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Victorian Network

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THEATRICALITY AND PERFORMANCE IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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Performance and theatricality have become key terms for scholars working across wide reaches of Victorian studies. Closely related and multiply resonant as they are, I will not attempt to disentangle them here. Thomas Postlewait and Tracy Davis in defining just one of these terms suggest that:

> the idea of theatricality has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message. It is a sign empty of meaning; it is the meaning of all signs. Depending on one's perspective, it can be dismissed as little more than a self-referential gesture or it can be embraced as a definitive feature of human communication. Although it obviously derives its meanings from the world of theatre, *theatricality* can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life.[1]

We see how richly useful and widely usable these terms are in the diverse approaches demonstrated by the work gathered in this issue of *Victorian Network*. These are not articles purely about the theatre but they do recognise the importance, both metaphorically and literally, of theatricality and performance in a number of areas of nineteenth-century culture and society. As Tracy Davis and Peter Holland suggest, 'theatre and performance are currently embraced by Romantic and Victorian scholars alike as pervasive practices of the historical past.'[2] Not only do these terms help us access, discuss and connect up particular moments of cultural history, their significance has contributed to the opening up of new areas of scholarly interest. Over the past twenty to thirty years music hall, pantomime and melodrama have been investigated alongside the "legitimate" drama, just as work on popular magazines or penny dreadful fiction has flourished alongside continued interest in the realist novel. The fact that the latest issue of *Victorian Network* seeks to investigate these overlapping areas of interest is apposite, as the theatre, and indeed all other areas of Victorian culture, worked through networks. Whether these networks were social or economic, cultural production could not function without them. The network is

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1 Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, 'Theatricality: an introduction' in *Theatricality* ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 1.
2 Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland, 'Introduction: the Performing Society' in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 3.

particularly apparent when considering the theatre itself and the relationships between playwright, director, actors, managers, critics and audience. But as several of the essays here demonstrate, the interconnected networks of production and consumption into which their focus texts were launched often crossed generic boundaries. Indeed, since Martin Meisel's *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in the Nineteenth Century* (1983) explored the interconnectedness of the three areas of his title, and particularly the importance of theatrical metaphors in the visual arts and fiction writing, scholars have become more and more open to such connections. Katherine Newey suggests that many Victorians themselves had 'great confidence in the almost infinite capacity of the stage as an effective means of representation and communication, and its capacity to absorb and incorporate all other art forms.'[3] Deborah Vlock argues powerfully in her *Dickens, Novel Reading, and the Victorian Popular Theatre* that 'the tropes of the theatre gave voice to other forms of artistic and popular expression; people read novels, newspapers, social criticism – indeed, just about everything worth reading – through the lens of popular performance.'[4]

Many of the best known figures in Victorian culture worked across a number of networks which reached outside the field in which they are now best known (or most often pigeon holed). Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote successful plays, including *The Lady of Lyons* (1838), amidst his hectic schedule as a novelist. Henry James's hunger for the theatrical success