his poems detailing accidents were inspired by newspaper reports. In this chapter, I move out from this discussion to explore accidents centred around the passengers, rather than the workers, as they were written in the periodicals of the kind Anderson was reading. Across the 1860s and 70s the periodical press was building the perception that accidents were occurring with alarming regularity. This can be seen with articles such as, 'Terrible Railway Accident', 'The Dangers Of The Rail', 'The Railway Accident Season', 'The Latest Railway Accident', 'Accident Upon Accident', and 'A Month's Railway Accidents'.<sup>1</sup> These titles display a weariness with the perceived frequency of railway disasters, whilst their accounts range from major crashes involving multiple trains and

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Terrible Railway Accident' (1860) appears in *The Examiner*, *John Bull* published 'The Dangers of the Rail' (1861), whilst 'The Railway Accident Season' (1863), 'The Latest Railway Accident' (1870), 'Accident Upon Accident' (1873), and 'A Month's Railway Accidents' (1873) are all taken from *The Saturday Review*.

numerous fatalities, to relatively minor accidents with few injuries. As one writer in an 1865 edition of *Good Words* observes:

The enormous stimulus which the Railway has given to travelling, has by no means reached its limit; and yet, considering the alarming accidents, or rather terrible catastrophes, which even now periodically frighten the public [...] it is impossible not to look at the future with some apprehension.<sup>2</sup>

In marked difference to Anderson and his optimistic vision of progress, this writer looks to the future with fear and apprehension due to the rate at which ‘alarming accidents’ and ‘terrible catastrophes’ were seen as occurring. The railway space may symbolise the accomplishments of mankind, but accidents destabilise the progressive ideals embodied within the machine ensemble, leading instead to an environment defined by anxiety. This is demonstrated by Amy Milne-Smith who writes that the 1860s ‘were awash with fears about violence and danger on the railway’.<sup>3</sup> The perception that the Victorian railway space was plagued by violent accidents is one that has lingered, with many critics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries claiming the same. L.T.C. Rolt for example, writes in 1978 that the ‘[eighteen] seventies were indeed a black decade in railway history’.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Michael Cook writes in 2011 of the nineteenth-century railway system’s ‘appalling record of accidents’.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst the perception was, and largely remains, that the Victorian railway was defined by violence, in reality the machine ensemble in these two decades was a comparatively safe environment. The writer of an 1863 article from *Reynold’s Miscellany* explains that in 1862, a year in which 180,420,071 passengers travelled on the British railway system, thirty-five passengers lost their lives. Of that number, nine of these deaths were

---

<sup>2</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accidents and Chief Securities Against Them’, *Good Words*, 1 Aug 1865, 578-86 (p. 578).

<sup>3</sup> Amy Milne-Smith, ‘Shattered Minds: Madmen on the Railways, 1860-80’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21 (2016), 21-39 (p. 21).

<sup>4</sup> L.T.C Rolt, *Red for Danger* (London: Pan Books, 1978), p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Cook, ‘The Locked Compartment: Charles Dickens’s “The Signalman” and Enclosure in the Railway Mystery Story’, in *Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction*, ed. by Michael Cook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 22.

caused by neglect on the part of the individual.<sup>6</sup> This was corroborated by an 1862 article in *The Cornhill Magazine* which states, ‘the terrors of railway accidents [cannot] have much effect, especially now that experience has shown that the accidents are insignificant compared with those which occurred in the “good old days of coaching”’.<sup>7</sup> This writer then includes data very similar to that above, reflecting that in 1860 the death rate of passengers on British trains was 1 in 5.6 million, whilst on the old coaching network in France, the only country this writer provides data for, the death rate was around 1 in 335,000. Evidence suggests that the statistics were similar in the UK. Indeed, *Chambers’s Journal* published an article in 1862, titled ‘Facts About Railways’, which states that the ‘deaths and injuries in one year of travelling by railway bear no proportion to the great extent of disastrous accidents under the old, coaching-system’.<sup>8</sup>

If the railway space was relatively safe during the 1860s and 70s, why was there a persistent view that the ‘railways are still killing people as fast as they can’, as the writer of one 1873 *Saturday Review* article reflected?<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it is an issue of perception. I argue that the frequency of articles discussing the dangers of train travel does not reflect the actual safety of the network, but rather signals an increased awareness on the part of the periodical writers towards the darker aspects of the railway’s spatial production. When an accident occurs, the inherent lack of care for passengers, the fetishising of capital above all else, and the commodification of the human corpus are revealed. As I have demonstrated across this thesis, these elements were always embedded in the railway space, but it is the accident and its aftermath that renders them visible in the eyes of the public. The railway carriage breaks down at the moment of catastrophe, but so too does the façade of the network as an environment of egalitarian connectivity and mobility. Instead, the true nature of the railway

---

<sup>6</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Statistics’, *Reynold’s Miscellany*, 31 Oct 1863, 302.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., ‘The Effect of Railways on Health’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 6 Oct 1862, 480-89 (p. 481).

<sup>8</sup> Anon., ‘Facts about Railways’, *Chambers’s Journal*, 27 Dec 1862, 404-06 (p. 404).

<sup>9</sup> Anon., ‘The Railway Point of View’, *The Saturday Review*, 13 Sep 1873, 333-35 (p. 333).

as a mercenary space perpetuating the ideologies of mid-Victorian industrial capitalism, is exposed for all to see.

To explore how accidents reveal the produced nature of railway space, I analyse four facets of writing on railway crashes during the 1860s and 70s in the periodical press. I begin with accidents surrounding excursion trains to show how they were used by periodical writers as an exemplar of the worst examples of corporate greed. As part of this discussion, I also counter the view that railway accidents were indiscriminate. I show instead that railway crashes were perceived as disproportionately affecting the poorer members of society. I then focus in from this discussion to explore the representations of one specific accident involving excursion trains, the Clayton Tunnel crash of 1861. This crash, despite being the worst on the British railway system at that time and particularly shocking for taking place in a tunnel, is nonetheless indicative of the typical responses to railway accidents in the press. I then explore how newspapers and journals advertised railway insurance, with insurance allowing the traveller to reclaim their body inside the network by protecting what the operators saw as dispensable. However, insurance also further commodified the individual, confronting them with the exact value of their corpus.

In the final section, I trace how newspapers and journals responded to the growing popularity of railway keys across the 1860s. I show that they were perceived as a tactic for passengers to ensure their safety inside the network, allowing egress in the event of a crash. But also, and like railway insurance, how keys were depicted as serving a psychological function too, revaluing the human body that was seen as undermined by the destructive forces of the railway. Recognising the transgressive properties of keys, the railway companies were quick to clamp down on their usage. I therefore conclude this project by analysing how there are always slippages in the rigid boundaries of produced spaces. Passengers reclaim their individuality inside the network, break free from the despotic pressures of the railway space,

and find their own uses of it, even if only in small gestures and actions. The railway accident exposes the worst elements of the railway's production but in so doing, it also provides the conditions for passengers to fight back and resist.

**‘There must be something wrong about excursion trains’**

In the decades leading up to 1860, the popularity of excursion trains was growing at an exponential rate, with cheap tickets democratising spaces such as the seaside as new recreational environments for the Victorian traveller to explore. Although excursion trains democratised travel, they also became a key area of concern when it came to railway safety. To make the maximum financial returns these trains were often extremely long, carrying far more carriages than a normal express or mail. They operated in addition to the regular timetable and frequently travelled close together to pack the greatest number of trains into the comparatively short period of time in which excursionists wished to travel. For these reasons, by the 1860s excursion trains had become a metaphor for the perceived greed and carelessness of the railway operators. This can be seen in an 1878 illustration taken from *Punch*:



“THERE AND (NOT) BACK!”

(Vide any Daily Newspaper.)

Figure 10. ‘There and (Not) Back’, *Punch* (1878) <<https://punch.photoshelter.com/image/I00009c4OZDxea4U>> [Accessed 17 March 2020]

Advertisements with their promises of ‘excursions’ or invitations to ‘spend a happy day’ by the sea surround the ticket desk, promoting the cheap fares on offer. In so doing, they highlight the consumable nature of the space. Much like the plethora of advertisements that would have appeared on the platforms themselves at this time, the *Punch* illustration is firmly placing the railways within the spectacle culture of the latter half of the nineteenth century, with space itself turned into a product for sale. The visual language at play within this illustration is effective in and of itself in highlighting the mercenary and consumable nature of the railways, but the cartoonist goes further. By replacing the ticket seller with a skeleton,

they directly illustrate the dangers of the machine ensemble. Not only does this image highlight the role that railway companies play within consumerism, but it also demonstrates the perceived brutality of the operators and implicitly conflates the two. The fact that the skeleton in the window synonymous with death is surrounded by these advertisements for joy, sun, and family time, starkly frames the loss of human life that was increasingly seen as a by-product of capitalism by the late 1870s. The illustration is encouraging us to reflect that these advertisements, all with their promises of consumable pleasure, are directly linked to the loss of life within the current economic model, inviting us to conclude that railway capitalism explicitly means paying the skeleton his due.

The theme of death inside the railway space was not unusual for *Punch*, with similar imagery appearing in 1890 showing a skeleton piloting a locomotive whilst an over-worked driver slumbers next to him in the cab. Or ‘Railway Undertaking’, a sketch published in 1852, in which an undertaker offers his card to passing passengers, or ‘Railway Literature’ from the same year where a station bookseller advises a female passenger to buy ‘Broken Legs: And How to Mend Them’ in readiness for her journey.<sup>10</sup> None of these sketches explicitly concern excursion trains, but they do display the same idea as the 1878 illustration above, namely, that to travel in the railway space, particularly on holiday trains, equates to violent death or injury. Michael Freeman writes that, ‘*Punch* adopted the stance of advocate of the middle classes against the unscrupulousness of railway directors and officers, particularly over the carelessness of organisation that led to accidents’.<sup>11</sup> I explored in Chapter Three how satirical publications in the 1860s and 70s were amongst the most

---

<sup>10</sup> ‘Railway Literature’, *Punch* (1852), ‘Railway Undertaking’, *Punch* (1852), and ‘Death and His Brother Sleep’, *Punch* (1890)  
[https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&\\_bqG=2&\\_bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ\\_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob\\_3lwZWtRALs\\_LPQkXLGAvf3X5PK3OZrq\\_C2\\_6wbpzfclxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfQ4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjQumLRT6TjL.j.DeK\\_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI\\_AW7x11f2vXxQC\\_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx\\_QItgnS5&GI\\_ID=>](https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&_bqG=2&_bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob_3lwZWtRALs_LPQkXLGAvf3X5PK3OZrq_C2_6wbpzfclxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfQ4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjQumLRT6TjL.j.DeK_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI_AW7x11f2vXxQC_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx_QItgnS5&GI_ID=>) [Accessed 3 January 2021].

<sup>11</sup> Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p. 101.



voracious critics of the railway, ridiculing the obedience to rules, rigid timetables, and bizarre legislation governing the railway space. The same is true when it comes to railway accidents, with satirical magazines vocal in their criticism of corporate greed. However, when read in the context of its fellow publications, *Punch* was neither more nor less of an ‘advocate’ against the railway directors than its rivals in both the comic and serious press. Nor was this an exclusively middle-class phenomenon, but papers across the social spectrum, from cheap penny publications to wealthy upper-class magazines, turned their voice to both manufacturing and then advocating the concerns of their readership. Even the illustrator of the 1878 picture above recognises this through the included subheading, ‘Vide any daily newspaper’. Railway accidents were perceived as occurring with such regularity that one may pick a paper almost at random and be able to vindicate the events described in *Punch*.

This is demonstrated by the middle to upper-class *London Review*. As I explained in Chapter Three, *The London Review* was frequently critical of the railways, in no small part because of its editor’s unfortunate history with the railway boom of the 1840s. In 1864, the paper published an article stating that accidents, “‘on the line” have of late become so frequent that our morning paper is very rarely without at least one to give zest to its columns’.<sup>12</sup> This issue of the paper even carried an article called ‘The Unprotected Male’, expressing anxiety for lone men travelling by train in the wake of Briggs’s murder, as well as two articles covering railway accidents that had occurred earlier the same week.<sup>13</sup> However, it was excursion trains that gave the writers in *The London Review* the greatest concern and displayed most clearly the produced nature of the machine ensemble. As the writer of an 1861 article reflects, ‘There must be something wrong about excursion trains’, especially:

When it is found that accidents very rarely happen to ordinary trains or first-class passengers, but that they frequently happen to excursion trains and to second and third-class passengers. If the fact be so, - as we think no one who runs over a list of all

---

<sup>12</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accidents’, *The London Review*, 20 Aug 1864, 201-02 (p. 201).

<sup>13</sup> Anon., ‘The Unprotected Male’, *The London Review*, 20 Aug 1864, 198-99.

the fatal railway casualties that have occurred since railways superseded all other modes of travelling, will deny, - one of two conclusions is inevitable: either that less care is bestowed upon excursion trains and their passengers than upon ordinary traffic; or that excursion trains are, by their very nature, so dangerous, that no amount of care and attention can render them safe as the ordinary mails and expresses that run at the usual hours.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to railway crashes, Cornish, Banks, et al. highlight that, despite ‘the railways’ relative safety, these incidents, with their shocking nature and indiscriminate effects on the general public, became a defining feature of the Victorians’ experience of travel’.<sup>15</sup> This is true, but only in part. Certainly, the de-individualising and apparently undiscerning nature of these accidents was deeply concerning to a Victorian readership. However, this is not the entire picture, as the *London Review* writer emphasises. Far from being an indiscriminate, socially-levelling force, this writer argues that railway accidents are disproportionately affecting the poorer members of society. They then interpret the lack of care surrounding excursion trains as a systematic attack on working-class passengers. They propose two possible reasons for this, either a lack of care being bestowed upon excursionists because of their lower status, or else that these trains are so inherently dangerous that they can never be as safe as regular trains. Whichever of these reasons is closer to the truth, both lay the blame with the railway operators, uncaringly endangering the lives of the working-class travellers they were responsible for.

As the ‘Excursion Trains’ article continues, the writer’s criticism of the railway operators increases. They emphasise that excursion trains, ‘are found to be very profitable to the railway companies’. Therefore:

It might be supposed, for these reasons, that the directors and officials, instead of employing less, would employ greater care in the management of a branch of their business which is so remunerative as well as so popular. But the reverse appears to be the case. The excursion train is an addition to the work of the railway system, but is

---

<sup>14</sup> Anon., ‘Excursion Trains’, *The London Review*, 31 Aug 1861, 257-58 (p. 257).

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Banks, William Cornish, Charles Mitchell, Paul Mitchell, and Rebecca Probert, *Law and Society in England: 1750-1950* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2019), p. 458.

not accompanied by a corresponding addition to the working strength of the Company.<sup>16</sup>

The writer's attack on the railway directors centres squarely around the injustices and dangers that they perceive to be at the heart of the excursion train model. They also emphasise the exchange of capital within the railway network, identifying the profitability of the excursion trains and their popularity for the railway companies as a dependable and lucrative source of income. In light of this, the operating companies should take more care of such an economically productive part of their ensemble. In fact, the opposite is true; far from showing more care for excursionists, leisure travellers are perceived as a dispensable commodity and treated with far less regard than regular passengers.

Similar arguments are voiced in another *London Review* article from June 1865. In this piece, the writer reports:

They pay their money – who shall say with how much self-denial it has been saved? – take the little pasteboard passports which give them their title to be driven through their journey at a pace which seems to place the scene of their holiday enjoyment miles away.<sup>17</sup>

This writer, like the author of the 'Excursion Trains' article, highlights the direct relationship between capital and danger inside the railway space. They imagine the working-class passengers saving to buy the 'pasteboard passports', highlighting the exchange of money for movement that occurs inside the railway. After the passengers board the train, they travel for ten miles in 'innocent, confiding happiness' before the train reaches a part of the track where the rails have been lifted.<sup>18</sup> As the train careers off the line, there 'is now one long sound – long it sounds, although it was scarcely for a minute – of crashing woodwork; carriage is heaped on carriage'.<sup>19</sup> The tone throughout the article is sensationalistic, with the writer continually drawing the reader's eye to the horrors they are imagining inside the railway

---

<sup>16</sup> Anon., 'Excursion Trains', p. 257.

<sup>17</sup> Anon., 'Railway Accidents', *The London Review*, 24 Jun 1865, 654-55 (p. 654).

<sup>18</sup> Anon., 'Railway Accidents', p. 654.

<sup>19</sup> Anon., 'Railway Accidents', p. 654.

space. The writer even uses the second person address of ‘you perceive’ and ‘you hear’, to attempt to pull their reader into the events they are envisioning and to convince them of the very real dangers of excursion trains.<sup>20</sup> Although this writer is undoubtedly drawing on real incidents, for instance the Staplehurst crash involving Dickens which had occurred earlier that month and was caused by similar circumstances, the scene they describe is entirely imaginary. This further suggests how the anxiety around railway travel was not reflective of actual safety but was instead a response to the broader social conditions revealed in the railway crash.

Having conjured this imagined scene, the writer then asks:

Would such careless work be allowed on any line on which the Queen or Prince of Wales was expected to travel? If the directors determined to have a day ‘out’ and dine together to celebrate a parliamentary triumph at some town on their line, would their special train be subjected to such risk?<sup>21</sup>

The writer is clear where the blame lies for the carelessness towards the working-class excursionists, it is the fault of the companies and the ‘careless’, ‘sleepy half-stupid’ railway labourers.<sup>22</sup> It is precisely these views of the railway workers, as lazy and uncaring, that Anderson was attempting to counter in the previous chapter. But here the writer conflates the workers and the company together as part of a system that does not protect its passengers. They suggest that if high-status individuals, or the directors themselves, were traversing the line more care would be taken to protect them. Railway accidents, even imaginary ones, are framed as a class battle, the directors perpetuating violence and interested only in lining their own pockets at the expense of the poor. This was the case from the earliest days of the railway with the entire system produced by the forces of industrialised capitalism, but the violence of accidents renders these inherent aggressions visible to a wider cross-section of society.

---

<sup>20</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accidents’, p. 654.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accidents’, p. 654.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accidents’, p. 654.

Like *The London Review*, *The Saturday Review* also published frequently on accidents. In fact, *The Saturday Review* sat alongside *The Examiner* and *The Athenæum* as the three newspapers publishing most often on railway accidents, with a collected 3202 articles appearing in these three journals between 1860 and 1880.<sup>23</sup> It published accidents involving leisure trains especially regularly. For instance, ‘The Accident Season’ (1873) in which the writer reflects that:

Railway accidents and grouse come into season together. Accidents of a more or less serious kind are of course going on every day, but the great massacres of the year are reserved for the weeks between the end of July and the beginning of September.<sup>24</sup>

In Chapter Three, I saw how *The Saturday Review* was divided over the issue of Metropolitan railways, with some writers seeing them as a necessary vehicle for slum clearance and urban re-modelling whereas others emphasised their iconoclastic impact on the built environment. When it comes to writing on railway incidents, the voice of its contributors becomes homogenised with the paper frequently and consistently critical of the corporate greed seen as causing them. This article also bears similarities, both in content and title, to another piece published in *The Saturday Review* in 1866 entitled ‘The Railway Accident season’. In this earlier article, the writer argues that, ‘There are late and early years, as for grouse, so likewise for smashes’.<sup>25</sup> It shows how little had changed in the seven years between these two editions, with a continuing sense that the holiday season brought more casualties upon the rails as a result of the increased excursion trains. These authors suggest that railway accidents are as much part of the modern calendar year as grouse season, emphasising further the frequency with which accidents involving excursionists were perceived as occurring.

Through this, the writers also invite parallels between the grouse being bred purely to be shot

---

<sup>23</sup> Proquest (2021)

<<https://search.proquest.com/britishperiodicals/results/9DBF83FD58BD4A2DPQ/1?accountid=8318>> [Accessed 3 January 2021].

<sup>24</sup> Anon., ‘The Accident Season’, *The Saturday Review*, 16 Aug 1873, 204-05 (p. 204).

<sup>25</sup> Anon., ‘The Railway Accident Season’, *The Saturday Review*, 1 Sep 1866, 265-66 (p. 265).

and the passengers blindly being massacred, killed not by marksmen but by the railway companies.

Returning to the 1873 'Accident Season' article, having established the regularity of accidents, the writer once again explicitly criticises the railway companies:

There is nothing more disheartening than writing about railway accidents which are not accidents at all, but simply the necessary and inevitable consequences of the reckless mismanagement and parsimony of the Companies. It is supposed that the press forms or guides public opinion, and that public opinion is omnipotent. But against these powerful corporations public opinion can do nothing.<sup>26</sup>

Accidents too become trapped in a network defined by timetables and closely regulated movement and begin to occur with the regularity of 'the course of a comet'; an image that parallels *Middlemarch* and *Songs of the Rail*, with the inevitability of the railways compared to the movement of astronomical objects.<sup>27</sup> The reason that accidents are so disheartening is because they are entirely avoidable. They are not the result of inherent dangers or vulnerabilities in railway technology but are instead caused by 'reckless mismanagement'. It is the 'parsimony' of the operators and their fetishising of capital above all else that results in dangerous conditions inside the ensemble. The writer recognises the role of the press in shaping and moulding public opinion, highlighting the potential power of the periodicals in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. But this power is ultimately futile. Despite the widespread public anger stirred by the press against the productive forces of the companies, still nothing changes. 'We could pick up, almost at random, a back volume of this or any other journal', the writer continues, 'and find there an article which would be just as appropriate to existing circumstances as if it had been freshly written'.<sup>28</sup> In this, the writer reflects the illustrator in *Punch* and the journalist for *The London Review* and the sense that one could pick at random any newspaper and read of another railway calamity. 'Pick up' any journal, this writer

---

<sup>26</sup> Anon., 'The Accident Season', p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> Anon., 'The Accident Season', p. 204.

<sup>28</sup> Anon., 'The Accident Season', p. 205.

invites, and you will find an article exactly like this. And exactly like this article, its role in shaping public perception and anger will be significant, whilst its role in influencing policy change will be inconsequential.

### **‘The most terrible disaster that has ever yet occurred’: The Clayton Tunnel Crash, 1861**

As the writers of the articles above highlight, one mid-nineteenth-century accident can almost stand in for another in terms of cause, representation, and impact. With this in mind, I am focusing specifically on The Clayton Tunnel Catastrophe of 25 August 1861, using it as a case study for demonstrating how the press represented accidents and the corporate greed that was seen as causing them. Twenty-three passengers lost their lives and a hundred and seventy-six were injured inside the Clayton Tunnel near Brighton when two trains collided after a signal failure, incorrectly stating that the tunnel was empty. One of these was an excursion train, adding fuel to the debates surrounding leisure trains discussed above. This was the worst crash that had occurred on the British rail network to date and the first in which more than twenty passengers died. The 1860s therefore began with a crash unlike any that preceded it in terms of lives lost. This would go on to shape the responses to accidents across the succeeding decades, in fiction as well as in the newspapers. For instance, Dickens’s ‘The Signalman’, included in *Mugby Junction*, with its famous crash in the tunnel and signal box scenes, was almost certainly influenced by this catastrophe five years earlier.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Karen Odden argues that this accident played a role in the development of sensation fiction which would expand rapidly both in frequency and popularity from 1861, and regularly feature railway accidents as key plot devices.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Peter Haining, ‘Introduction’, in *The Complete Ghost Stories of Charles Dickens*, by Charles Dickens (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Karen M. Odden, ‘25 August 1861: The Clayton Tunnel Rail Crash, the Medical Profession, and the Sensation Novel’, *Victorian Review*, 40 (2014), 30-34 (p. 33).

Almost immediately after the accident, *The Saturday Review* published ‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’ (1861). This article begins with the author reflecting how:

After a quarter of a century of railway travelling and railway experience, we have an accident – we use the word to avoid a circumlocution which greater accuracy in defining the Brighton catastrophe would involve – which exceeds, both in the actual loss of life and in the horrors of its attendant circumstances, all that have gone before it.<sup>31</sup>

This writer is notably reluctant to define the crash as an ‘accident’ because that implies something unavoidable with no-one to blame for it. Instead, they are clear that the ‘real responsibility of this calamity rests on no pointsman, nor signalman, nor driver, but on the Company which undertakes to carry more passengers in a given space of time than that time will safely allow’.<sup>32</sup> In the same way as *The Saturday Review* article that I explored in the previous section, the fact that this accident was avoidable only emphasises the tragedy. It is the railway operators who are responsible for the loss of life inside the tunnel, with their greed leading to the lines being over-worked, resulting in the most devastating crash at that time.

The recognition that the Clayton Tunnel Crash was worse than any prior accident echoed across the printed press. The writer of an article published the same day on the front page of the liberal *The Examiner*, for instance, reflects that this was ‘the most terrible disaster that has ever yet occurred’.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the *Six Penny Magazine* writes in the wake of the Clayton accident that ‘every year has contributed something to the supposed perfection of the system; and yet the worst apprehensions of its most timid opponents are beginning, only now, to be realised’.<sup>34</sup> The writer then considers the ‘country gentlemen’ who used to be mocked for his fear of train travel, now vindicated in his anxieties by the rising rate of accidents.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Anon., ‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’, *The Saturday Review*, 31 Aug 1861, 213-14 (p. 213).

<sup>32</sup> Anon., ‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’, p. 214.

<sup>33</sup> Anon., ‘The Brighton Railway Disaster’, *The Examiner*, 31 Aug 1861, 545-46 (p. 545).

<sup>34</sup> Anon., ‘Law and Crime’, *The Sixpenny Magazine*, Oct 1861, 502-06 (p. 502).

<sup>35</sup> Anon., ‘Law and Crime’, p. 502.



The accident proves a unifying moment whereby criticism of the railway space is acknowledged as justified. Despite the improvements to the railway system, accidents continue to occur because the model on which the railway companies operate is broken and favours the managers above the passengers. This is something certain old ‘country gentlemen’ recognised from the beginning, as I saw through my analysis of Eliot and Gaskell’s fiction, but the rate of accidents upholds their arguments more broadly in the public mind.

Returning to *The Saturday Review* article, ‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’, the writer continues, ‘there is a natural feeling that a sudden, violent, and painful death is more frightful when the victim is in holiday guise and with holiday feelings’.<sup>36</sup> This writer is not alone in these sentiments. The writer of one of the *London Review* articles that I explored above, also from August 1861, highlights the same sense of horror in the cruel juxtaposition of leisure travellers losing their lives inside the uncaring spatiality of the railway:

The hideous accident in the Clayton Tunnel of the London and Brighton Railway, by which twenty-three persons, young and old, who, a moment previously were in the full enjoyment of life and health, out for a holiday excursion, and animated by the keenest anticipations of pleasure, were suddenly hurried into eternity by a frightful death, is one of the most appalling that has ever occurred in the annals of railways.<sup>37</sup>

Here the writer addresses the disparity between the leisure travellers enjoying their holidays by excursion train and the technological violence of the railway crash, with the natures and dispositions of the holidaymakers in diametric opposition to the cold productive environment of the railway and its directors. By highlighting this binary at the heart of the railway space, the writer emphasises just how broken the model of the machine ensemble is, with the operators and passengers pitted against one another and epitomising competing interests, rather than sharing a collective network. The author of an article in *Reynolds’s Miscellany* in

---

<sup>36</sup> Anon., ‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’, pp. 213-14.

<sup>37</sup> Anon., ‘Excursion Trains’, p. 257.

September 1861 highlights the same. ‘They were bound on a pleasure excursion’, the writer establishes:

They had left the cares of business – the anxieties of the week behind them. They looked forward to nothing but ease and recreation. They were full of confidence in the safety of their means of conveyance, and in the skill and prudence of those who were to pilot them to their destination. In an instant they were stricken down.<sup>38</sup>

As well as emphasising the cruel disparity between the leisure-minded travellers and the violence of the railways, this writer addresses a further dichotomy inside the railway space, with the passengers trusting the machinery conveying them to whisk them safely to their destination. Far from being safe and reliable, the operators and the machinery failed the passengers. In this, the *Reynolds’s* writer differs from *The Saturday Review* author, who lays the blame purely with the managing directors. Instead, this journalist blames the entire railway space for the failure, perceiving the managers, machinery, and workers alike as part of a machine ensemble lacking in ‘skill’ and ‘prudence’ and unfit to take proper care of the passengers within its bounds.

The *Reynolds’s* writer emphasises that the accident’s occurrence in a tunnel was one of the reasons it was so violent. They write of the:

Tortures of the survivors, pent up within the walls of the black tunnel, scalded with steam, half-suffocated with smoke, unable to see their hands before their faces, jammed and jostled together, a seething, groaning mass of humanity [...] When to the horrors of the Royal George are added the agonies of the Black Hole at Calcutta, a faint idea may be realised of what was experienced by the prisoners in the Clayton Tunnel on that Sunday morning.<sup>39</sup>

The writer continues to address the violent nature of the railway space, presenting the passengers as ‘prisoners’ devoid of agency and trapped in a network that does not care for their safety. In this space they face torture, suffocation, and scalding, highlighting the brutal effects of the machine malfunctioning and framing further the disparities between the fragile

---

<sup>38</sup> Anon., ‘Terrible Accident on the London and Brighton Railway’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 14 Sep 1861, 185–86 (p. 185).

<sup>39</sup> Anon., ‘Terrible Accident’, p. 185.

human corpus and the unrelenting energies of technology. I saw in the previous chapter how Anderson celebrates the workers who can operate to the beat of the machine, but for the passengers it is unreasonable to expect the same merger with technology. Instead, they are consistently portrayed in opposition to the engine. This violent imagery was typical for *Reynolds's*, with the writer of an article published the same year describing the aftermath of a crash at Hampstead and how there was, 'visible the head of one man and the legs and arms of another' under the locomotive.<sup>40</sup> In this lurid imagery, one can see traces of the literary aesthetic of the magazine's editor, George William MacArthur Reynolds. He ran the magazine until 1869 and had a violent, sexualised, and sensationalistic style which he voiced in the articles he published in the penny dreadfuls, even writing his own penny dreadful, *The Mysteries of London*, until 1846.<sup>41</sup>

The violence of the railway accident was not only against the body, but against identity too. I have explored in previous chapters some of the ways that the nineteenth-century railway space was approached as a de-individualising environment, whether that was in terms of the non-place of the Underground or the uniformity of stations. As the *Reynolds's* writer emphasises, the railway accident is especially and uniquely homogenising, with passengers 'jammed and jostled together'. Published on the front page, the article also includes an illustration, and this displays vividly how passengers were reduced to a 'seething, groaning mass of humanity':

---

<sup>40</sup> Anon., 'The Fearful Accident on the Hampstead Junction Railway', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 28 Sep 1861, 213.

<sup>41</sup> Anon., 'Penny Dreadful, The Mysteries of London', *British Library* (n.d.) <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/penny-dreadful-the-mysteries-of-london#>> [Accessed 5 February 2021].

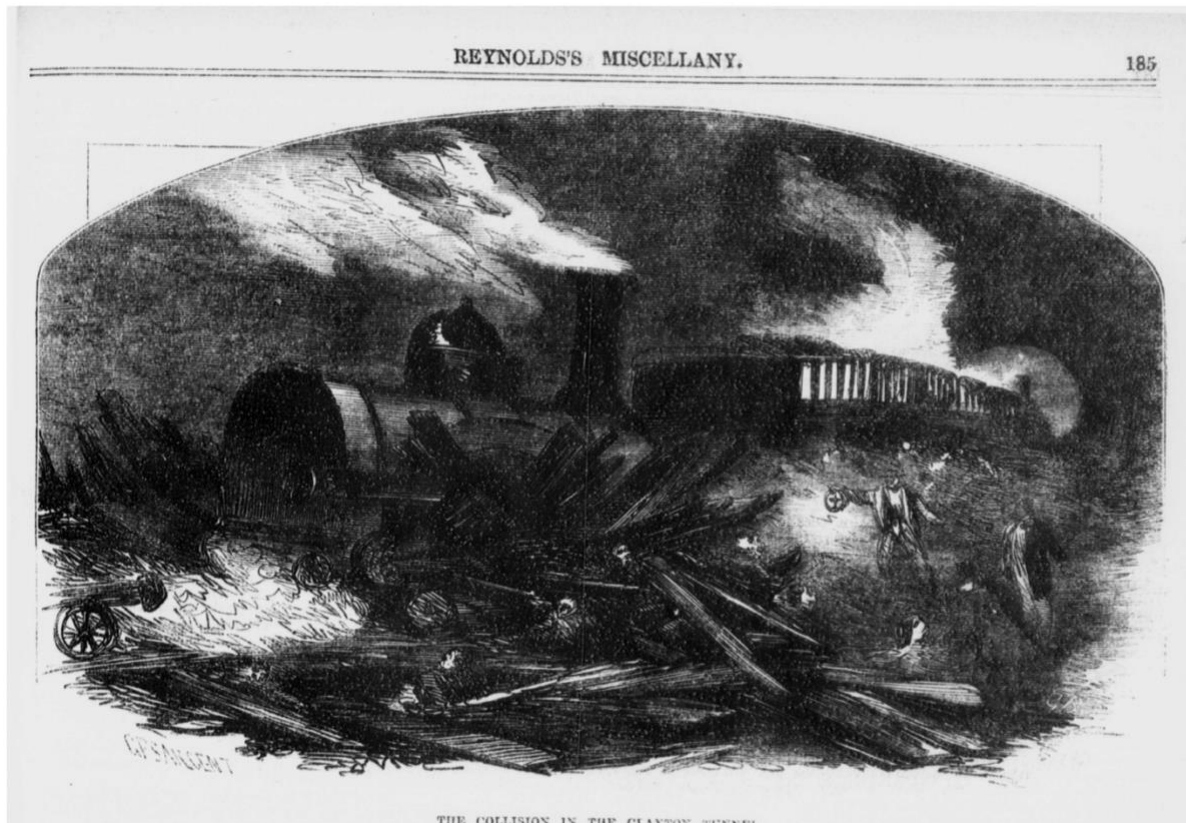


Figure 11. Anon, 'The Collision in the Clayton Tunnel', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 14 Sep 1861, 185

The image is dark with the rounded frame of the picture evocative of the tunnel itself, the entrance of which is dimly visible in the distance. This use of shade adds to the sense of constriction already evidenced within the image and amplifies the claustrophobia of the tunnel's spatiality. The fire is raging from the carriage whilst below lies the mangled wreckage of splintered wood, with the dim outlines of human faces amongst the debris. For the most part it is impossible to tell what is wood and what is organic, and whether these human faces are dead or alive remains unknown, imbuing the illustration with a sense of ambiguity and de-individualising the victims caught in the accident.

It was not only in this article where G.W.M. Reynolds published criticisms of the railway space. The writer of 'High Speed on Railways' (1861), disparages the railway operators for wasting money on more powerful and faster trains, with the piece critical of

both the lack of investment in safety, and over-investment in perceived vanity projects.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, in the ‘wit and humour’ section of the periodical, a short piece on ‘Railway Maxims’ was published in 1866, and one of the maxims proposed that the ‘great charm of the railway accident, is that, no matter how many are killed and mangled, no one is to blame’.<sup>43</sup> Although intended as a joke, this once more gestures towards the perception that the railway operators were not only becoming more careless, but actively working to avoid being held responsible for the deaths occurring in their spaces.

To compensate for the railway companies’ lack of accountability, the periodicals turned to apportioning blame and petitioning for change themselves in the wake of the Clayton crash. Another article in *The Saturday Review* entitled ‘A Caution to Railway Directors’ takes exactly this approach in the year after the accident. The writer states:

A case which was tried at Guildford on Monday may serve as an opportune moment to railway directors to take decent care of the lives and limbs of their passengers during the present holiday season. It was one of the many actions against the London and Brighton Company arising out of the frightful Clayton Tunnel accident of last August; and the effect of the verdict is that the Company have to distribute upwards of 600l.<sup>44</sup>

The title of the article highlights the turning tide against railway directors, with the piece intended as a warning for those railway companies that partake in negligence for reasons of economy. The Fatal Accidents Act (1846), commonly referred to as Lord Campbell’s Act, made the railway companies liable for the injuries sustained by the passengers, with compensation intended to dissuade companies from cutting corners. However, this was not without its controversies, particularly as Campbell argued that if passengers took out life insurance this should reduce the amount of compensation they received from the railway operators.<sup>45</sup> Whilst attitudes were slowly changing and railway companies no longer enjoyed

---

<sup>42</sup> Anon., ‘High Speed on Railways’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 7 Sep 1861, 164.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Maxims’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 31 Mar 1866, 239.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., ‘A Caution to Railway Directors’, *The Saturday Review*, 16 Aug 1862, 180-81 (p. 180).

<sup>45</sup> Anon., ‘Legislative Interference’, *The National Magazine*, Nov 1861, 5-7.

the freedom of the early rail years, the value of passengers' lives was a debate that continued throughout the nineteenth century, further emphasising the mercenary underpinnings of the entire rail system. I have focused the discussion here on one particularly influential accident in 1861. But despite its scale, the Clayton disaster stands in for the typical accidents of these decades, in terms of the language and imagery writers used to capture their horrors, and the perceived carelessness and consumerism that was seen as leading to such crashes in the first place.

### **Insuring against railway accidents**

As part of the rising perception that the railways were becoming increasingly dangerous and operators evermore callous, railway insurance rose in tandem in the mid-nineteenth century. As well as serving a practical purpose as financial recompense in case of injury or death, the benefits of insurance are psychological in nature too. As Geoffrey Clark writes in his monograph *Betting on Lives*, insurance was a 'bold effort to extend human control over accident, ill fortune, and indeed, over uncertainty itself'.<sup>46</sup> Faced with a network defined by contingency where risks were perceived as unavoidable and control and agency were frequently denied the passengers, railway insurance offered travellers the chance to reclaim power. An article appears in a 1904 edition of *The Saturday Review* which, despite being outside of the temporal scope of this thesis, traces the history of railway insurance in the period I am scrutinising. The writer reflects how:

Accident insurance in this country commenced about the middle of the nineteenth-century, and owes its origin to the introduction of the railways. People were so impressed by the dangers of travelling in this novel way that a large number of companies were projected for the purpose of insuring against railway accidents [...] Insurance against railway accidents was followed within a year or two by insurance against accidents in general.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey Clark, *Betting on Lives: The Culture of Life Insurance, 1695-1775* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., 'Changes in Accident Insurance', *The Saturday Review*, 30 Jul 1904, 132.

The writer is clear that railway insurance emerged from the dangers at the heart of the machine ensemble, with passengers desiring to safeguard against the mercenary tactics of the railway companies. After railway insurance became normalised, life insurance more generally followed in its wake.

The periodical press frequently carried advertisements for railway insurance agencies. One such example can be found in Dickens's *All the Year Round* in 1867 with an advert for the 'Railway Passengers' Assurance Company, 64 Cornhill London'. This large and imposing advert begins with the ominous heading, 'Accidents will happen' and 'EVERYONE SHOULD THEREFORE PROVIDE AGAINST THEM!'.<sup>48</sup> The language is universalising, with accidents presented as unavoidable and indiscriminate, with everyone at risk of violent death inside the railway space. A similar advert for the same company appeared in *The Athenæum* in 1863, advising that, '£149,000 has been already paid as COMPENSATION FOR ACCIDENTS OF ALL KINDS'.<sup>49</sup> Identical adverts appeared in a wide variety of periodicals, most commonly *The London Review* and *The Examiner*. It is far from coincidental that the journals that published most frequently on railway accidents in the 1860s and 70s are also the journals that carry the most frequent adverts for railway insurance.

Inevitably, these papers would publish accounts of accidents in the same edition that carried advertisements for railway insurance. For instance, three adverts for insurance agencies were printed in the 16 August 1862 edition of *The Saturday Review*, considered above for its article criticising railway directors for their negligence. This can also be seen with the 15 August 1863 edition of *The Examiner*. In the advertisement section, one can find adverts for the 'Imperial Life Insurance Company', 'Rock's Life Assurance Company', and 'The Royal Insurance Company'.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, the paper also carried 'How Railway

---

<sup>48</sup> 'Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company', *All the Year Round*, 27 Apr 1867, 445.

<sup>49</sup> 'Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company', *The Athenæum*, 23 May 1863, 694.

<sup>50</sup> 'Advertisements', *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 528.

Accidents are Prepared', an article that reflects on the dangers of overcrowded excursion trains on the Great Eastern Railway being dispatched 'without at all considering whether it is the time to despatch a regular train or not'.<sup>51</sup> The same edition also carried a front page account of 'The Lynn Railway Accident' in which six passengers died after a bullock strayed onto the line.<sup>52</sup> As railway accidents were perceived as occurring with alarming frequency, so too did railway insurance rise in response to combat the network's perceived lack of safety. And as personal insurance became more popular, so too did the perception of the railway as unsafe continue to develop in tandem. This led to a vicious circle of capital, consumption, and production with the press both creating societal concerns and promoting apparent solutions to them.

Sections of the periodical press were very much alive to these practices. For instance, an article by Walter Saville appears in 1872 in the light-hearted *Gentleman's Magazine*. In it, Saville comments that:

In this country agents are everywhere at work, and are assisted by certain journals of not very able or interesting character [...] These tracts generally bear a preliminary flourish in the shape of a poetical quotation, such as: -

'Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer'

and other stock sentences of a like nature; and contain terrible tales of people who always meant to insure *to-morrow*, but are unfortunately *to-day* blown up in a powder mill, or smashed in a railway accident<sup>53</sup>

Saville is clear that periodicals play a major role in allowing insurance agencies to flourish.

Their pages provide a platform to reach their thousands of readers and legitimise the necessity of investing in insurance. However, Saville is critical of such practices. He ridicules

---

<sup>51</sup> Anon., 'How Railway Accidents are Prepared', *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 526.

<sup>52</sup> The writer is clear that this particular accident was especially catastrophic because 'the third class carriages of the Great Eastern Company' were so poorly built. This once again demonstrates that working-class passengers were disproportionately affected by incidents. Firstly, because of the perceived disregard of excursion trains, as I discussed above, but secondly through the poorer construction of the cheaper carriages. (See: Anon., 'The Lynn Railway Accident', *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 513.)

<sup>53</sup> Walter Saville, 'Curiosities of Life Assurance', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Apr 1872, 445-50 (p. 450). Italics in original.



the kinds of advertisements discussed above by commenting on their propensity for appearing in dull journals and being designed to shock the reader into the necessity of insurance. They persuade not through logic and rationality, but through sensationalism with stories of those planning to take out insurance but ultimately leaving it too late. Despite this vitriol towards journals carrying such adverts, the upper-middle class and patriarchal *Gentleman's Magazine* was no different, itself carrying advertisements for the Railway Accident Mutual Assurance Company in 1876, ironically written in exactly the sensationalist tone satirised above. In this advert, the company proclaims that whilst a railway accident may seem a remote risk, 'it may happen, as a matter of fact, the very next journey undertaken'.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, railway insurance is 'an obvious duty in the case of most travellers'.<sup>55</sup> This advert uses nearly the same words as the article mocking them four years earlier. In so doing, it demonstrates that nowhere in the periodical marketplace is free from the pressures of advertising, with even journals publishing pieces critical of the insurance agencies' tactics complicit in their campaigns.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their sensationalist tactics, such advertisements seem to have been effective. Another advert for the 'Railway Passengers' Assurance Company' appeared in *The Examiner* in 1859 and provides an interesting insight into the contemporary costs and figures of railway insurance. It states:

Insurance data show [*sic*] that One person out of every Fifteen is more or less injured by Accident yearly. An annual payment of £3 secures a FIXED ALLOWANCE OF £6 PER WEEK in the event of injury, or £1000 in case of Death, from Accidents of every description, by a Policy in the RAILWAY PASSENGERS' ASSURANCE COMPANY, which has already paid in compensation for Accidents, £37,069.<sup>56</sup>

The price of the insurance, costing around a third of a housemaid's annual salary, and the placement of these adverts in middle-class publications, demonstrates that it was not targeted

---

<sup>54</sup> 'Advertisement for Railway Accident Mutual Assurance Company', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar 1876, 387.

<sup>55</sup> 'Advertisement', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, p. 387.

<sup>56</sup> 'Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company', *The Examiner*, 2 Apr 1859, 222.

at working-class individuals. Therefore, insuring one's life and protecting one's body against the railway directors are framed as exclusively middle-class activities. Nonetheless, the fact that in 1859 the Railway Passengers' Assurance Company claimed to have paid £37,069 while just three years later, they claim to have paid £149,000 in compensation (as mentioned in the advert in *The Atheneum* included above), shows the growing demand for insurance across the 1860s.

The normalisation of railway insurance over these decades was satirised in *Fun* for the journal's largely working-class readership. The journal carries a short piece in October 1861, just three months after the Clayton Tunnel crash, in which the writer imagines a father and his family boarding a train. "Now my dears", he reflects:

'Let me see, we've got the sandwiches, and the sherry, and the two copies of *Fun*, and the railway tickets, and the insurance tickets in case of a collision, so that it is a great comfort to reflect, in case of anything serious—' The rest of the speech is lost in the shriek of the railway engine.<sup>57</sup>

In this list of essential accoutrements for a railway journey the writer suggests that for the middle-class father, railway insurance was as essential as the tickets, food, and two copies of the journal for reading. It appears the father's fears are justified, with the rest of the list cut short by the 'shriek' of the railway engine. This may be innocuous and suggesting that the train has just started its engine. However, satirical accounts like this often end abruptly with a railway crash, so the 'shriek' may be something more sinister too. Both the tone and content of this article are typical for the magazine, with *Fun* publishing a later article in 1880, titled 'Extracts from the Diary of a Railway Passenger'. As discussed earlier, humorous magazines are uniquely well-placed to satirise some of the more ridiculous elements of railway travel. The necessity of purchasing insurance to protect oneself in the event of an accident certainly seems to conform to the category of absurdity. In this article, as the man arrives at the station,

---

<sup>57</sup> Anon., 'An Enjoyable Railway Trip', *Fun*, 5 Oct 1861, 23.

he decides to ‘take an insurance with my railway ticket’, before deliberating for several minutes on which part of the train to enter for the maximum chance of safety.<sup>58</sup> The front is bad in the event of hitting something, the back bad in the event of something hitting you, and the middle particularly perilous in the event of a derailment. He therefore concludes that all are ‘as bad as one another’.<sup>59</sup> The process of standing on the platform and deciding which train carriage to board is itself a process of consumption akin to browsing the window displays or evaluating the highest quality produce in a shop. Yet inside the railway space, this process of selecting which product to buy takes on a different significance when that choice could potentially be the difference between life and death.

As the traveller sits in his carriage, he finds himself pleased to have selected a carriage near the front, as because of the train being delayed in starting, ‘another ran into us as we were standing in station’.<sup>60</sup> The traveller then turns to his newspaper where he discovers, “‘Terrible Railway Accident” Dear oh dear!’ he exclaims, ‘Hope I’ve got that insurance ticket all right’.<sup>61</sup> The author achieves two distinct but related things here. They satirise the safety record of the railway companies, highlighting the concerning lack of safety for the traveller of 1880 by suggesting that it is impossible for the railway passenger to venture anywhere without being caught in an accident. The writer also mocks the culture that perceives accidents as occurring constantly. ‘Terrible railway accident’ is a clear invocation of the titles of newspaper and periodical articles that I highlighted in the introduction to this chapter. This gives the piece the semblance of reality, but like *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, it also gently pokes fun at a press that was fanning the flames of railway panic through publishing such sensationalistic pieces. After reading the account of the railway accident, the traveller frantically checks he is still holding onto his insurance ticket, once more

---

<sup>58</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts from the Diary of a Railway Traveller’, *Fun*, 22 Sep 1880, 115.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts’, p. 115.

<sup>60</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts’, p. 115.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts’, p. 115.

foregrounding the direct relationship between print culture and public attitudes. As the writer of this piece shows, it was these sensational accounts of accidents that lead to the public perception of the dangers of train travel and encouraged them to take insurance as a precaution.

After experiencing several more accidents during his journey from ‘fifteen killed’ during a crash, to ‘a steam pipe bursting in the engine’, he is frustrated to find that ‘I think I’ve wasted the insurance ticket money’.<sup>62</sup> Whilst the train encountered accidents at nearly every point in the journey, the diary writer was uninjured, leaving the insurance untouched. At least, up until the final line of the diary, when after reflecting on the incredible speed that the train is travelling, we are told that the ‘diary ends abruptly’.<sup>63</sup> What is noticeable throughout this article is the constant association of capital, consumption, and railway accidents. Even whilst caught amongst wreckage, death, and derailment, the fictional author finds his thoughts drifting to his insurance ticket, asserting the inescapable, all-consuming presence of financial concerns even during catastrophes. Highly satirical though this article may be, it is also a critique of the productive forces, both of the railway for its lack of safety, and of the print market for fanning the flames of anxiety.

Railway insurance offers a reclamation of the body inside the railway space, especially in the face of the perceived dangers and lack of care on the part of the directors. However, adverts for insurance also serve to further commodify the human body inside the machine ensemble, with insurance, like the railway companies, another product of mid-nineteenth-century capitalism. Timothy Alborn writes, ‘Victorian life insurance companies recurrently reconceived their customers’ lives as both consuming subjects and objectified abstractions’.<sup>64</sup> The title of Alborn’s book, *Regulated Lives*, suggests how the human body

---

<sup>62</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts’, p. 115.

<sup>63</sup> Anon., ‘Extracts’, p. 115.

<sup>64</sup> Timothy Alborn, *Regulated Lives: Life Insurance and British Society, 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 4.

was being absorbed into the processes of industrialised regulation that, as I have seen, came to dominate Victorian society by 1880. In this way, nothing is free from the productive forces of capitalism, with the human frame monetised, objectified, and consumable as the user was confronted with the value of one's body inside the machine. According to the 'Railway Passengers' Assurance Company', in 1859 this was exactly £1000.

### **Lock-ins and break-outs: railway keys**



Figure 12. 'London and North Western Railway Early Carriage Key', *Antique Atlas* (2021) [https://www.antiques-atlas.com/antique/lnwry\\_early\\_carriage\\_key/as218a2264](https://www.antiques-atlas.com/antique/lnwry_early_carriage_key/as218a2264) [Accessed 26 March 2021]

The rise of railway insurance shows how enterprise responds to an opportunity created by the productive forces and provides a potential solution based around greater financial outlay on the part of the consumer. However, passengers also saw potential within the railway space to take matters into their own hands when it came to resisting the firms that were seemingly indifferent to their safety. In this section, I explore how railway keys (see photograph above), a keen topic of debate during the 1860s, served as a tactic for passengers to break free from the productive energies inside the machine ensemble. Despite the strength of the agencies producing space, they were not omnipotent and openings remained for escape and transgression. Before the days of modern central locking systems, the only solutions for railway operators were either to leave their passengers free to exit the train at any time, or manually lock them inside the carriages. The former was a potentially perilous initiative with

passengers being able to access the tracks during an unexpected stoppage as well as theoretically allowing passengers access to the train without buying a ticket. However, the effects of the latter are all too apparent when something goes wrong inside the network, with passengers left trapped in their carriages with no means of escape in the event of an accident or unscrupulous fellow passenger.

Railway keys therefore became a popular item for the Victorian traveller to carry to ensure his or her escape from the carriage in the event of impending accident. As Robin Barrow writes, by 'the 1860s, locked doors were more accepted; an experienced traveller would carry a universal railway key, which could be purchased at bookstalls'.<sup>65</sup> Costing only a few pence and widely available, the railway key served as an affordable and rapidly adopted solution for passengers to fight back against the tyranny of the railway companies and reclaim their liberty inside the railway space. The quantity of literature on railway keys in the United Kingdom rose sharply over the 1860s, reaching its peak in the middle of the decade, before almost entirely dying away in the early 1870s. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. The rise of railway keys in the early 1860s is likely a response to Thomas Briggs's murder that took place in 1864. This was the first murder on the British railway network and had a cataclysmic impact on the psyche of the British travelling public. As Michael Cook writes, in the post-Briggs era, the 'railway compartment had become, in effect, a locked room where the passenger was a helpless victim of circumstance'.<sup>66</sup> With Briggs murdered whilst trapped in a compartment with his assailant Franz Müller, this naturally led to anxiety around being confined alone with a potentially hostile stranger in a locked carriage with no means of escape or way of contacting the train guard.

---

<sup>65</sup> Robin Barrow, 'Rape on the Victorian Railway: Women, Safety, and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20 (2015), 341-356 (p. 343).

<sup>66</sup> Cook, p. 22.

Alongside their practical function in facilitating escape, the railway key also works to reconstitute passengers' identities inside the railway space, much like railway insurance, and to reinstate their control over the space they are contained within. Michel de Certeau captures this in *The Practice of Everyday Life* when he explores how individuals regain their individuality in produced spaces through small acts of rebellion. De Certeau and Lefebvre were broadly contemporaneous French philosophers, and both were fascinated by the built environment and the individual's negotiation of it. Yet a crucial difference exists between them. For Lefebvre, spatial production is absolute, a totalising regime that 'thoroughly routinised and degraded' everyday life.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, for De Certeau there is room for negotiation, escape, and individuality. Whilst the city might map the approved paths for pedestrians to traverse, there will always be shortcuts, new routes, deviations forged by the individuals seeking out their own urban landscape. De Certeau defined these as strategies and tactics. The former, 'the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an environment.' Meanwhile, the 'place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place fragmentarily, without taking over its entirety'.<sup>68</sup> The individual purchasing a railway key is engaging in a tactic to attempt to undermine the authoritarianism of the railway space. Not a whole scale strategy to destabilise the hegemony of the railway directors, but a small-scale and individualistic rebellion to re-assert the human into a network defined by abstract concepts of finance and control.

The growing popularity of railway keys is reflected in a variety of mediums across the 1860s. For example, a writer in *The Times* in 1865 reflects on their involvement in an accident on the Great Western Railway and how they only managed to escape by pretending

---

<sup>67</sup> Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 158.

<sup>68</sup> De Certeau, p. xix.

to close the door to prevent the guard from locking it. This event was sufficient to ensure that they, ‘will never again travel on the Great Western Railway without A RAILWAY KEY’.<sup>69</sup>

Another article from *The Times* in June of the same year, quotes a Mr Filder boasting of how he had, ‘two keys, and I intend to increase the number to six for the use of my friends, for no man with a head on his shoulders knowing anything of railway travelling would travel [...] without a key’.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, *Reynolds’s Miscellany* serialised the novel *Left to Seven* on its front cover in 1868, featuring Sir Reginald Basham travelling by train with his lover, Clarice.

As the train unexpectedly stops in a tunnel, they attempt to leave the carriage:

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Clarice, horror-stricken; ‘the doors are locked! We can’t get out!’  
‘Don’t you be so sure of that,’ answered Reginald Basham. ‘I never travel without a key. I’ve been in this sort of fix before. There’s my private key. It shows the beauty of being prepared for everything.’ So saying, he opened the door, and stepped out on the line.<sup>71</sup>

Keys featured as frequent narrative devices in novels of this period, as well as being widely adopted by the writers in the periodicals, with keys presented as an essential accessory for any worldly railway traveller to possess.

The writer of a letter in the middle-class *Pall Mall Gazette* of 1865, further highlights the imperative of key carrying, not only domestically but in the railway network abroad too. This writer describes his experience of having ‘narrowly escaped being roasted alive in the Paris and Marseilles express of the 20<sup>th</sup> ult’. He therefore feels:

Impelled to call your attention to the necessity of adopting forthwith two very simple measures for the protection of railway passengers in England. The first is, to forbid the dangerous practice which now obtains of locking at least one door of every railway carriage whilst in motion. The second is, to establish a means of communication between every railway carriage and the official in charge of the train. When a railway carriage upsets, or runs down an embankment, it is as likely to turn over on the side on which the door is unlocked as on the side on which the door is locked. And, if it turns over on the side on which the door is unlocked, the passengers are to all intents and purposes locked in.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Accident’, *The Times*, 30 Dec 1865, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Anon., ‘Railway Keys: To the Editor of The Times’, *The Times*, 13 Jun 1865, 14.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., ‘Left to Seven’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 24 Oct 1868, 289-92 (pp. 291-92). Despite being well-known enough to appear on the front cover of *Reynolds’s*, I have not been able to locate the author of this novel.

<sup>72</sup> Anon., ‘Involuntary Combustion’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 Dec 1865, 4.



The writer of this letter is clear that door-locking is ‘dangerous’ with the passengers left to be ‘roasted alive’ in the burning wreckage of the train. Door locking was another way for the railway companies to save money. As the writer of the *Pall Mall* letter proceeds to reflect, the ‘practice of door-locking is undoubtedly very convenient for the railway officials, and very economical for the railway companies, who are thereby enabled to carry on their daily business with a smaller staff than they would otherwise require’.<sup>73</sup> Door locking is nothing more than an efficiency exercise, to save time and money, with the railway space once again recognised in terms of its raw productive elements of exchange.

This was not the only time the *Pall Mall Gazette* published on railway keys. The writer of an article published earlier in the same year reflects on two accidents, one an ‘overcrowded excursion-train’ at Shrewsbury and the other a train on the Great Western.<sup>74</sup> In the latter accident, the ‘accidental possession of a railway key, by a commercial gentleman’ enabled him to open the door to his carriage, saving the life of three or four of his companions.<sup>75</sup> Most intriguingly, an advert appeared in the same journal in June 1870, promoting the ‘Gentleman’s “Pall Mall” Dressing Bag’ by Metcalf and Co.<sup>76</sup> Alongside the usual travelling accoutrements of ‘glass bottles’, ‘ivory brushes’, ‘ivory paper knife’, ‘penholder and ink’, is a ‘railway key and whistle’.<sup>77</sup> The set was priced at eleven guineas emphasising that this was a luxury product for their wealthy readership. But this also highlights that whilst railway keys were available for pennies from booksellers, they were also offered as a premium item too. They were as essential for any travelling gentleman as a pen, brush, or writing book. Not only was the *Pall Mall Gazette* publishing letters detailing railway keys and articles highlighting their necessity, but actively promoting their sale too.

---

<sup>73</sup> Anon., ‘Involuntary Combustion’, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Anon., ‘The Railway-Accident Season’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 Jun 1865, 1-2 (p. 1).

<sup>75</sup> Anon., ‘The Railway-Accident Season’, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Advertisement’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 Jun 1870, 560.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Advertisement’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 560.

Despite their widespread adoption and ready availability at station booksellers, there was doubt surrounding the legality of railway keys, with railway companies attempting to clamp down on their use. In August 1867, a ‘gentleman named Craig was charged on Monday at the Mansion House with having unlocked the door of a carriage at the Cannon-street station with a private key’.<sup>78</sup> As this short piece from *Bell’s Life in London* reports:

It appeared that he was in haste, and the train was just starting. The prosecution was instituted to stop the practice, which it was alleged was extensively practiced on all the lines by season ticket holders, but which in the case of the City branch lines, led to mistakes and danger. The by-law under which the proceedings were taken was stated to be peculiar to the company. A nominal fine of 1s and 3s costs were inflicted on the grounds that the defendant was not aware of the by-law. The presiding magistrate, Sir R Carden, said he carried a railway key himself, and had often used it, as he had never heard of such a regulation.<sup>79</sup>

*Bell’s Life in London* was a periodical that, despite being aimed at the working-classes, enjoyed wide, cross-class appeal.<sup>80</sup> The article above is the only one I have found in the journal discussing railway keys. Whilst it published frequently on railway accidents, they tended to be quite short pieces, except for major incidents such as the crash at Helmshore, Lancashire in 1860 involving three excursion trains and killing eleven. This is perhaps unsurprising considering the journal’s primary focus on sport, as well as its anticipated audience, with the paper favouring short snippets of news rather than long, in-depth analysis. What is surprising, is the inclusion of the article above. Whilst it is a short article in keeping with the layout of the journal it nonetheless demonstrates the significance of this event in the public mind. The writer highlights the power that the railway companies had come to possess by the 1860s, both able to make their own by-laws and to introduce regulations specific to their own route network. It is the railway company that has enforced the fine in an attempt to reclaim ultimate governance over the space it built and occupied, with even the magistrate unfamiliar with the scope and implementation of the laws. Not only was the magistrate

---

<sup>78</sup> Anon., ‘Police Intelligence’, *Bell’s Life in London*, 31 Aug 1867, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Anon., ‘Police Intelligence’, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Brake and Demoor, p. 47.

unacquainted with these laws but he was openly in violation of them, admitting to carrying a railway key of his own.

The attempts of the railway companies to fight back against passengers using railway keys can be seen further in a letter published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in August 1867. This was in direct response to the trial of Mr Craig. Entitled 'Locks-Out and Lock-Ins', the author reflects how:

In common with most persons who travel much by rail, I uniformly carry a railway key, but after the magisterial decision with reference to the gentleman who had sinned by unlocking a carriage door, I feel somewhat disturbed less other companies, always as eager to trammel and hamper their passengers as if they were their mortal enemies, instead of their sources of income, should be moved to emulate the South Eastern in its vexations of arbitrary regulations. Is a company able to enact any by-law which its chairman choses to adopt, and, if so, where is the power to stop?<sup>81</sup>

This writer admits that they always travel with a railway key and expresses outrage at the magisterial decision to fine a man for unlocking a carriage door with his personal key. What is especially noticeable here, as in the short piece in *Bell's*, is the emphasis upon 'arbitrary regulations'. As well as to prevent passengers accessing the tracks illicitly, and to save money, the motivations behind door locking were also part of a network built according to the abstract principles of 'control[ling] space in its entirety'.<sup>82</sup> By sealing the passengers in their carriage, the railway space constrains them within its bounds, turning individuals into prisoners inside the network. This is emphasised in the article above with the passengers treated as 'mortal enemies' by the operators, their only role as 'sources of income'. Further losing their individuality, the passengers inside the network are reduced to insentient obstacles for the operators to negotiate. In contrast, railway keys signal the reclamation of individual liberty and function as a way for passengers to counteract the callous railway companies who are 'left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine

---

<sup>81</sup> Anon., 'Locks-Out and Lock-Ins', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 Aug 1867, 5.

<sup>82</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 388.

themselves outside the reach of panoptic power', as De Certeau writes.<sup>83</sup> With the power of railway keys to 'counterbalance' the railway's tyranny and function as a 'contradictory movement' to its deindividualising aspects, it is unsurprising that the railway companies would fight back and work to prevent such practices in order to retain their hegemony. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* writer identifies, if a company can 'enact any by-law' it chooses, then 'where is the power to stop?'

This enactment of laws against the use of railway keys reverberated within the public consciousness at the end of the 1860s, working to further emphasise the cruel practices of the directors. *Judy*, rival to *Punch* and *Fun*, published 'Railway Dogberries', in which the author takes the issue of railway laws ad absurdum. 'The success of the Railway Companies in the matter of railway keys as proved by the late magisterial decision, that to carry them was illegal when forbidden by the bye-laws [*sic*], has determined the Companies to increase these supplementary laws', the writer reflects.<sup>84</sup> They then proceed to suggest that every 'passenger, previous to the starting of the train, will be searched by the guard', that the ticket clerk will decide on the class the passenger should travel in, and in the event of a crash, passengers should be liable to pay a fine to the railway company to cover the damage to the train.<sup>85</sup> Whilst clearly exaggerated, this article expresses an underlying anxiety around the power of railway companies to police their space and control their passengers. New restrictions on railway keys are seen as the tip of the iceberg of increased regulation and further evidence of the railway companies' war against the passengers they should be serving and protecting. Debates surrounding railway keys reached their apex during Craig's trial in 1867, with a rapid decline in articles after this point. A major reason for this was the passing of the 'Regulation of Railways Act 1868', which made it compulsory for trains to carry a

---

<sup>83</sup> De Certeau, p. 95.

<sup>84</sup> Anon., 'Railway Dogberries', *Judy*, 11 Sep 1867, 258.

<sup>85</sup> Anon., 'Railway Dogberries', p. 258.

means of communication between the carriages, so that passengers could signal to the guard in the event of an emergency.<sup>86</sup> Whilst the question of sealed doors had not been resolved, passengers did at least feel less isolated and trapped after 1868, a regulatory change that quietened, if not entirely placated, the travelling public and their concerns around being locked in their compartments.

As I have shown throughout this chapter, the carriage, life, and society were not the only things blown violently apart by the destruction of space during railway accidents. So too were society's perceptions of the network as an equalising, modernising force. Even though the perception of the railways as intrinsically dangerous was largely a moral panic, a social fire fanned by the press, the capitalist forces behind the railway were rendered visible in society at large during railway crashes. The acts of Parliament granting passengers methods of communicating with the guard quelled the fears of being locked in by the 1870s, and the public was placated further by the greater safety regulations of the late 1880s such as the 1889 Regulation of Railways Act.<sup>87</sup> The exposure of the produced nature of the railway space, however, was a far longer-lasting legacy of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century panic surrounding railway accidents. Ernst Bloch writes in 1930 of how accepted and normalised railway travel has become, now 'one [has] got used to it and lost the demonism behind it'.

Despite this:

Only an accident occasionally brings it to mind again: the crash of the collision, the bang of explosions, the screams of shattered people – in short, an ensemble that has no civilised timetable [...] There is no way back, but the cries of accidents (of uncontrolled things) will persist all the longer as they lie deeper than cries of the economy (of uncontrolled commodities).<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> 'The Regulation of the Railways Act, 1868', *Legislation.gov.uk* (n.d.) <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/31-32/119/contents>> [Accessed 6 May 2020].

<sup>87</sup> 'The Regulation of Railways Act, 1889', *Legislation.gov.uk* (n.d.) <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/52-53/57/section/1/enacted>> [Accessed 4 December 2019]. This law forced railway companies to introduce the absolute block signalling system, interlocking of points and signals, and continuous brakes on all passenger trains.

<sup>88</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Traces*, trans. by Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 125.

Whilst travellers might forget the potential violence of the network, it only takes one accident to bring the underlying aggression of the machine space to the surface again and reveal the callous, mercenary structures underpinning the entire railway operation. In Bloch's schema, the violence of the railway network is inseparable from the violence of modern capitalism. Both the railway space and the space of commodities are uncontrollable, with the powerful forces of the market and the power of the engine's energies directly linked together as unstoppable and unregulated productions of state power. These ideas may be voiced in the 1930s, but as I have seen throughout this chapter, they were forged in the periodical press of the 1860s and 70s.

## Conclusion

Across this thesis, I have foregrounded the nineteenth-century railway space in terms of spatial production. By using Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* as a theoretical framework, I set out to demonstrate that, whilst they might not have the twentieth-century vocabulary of spatial theory, writers during the 1860s and 70s are nonetheless alive to the realities of spatial production and recognise the darker aspects of the railway environment; those of control, de-individualisation, regulation, and mechanisation of the human body, and the tensions between existing places and the new industrial spaces. My thesis expands and develops the existing work on the railway undertaken in the decades following Wolfgang Schivelbusch's seminal 1977 *The Railway Journey* by complementing the longstanding but reductionist view of the 'annihilation of space by time'.<sup>1</sup> This is a view that captures elements of the shock and wonder with which Victorians viewed the railway, but that overlooks the new spaces the railway inhabited and the spatial politics and ideologies contained within them.

Throughout this project, I have charted the different and often conflicting attitudes towards the production of the railway space. Eliot, Gaskell, Dickens, and Trollope show the necessity of integrating into the railway network, even as it is an oft-times troubling indicator of the more unsettling parts of nineteenth-century capitalism. The alternative, as these writers recognise, is a life of reactionary isolation or worse, violent displacement. These authors do not offer solutions to the negative elements of modern spaces, but they do assert that progress is unstoppable and one is better off inside the connectivity and reforms they offer than trapped outside them. In a similar way, the periodical writers I explore in Chapter Three do not offer meaningful solutions for changing the space of the Metropolitan railway either.

---

<sup>1</sup> Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 33.

Whilst they present it in terminology consistent with Augé's theory of non-places, and emphasise its confusing spatial similitude, identity destruction, consumerist underpinnings, and housing demolition, they lack a clear suggestion of how to build a more hospitable network in its place. In contrast, Chapters Four and Five trace some of the ways that people sought a renegotiation of the conditions of spatial production. Beginning with Alexander Anderson, his *Songs of the Rail* shows how the workers assume a politicised agenda, seeking to move power away from the productive forces and back into the hands of the operators. In Chapter Five, I charted how the railway accident, as depicted in the periodical press, renders visible the ever-present and mercenary structures of capitalism upon which the machine ensemble is built. In so doing, the journalists emphasise the imperative of making changes and moving power away from the greedy and uncaring railway companies to favouring and protecting the passengers instead. I also explored how, through the purchasing of railway keys, passengers re-asserted themselves into the network. Whilst the companies fought back and tried to clamp down on their usage, railway keys signalled a slippage in the tight forces of spatial production.

The 1860s and 70s are transitional and historically important decades in the history of the railway. They are sufficiently advanced to be beyond the early years of railway invention and the railway bubble with all its volatility. However, they are not sufficiently developed for the railway to be a fully accepted and banal part of daily life. This means that texts published during these decades continue to critique and rationalise the railway space, its impact on the country, and the forces that produced it. As well as the many important historical events occurring in relation to the railway during these decades, this was also the age of spectacle and sensationalism, giving writers a new discourse to chart the relationship of the railway space to models of exchange, consumption, and visual culture. In so doing, the writers in this study invite parallels between exhibitions and the railway tracks, between the swirl of



consumers in the Underground and the burgeoning West End, between purchasing tickets and purchasing goods, and between getting lost in the obfuscating mist of the network and the confusing chaos of the contemporary marketplace. As I set out in my introduction, Lefebvre is clear that ‘there are relations between the production of things and that of space’.<sup>2</sup> In this way, consumption and spectacle give writers a language to capture the production of the railway space, whilst also inviting obvious parallels between the two contemporary forms of nineteenth-century capitalism.

Analysis of the railway space and issues of class have been significant throughout this thesis as I have explored the impact of railway production on the rural inhabitants, poor city dwellers, and working-class excursionists. Questions of gender have also played an important role in this project, with the women excluded from modernity in Gaskell’s fiction, and to a lesser extent Eliot’s; the position of women on the Underground as urban consumers; and Anderson’s view that only men can survive the pressures of the railway space. Going forward, it would be valuable to expand these discussions to consider in more detail the experiences of marginalised groups and their relationship with the railway space and the productive forces that constructed it: productive forces that are inherently white, male, and heteronormative. For instance, Jennifer LaFleur identifies some of the issues of Lefebvre’s theories of spatial production, writing that ‘Lefebvre exercised his positional privilege to avoid intellectually engaging with questions of race’.<sup>3</sup> Questions of gender, sexuality, and race are a notable omission of Lefebvre’s work and would therefore be valuable to discuss in an expanded version of this project. It would also be interesting to expand these discussions to other countries, to observe if similar trends emerge in recognising the produced nature of the railway space to those I have charted in Britain.

---

<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre, ‘Reflections on the Politics of Space’, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer LaFleur, ‘The Race that Space Makes: The Power of Place in the Colonial Formations of Social Categories’, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (2020), 1-15 (p. 5).

By exploring the mid-Victorian railway in terms of its production and spatial politics, I situate my work within a growing discourse surrounding the built environment. Questions surrounding built spaces continue to resound as we ask again, who has the ‘Right to the City’?<sup>4</sup> For instance, studies of hostile architecture rose to prominence in the mid-2010s, a form of urban design intended ‘to influence public behaviour’ such as spikes on low walls to prevent sitting, or slopes on benches to prevent homeless people from sleeping there.<sup>5</sup> The built environment has become an increasingly pressing concern as we try and understand the spaces of the world in an age defined by rising house prices, expanding urban centres, soulless financial districts, climate crisis, and increasing inequality. Colin Ellard and other psychogeographers have written about the psychological impact of spaces on human behaviour, with the lofty ceilings of courthouses, grand spires of churches, hypnotic nature of shopping malls, and uniformity of suburban streets all conspiring to impact the people inside and play a direct role in shaping their behaviour.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Roman Mars has commented in the podcast *99% Invisible*, ‘I like to pay attention to how [...] buildings make us feel, and that’s part of the story’.<sup>7</sup> Spaces are not only about serving a single purpose (work, accommodation, education, transportation) but they perpetuate ideologies and govern and inform human behaviour. From train stations to courthouses, residential streets to financial districts, from railway tracks to tarmac roads, spaces embody the ideology of the moment that produced them, replacing existing places and regulating their users according to their own systems.

---

<sup>4</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville suivi de espace et politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> Ben Quinn, ‘Anti-Homeless Spikes are Part of a Wider Phenomenon of “Hostile Architecture”’, *The Guardian* (2014) <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/13/anti-homeless-spikes-hostile-architecture>> [accessed 04 January 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Colin Ellard, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2015), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Roman Mars, 2020. ‘Roman Mars On Bullseye With Jesse Thorn’. *99% Invisible*.

As we seek to remodel urban spaces for the future, we enter a world that is more aware than ever of the ideologies embedded in the built environment and the need to re-evaluate the capitalist structures that underpin these spaces, signalling the continuing hope of eventually locating the egalitarian space of socialism that Lefebvre found so elusive.<sup>8</sup> We ask again who is benefitting from modernity, and who is left out; whether spatial production is benign or hostile; whether spaces benefit the users or serve the needs of the corporations operating them; and the ethics of humanity's domination over the natural world. These debates may have ascended in the twentieth century and are raging in the twenty-first, but as I have demonstrated across this thesis, they were born amidst the transportation networks of the 1860s and 70s.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lefebvre, *Production*, p. 54.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Anderson, Alexander, *Later Poems of Alexander Anderson, "Surface-Man"* ed. by, Alexander Brown (Glasgow: Frasher, Asher & Co, 1913)
- *Songs of the Rail* (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co, 1881)
- Carlyle, Thomas, 'Signs of the Times', in *Carlyle's Miscellaneous Writings, Vol 2*, ed. by Thomas Carlyle (London: James Fraser, 1839)
- Dickens, Charles, 'Barbox Brothers' from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005)
- 'Barbox Brothers and Co.' from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005)
- 'The Boy at Mugby' in *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005)
- 'Letter to Mrs. Watson 1854', *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol. 1 1833-1856* (2008)  
<<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25852/25852-h/25852-h.htm>> [Accessed 24 Nov 2018]
- *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (London: Collins, 1956)
- Edwards, Amelia, 'No. 5 Branch Line. The Engineer', in *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005)
- Eliot, George, *Felix Holt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1987)
- *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994)
- *Middlemarch* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2000)
- Gaskell, Elizabeth, *Cousin Phillis and Other Stories* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2010)
- *Lizzie Leigh & A Dark Night's Work* (Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing, 2007)
- Halliday, Andrew, 'The Engine-Driver' from *Mugby Junction* ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005)
- Jerrold, Blanchard, *The Life of George Cruikshank in Two Epochs* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894)
- Smiles, Samuel, *Self-Help* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Tennyson, A.L., *In Memoriam* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1861)
- Trollope, Anthony, *Can You Forgive Her?*, Vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1906)

— *Miss Mackenzie* (London: The Folio Society, 1997)

— *Phineas Finn* (Ware, Wordsworth Classics: 1923)

— *The Prime Minister* (London: Penguin Classics, 1994)

— *The Warden* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, n.d.)

Wordsworth, William, *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth* (Ware, Wordsworth Editions: 1994)

— ‘To the Cuckoo’, in *The English Poets, Vol. IV The Nineteenth Century: Wordsworth to Rossetti*, ed. by T.H Ward (London: Macmillan and Co, 1883)

## Periodical Articles

‘The Accident Season’, *The Saturday Review*, 16 Aug 1873, 204-05

‘Accident Upon Accident’, *The Saturday Review*, 30 Aug 1873, 266-67

‘Accidents and Offences’, *Downpatrick Recorder*, 31 May 1873, 3-4

‘Advertisement’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 Jun 1870, 560

‘Advertisement for Railway Accident Mutual Assurance Company’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Mar 1876, 387

‘Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company’, *The Examiner*, 2 Apr 1859, 222

‘Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company’, *The Athenæum*, 23 May 1863, 694

‘Advertisement for Railway Passengers Assurance Company’, *All the Year Round*, 27 Apr 1867, 445

‘Advertisements’, *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 528

‘Aunt Tabitha’s Railway Adventure’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, Nov 1864, 417-22

‘Book Review’, *The Athenæum*, 16 Aug 1879, 204-05

‘The Brighton Railway Catastrophe’, *The Saturday Review*, 31 Aug 1861, 213-14

‘The Brighton Railway Disaster’, *The Examiner*, 31 Aug 1861, 545-46

Buffum, Ed Gould, ‘In the Mont Cenis Tunnel’, *The Fortnightly Review*, 15 Mar 1866, 338-49

‘A Caution to Railway Directors’, *The Saturday Review*, 16 Aug 1862, 180-81

‘Changes in Accident Insurance’, *The Saturday Review*, 30 Jul 1904, 132

‘The Channel Tunnel’, *The Morning Post*, 4 February 1882, 3

C.L.E., ‘London Society Underground’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, May 1863, 407-14

Clough, Arthur Hugh, ‘Recent English Poetry’, *North American Review*, July 1853, 1-30

‘Completion of the Metropolitan Railway’, *The Morning Post*, 5 Jan 1863, 3

‘Contemporary Literature’, *The Westminster Review*, July and October 1879 (London: Trübner & co, 1879)

‘The Dangers of the Rail’, *John Bull*, 2 Feb 1861, 73

‘Death and His Brother Sleep’, *Punch* (1890)

[<https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ\\_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob\\_3lwZWtRALs\\_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq\\_C2\\_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npQgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D\\_eK\\_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI\\_AW7x11f2vXxQC\\_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx\\_QItgnS5&GI\\_ID=>](https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob_3lwZWtRALs_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq_C2_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npQgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D_eK_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI_AW7x11f2vXxQC_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx_QItgnS5&GI_ID=>) [Accessed 3 January 2021]

‘Demolition by Railways &c.’, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 12 May 1865, 480

Dickens, Charles, ‘The Great Exhibition and the Little One’, *Household Words*, 5 Jul 1851, 356-60

Dodd, George, ‘The Metropolis and the Railways’, *Fortnightly Review*, 15 Mar 1866, 359-68

‘The Effect of Railways on Health’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 6 Oct 1862, 480-89

‘An Enjoyable Railway Trip’, *Fun*, 5 Oct 1861, 23

‘The Excursion Train’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, Dec 1861, 727-34

‘Excursion Trains’, *The London Review*, 31 Aug 1861, 257-58

‘Extracts from the Diary of a Railway Traveller’, *Fun*, 22 Sep 1880, 115

‘Facts about Railways’, *Chambers’s Journal*, 27 Dec 1862, 404-06

‘The Fearful Accident on the Hampstead Junction Railway’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 28 Sep 1861, 213

Friswell, James H., ‘A Journey Underground’, *Once a Week*, 20 September 1862, 361-63

‘The Hayward and Leggatt Gallery’, *The Reader*, 17 Dec 1864, 777

‘High Speed on Railways’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 7 Sep 1861, 164

- ‘How Railway Accidents are Prepared’, *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 526
- ‘Involuntary Combustion’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 Dec 1865, 4
- ‘Irish Dissatisfaction and the Channel Tunnel’, *The Northern Echo*, 1 April 1882, 3
- ‘The Latest Railway Accident’, *The Saturday Review*, 25 Jun 1870, 832-33
- ‘Law and Crime’, *The Sixpenny Magazine*, Oct 1861, 502-06
- ‘Left to Seven’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 24 Oct 1868, 289-92
- ‘Legislative Interference’, *The National Magazine*, Nov 1861, 5-7
- ‘Locks-Out and Lock-Ins’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 Aug 1867, 5
- ‘London in Books’, *All The Year Round*, 14 October 1865, 270-76
- ‘London Railways and London Streets’, *The London Review*, 23 Jan 1864, 80-82
- ‘The Lynn Railway Accident’, *The Examiner*, 15 Aug 1863, 513
- ‘Mems of the Month’, *Sharpe’s London Magazine*, Aug 1865, 94-96
- ‘The Metropolitan or Underground Railway’, *The London Journal*, 7 Jun 1862, 365
- ‘The Metropolitan Railway’, *The Standard*, 12 Jan 1863, 6
- ‘A Month’s Railway Accidents’, *The Saturday Review*, 6 Sep 1873, 301-302
- ‘Mr Anderson’s Poems’, *The Examiner*, 13 Sep 1897, 1188-90
- ‘Mrs. Brown on the Underground Railway’, *Fun*, 12 May 1866, 87
- ‘New Metropolitan Railways’, *The Athenæum*, 27 Jan 1866, 134-35
- ‘Of a Respectable Couple Who Met with an Accident on the Underground Railway’, *Tinsley’s Magazine*, Jan 1870, 55-63
- ‘Opening of the Metropolitan Railway’, *The Daily News*, 5 Jan 1863, 5
- ‘Opening of the Metropolitan Railway’, *The Morning Post*, 10 January 1863, 6
- ‘Parliament and the Metropolitan Railways’, *The London Review*, 13 Feb 1864, 161-62
- Payn, James, ‘Melibœus Underground’, *Chambers’s Journal*, 11 Jan 1862, 26-29
- ‘Perplexities of Bradshaw’, *London Society: An Illustrated Magazine of Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation*, Jun 1869, 506-13

- ‘The Pneumatic Passenger Railway’, *The Quiver*, Oct 1865, 490-92
- ‘Poetry and Verse’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 15 April 1878, n.p.
- ‘Police Intelligence’, *Bell’s Life in London*, 31 Aug 1867, 8
- ‘The Poor versus the Railways’, *The Saturday Review*, 24 Feb 1866, 228-29
- ‘The Prime Minister’, *The Saturday Review*, 14 Oct 1876, 481-82
- ‘The Queen Upon Railway Accidents’, *The London Review*, 28 Jan 1865, 117
- ‘Railway Accident’, *The Times*, 30 Dec 1865, 7
- ‘The Railway Accident Season’, *The Saturday Review*, 1 Sep 1866, 265-66
- ‘Railway Accidents’, *The London Review*, 20 Aug 1864, 201-02
- ‘Railway Accidents’, *The London Review*, 24 Jun 1865, 654-55
- ‘Railway Accidents and Chief Securities Against Them’, *Good Words*, 1 Aug 1865, 578-86
- ‘Railway Dogberries’, *Judy*, 11 Sep 1867, 258
- ‘Railway Extension and the Poor’, *Saturday Review*, 16 Mar 1861, 268-69
- ‘Railway Keys: To the Editor of The Times’, *The Times*, 13 Jun 1865, 14
- ‘Railway Literature’, *Punch* (1852),  
[https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ\\_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob\\_3lwZWtRALs\\_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq\\_C2\\_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D eK\\_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI\\_AW7x11f2vXxQC\\_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx\\_QItgnS5&GI\\_ID=>](https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob_3lwZWtRALs_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq_C2_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D eK_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI_AW7x11f2vXxQC_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx_QItgnS5&GI_ID=>) [Accessed 3 January 2021]
- ‘Railway Maxims’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 31 Mar 1866, 239
- ‘The Railway Point of View’, *The Saturday Review*, 13 Sep 1873, 333-35
- ‘Railway Statistics’, *Reynold’s Miscellany*, 31 Oct 1863, 302
- ‘Railway Undertaking’, *Punch* (1852),  
[https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ\\_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob\\_3lwZWtRALs\\_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq\\_C2\\_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D eK\\_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI\\_AW7x11f2vXxQC\\_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx\\_QItgnS5&GI\\_ID=>](https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&bqG=2&bqH=eJxtUG1LwzAQ_jXrF7.0SIUN8iHNnfPcmkheJv0Uum5otzFhyob_3lwZWtRALs_LPQkXLGAvF3X5PK3OZrq_C2_6wbpzfcIxdlvMijznnSpFcEqc2v5waT9v2q7rN9vjR0bRgfO4Kau6npOgRgIACwAjqUmLRT6TjL.j.D eK_0cV.WZ4zCebgTJBe9tEcoapsYQ6eWQ0U3LR4hKIQ7jSpzF3xnphpV5kw5hRahA8W3BoI4EI_AW7x11f2vXxQC_JWpH1QS6jnKNWDTdlUVWR0sUpeoXhG9r7H1gzlMqL92176l6z1ZCeD1Vx_QItgnS5&GI_ID=>) [Accessed 3 January 2021]



- ‘The Railway-Accident Season’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 Jun 1865, 1-2
- ‘The Railways Again’, *The Saturday Review*, 31 Jan 1874, 137-38
- ‘Railways and City Population’, *The London Review*, 21 Mar 1863, 299-300
- ‘Railways in London’, *The Saturday Review*, 12 Mar 1864, 308-09
- Reynolds, Henry Robert, ‘Our Railway System’, *The British Quarterly Review*, Oct 1872, 362-408
- ‘Sauciness in the Sewer’, *The Examiner*, 14 June 1879, 761-62
- Saville, Walter, ‘Curiosities of Life Assurance’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Apr 1872, 445-50
- ‘The Submarine Railway’, *The London Journal*, 23 Feb 1856, 408
- ‘Terrible Accident on the London and Brighton Railway’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, 14 Sep 1861, 185-86
- ‘Terrible Railway Accident’, *The Examiner*, 8 Sep 1860, 573
- Thackeray, William, ‘Roundabout Papers – No. VIII’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, Oct 1860, 501-12
- ‘Underground Perils’, *The London Review*, 31 Aug 1867, 233-34
- ‘The Underground Railway’, *The London Review*, 17 Jan 1863, 64-65
- ‘The Underground Railway’, *The Times*, 15 Apr 1878, 7
- ‘The Unprotected Male’, *The London Review*, 20 Aug 1864, 198-99
- ‘The Uses of Atmospheric Air in the Saving of Labour’, *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, Sep 1866, 412-14
- ‘Where do the Citizens Sleep?’, *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 11 Jul 1868, 439-41
- Whitechurch, V.L., ‘Twenty-Four Hours at a Railway Junction’, *Railway Magazine*, September 1897, 263-71 24

## Secondary Sources

- Agnew, John A., ‘Space and Place’ in *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. by John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011)
- Aguilar, Marian, ‘Making Modernity: Inside the Technological Space of the Railway’, *Cultural Critique*, 68 (2008), 66-85
- Aguilar, Marian, Charlotte Mathieson and Lynne Pearce, ‘Introduction’, in *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)

- Alborn, Timothy, *Regulated Lives: Life Insurance and British Society, 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009)
- Armstrong, Isobel, 'George Eliot, Hegel, and *Middlemarch*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 29 (2020), 1-26
- Augé, Marc, *In the Metro*, trans. by Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002)
- *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008)
- Banks, Stephen, William Cornish, Charles Mitchell, Paul Mitchell, and Rebecca Probert, *Law and Society in England: 1750-1950* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2019)
- Barrow, Robin, 'Rape on the Victorian Railway: Women, Safety, and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20 (2015), 341-356
- Beaumont, Matthew and Michael Freeman, 'Introduction', in *The Railway and Modernity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007)
- Beer, Gillian, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Billington, Josie 'Reading and Writing Short Fiction: Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot', *The Gaskell Journal*, 29 (2015), 23-36
- Blair, Kirstie, 'A Very Poetical Town: Newspaper Poetry and the Working-Class Poet in Victorian Dundee', *Victorian Poetry*, 51 (2014), 89-109
- *Working Verse in Victorian Scotland: Poetry, Press, Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)
- Bloch, Ernst, *Traces*, trans. by Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006)
- Bradley, Simon, *The Railways* (London: Profile Books, 2015)
- Brake, Laurel and Marysa Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (Ghent: Academia Press and London: British Library, 2009)
- Brown, Alexander, 'Biographical Sketch', in *Later Poems of Alexander Anderson, "Surface-Man"*, ed. by Alexander Brown (Glasgow: Frasher, Asher & Co, 1913)
- Cadia, Lucca, 'The Soi-Distant Hero's Suicide: Chancy Speculation in Trollope's *The Prime Minister*', in *Merchants, Barons, Sellers and Suits: The Changing Images of the Businessman through Literature* ed. by Christa Mahalik (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010)
- Carter, Ian, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

- Castello, Manuel, 'A Network Theory of Power', *International Journal of Communication*, 5 (2011), 773-87
- Chapple, John, and Alan Shelston, *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
- Chase, Karen, *George Eliot: Middlemarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Clark, Geoffrey, *Betting on Lives: The Culture of Life Insurance, 1695-1775* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
- Cook, Michael, 'The Locked Compartment: Charles Dickens's "The Signalman" and Enclosure in the Railway Mystery Story', in *Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction*, ed. by Michael Cook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
- Daly, Nicholas, 'Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernisation of the Senses', *ELH*, 66 (1999), 461-87
- De Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)
- Depa, Bożena, 'Redefining Identity Through Railway Imagery in "Mugby Junction"', in *Reflections on/of Dickens*, ed. by Ewa Kujawaska-Lis and Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014)
- Despotopoulou, Anna, *Women and the Railway: 1850-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)
- Downey, Edmund, *Twenty Years Ago: A book of Anecdote Illustrating Literary Life in London* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905)
- Edwards, David Herschell, *One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets with Biographical and Critical Notices* (Brechin: D.H Edwards, 1880)
- Ellard, Colin, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2015)
- Ellegård, Alvar, 'The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 3-22
- Ferguson, Trish, *Victorian Time: Technologies, Standardisations, Catastrophes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
- Forrest, Adam, 'Metroland, 100 Years On: What's Become of England's Original Vision of Suburbia?', *The Guardian* (2015)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/10/metroland-100-years-england-original-vision-suburbia> [Accessed 26 March 2021]
- Fraser, Benjamin and Steven D. Spalding, *Trains, Literature, and Culture: Reading/Writing the Rails* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012)

- Freeman, Michael, 'Time and Space Under Modernism' in *The Railway and Modernity*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 98.
- *The Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997)
- Fyfe, Paul, *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Gardiner, Michael, *Critiques of Everyday Life: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- Gebauer, Mirjam, Helle Thorsøe Nielsen, Jan T. Schlosser, and Brent Sørensen, 'The Absence of Place and Time: Non-Place and Placelessness', in *Non-Place: Representing Placelessness in Literature, Media and Culture*, ed. by Mirjam Gebauer, Helle Thorsøe Nielsen, Jan T. Schlosser, and Brent Sørensen (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 2015)
- Grossman, Jonathan H., *Charles Dickens's Networks: Public Transport and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Haining, Peter, 'Introduction', in *The Complete Ghost Stories of Charles Dickens*, by Charles Dickens (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983)
- Hanauer, David Ian, 'Non-Place Identity: Britain's Response to Migration in the Age of Supermodernity', in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, ed. by Gerard Delanty, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008)
- Handley, Graham, 'A Dark Night's Work Reconsidered', *The Gaskell Journal*, 21 (2007), 65-72
- Hardy, Barbara, 'Elizabeth Gaskell in *Middlemarch*: Timothy Cooper, The Judgement of Solomon, and the Woman at the Window', *The George Eliot Review*, 46 (2015), 16-20
- Ihde, Don, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009)
- Jones, H.S., *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Don* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Ketabgian, Tamara, *The Lives of Machines: The Industrial Imaginary in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011)
- LaFleur, Jennifer, 'The Race that Space Makes: The Power of Place in the Colonial Formations of Social Categories', *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (2020), 1-15
- Lancaster, John, *What We Talk About When We Talk About the Tube* (London: Penguin Books, 2013)
- Lefebvre, Henri, *Critique of Everyday Life: The One-Volume Edition*, trans. by John Moore (Verso: London, 2014)
- *Le droit à la ville suivi de espace et politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974)

- ‘Preface to the New Edition: The Production of Space’, in *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, ed. by Stuart Elder, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman, trans. by Imogen Forster (London: Continuum, 2003)
- *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991)
- ‘Reflections on the Politics of Space’ in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. by Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)
- Livesey, Ruth, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Marr, Edwin, ‘Mugby Junction’. *The Literary Encyclopaedia* (2019) <https://www.literaryencyclopaedia.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=38925> [accessed 23 February 2021].
- Mars, Roman, 2020. ‘Roman Mars On Bullseye With Jesse Thorn’. *99% Invisible*.
- Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)
- Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005)
- Mathieson, Charlotte, *Mobility in the Victorian Novel: Placing the Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)
- McDonagh, Josephine, ‘Place, Region, and Migration’, in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820-1880*, ed. by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Meek, James, ‘Trains in Space’, *London Review of Books* (2016) <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n09/james-meek/trains-in-space> [Accessed 15 December 2017]
- Menke, Richard, ‘Industry and Technology’ in *George Eliot in Context*, ed. by Margaret Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- Milne-Smith, Amy, ‘Shattered Minds: Madmen on the Railways, 1860-80’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21 (2016), 21-39
- Molotch, Harvey, ‘The Space of Lefebvre’, *Theory and Society*, 22 (1993), 887-95
- Moore, Tara, *Victorian Christmas in Print* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
- Moretti, Franco, ‘Network Theory, Plot Analysis’, *Literary Lab*, 2 (2011), 1-31
- Odden, Karen M, ‘25 August 1861: The Clayton Tunnel Rail Crash, the Medical Profession, and the Sensation Novel’, *Victorian Review*, 40 (2014), 30-34

- Odlyzko, Andrew, 'Charles Mackay's Own Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Railway mania', *University of Minnesota* (2012) <http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/mania04.pdf> [Accessed 22 September 2020]
- Otis, Laura, *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001)
- Patrick, David, 'Alexander Anderson', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Lee Sidney (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1912)
- 'Penny Dreadful, The Mysteries of London', *British Library* (n.d.) <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/penny-dreadful-the-mysteries-of-london#> [Accessed 5 February 2021].
- Pope-Hennessy, James, *Anthony Trollope* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971)
- Powell, Kathryn, 'Engineering Heroes: Revising the Self-Help Narrative in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis*', *The Gaskell Journal*, 29 (2015), 79-96
- 'Railways and Regret: Revising Mobility Myths in Victorian Literature and Culture, 1857-1891' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Tennessee Knoxville, 2017)
- Proquest*, (2021) <https://search.proquest.com/britishperiodicals/results/9DBF83FD58BD4A2DPQ/1?accountid=8318> [Accessed 3 January 2021]
- Quinn, Ben, 'Anti-Homeless Spikes are Part of a Wider Phenomenon of "Hostile Architecture"', *The Guardian*, (2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/13/anti-homeless-spikes-hostile-architecture> [accessed 04 January 2021].
- 'The Regulation of the Railways Act, 1868', *Legislation.gov.uk* (n.d) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/31-32/119/contents> [Accessed 6 May 2020]
- 'The Regulation of Railways Act, 1889', *Legislation.gov.uk* (n.d.) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/52-53/57/section/1/enacted> [Accessed 4 December 2019]
- Rolt, R.T.C *Red for Danger* (London: Pan Books, 1978)
- Rumens, Carol, 'Summer Voyages: *Mugby Junction* by Charles Dickens and Others', *The Guardian* (2013) <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jul/31/summer-voyages-charles-dickens-mugby-junction> [Accessed 7 Dec 2018]
- Ruskin, John, *The Cestus of Aglaia and The Queen of the Air with Other Papers and Lectures on Art and Literature: 1860-1870*, ed. by E.T Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1905)
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth-Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)
- 'Railroad Space and Railroad time', *New German Critique*, 14 (1987), 31-40

- *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014)
- Shannon, Brent, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain 1860-1914* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006)
- Sharma, Sarah, 'Baring Life and Lifestyle in the Non-Place', *Cultural Studies*, 23 (2009), 129-48
- Short, Mick, 'Listing and Impressionism in Charles Dickens's Description of Genoa in *Pictures from Italy*', in *The Stylistics of Landscape, The Landscapes of Stylistics*, ed. by John Douthwaite, Daniela Francesca Virdis, and Elisabetta Zurru (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017)
- Slater, Peter William, 'The Ghost in the Machine Ensemble: Generating the Industrial Supernatural in *Mugby Junction* (1866)', *Playgrounds in Prison* (2014) <<https://playgroundsinprison.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/the-ghost-in-the-machine-ensemble-generating-the-industrial-supernatural-in-mugby-junction-1866/>> [Accessed 2 November 2018]
- Sutherland, John, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989)
- Taylor, Jenny Bourne, 'Trollope and the Sensation Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope* ed. by Carolyn Dever and Lisa Niles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Thacker, Andrew, 'Uncompleted Life: The Modernist Underground', in *The Railway and Modernity*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007)
- Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977)
- Uglow, Jenny, 'Gaskell [nee Stevenson], Elizabeth Cleghorn', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10434>> [Accessed 5 February 2021]
- Vadillo, Anna Parejo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Vermeulen, Timotheus, 'Space is the Place', *Frieze* (2015) <<https://frieze.com/article/space-place>> [Accessed 29 June 2018]
- Wagner, Tamara, 'Dickens's "gentleman for nowhere": Reversing Technological Gothic in the Linkages of *Mugby Junction*', *Dickens Quarterly*, 28 (2011), 52-64
- Welsh, David, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

- Weyant, Nancy S., *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Annotated Guide to English Language Sources, 1992-2001* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004)
- Wolmar, Christian, *Fire & Steam: How the Railways Transformed Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007)
- Wolmar, Christian, *The Subterranean Railway* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012)
- Wood, Henry Trueman, *A History of the Royal Society of Arts* (London: John Murray, 1913)
- Zhang, Zhongyuan, 'What is lived space?', *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organisation*, 6. (2006), 219-23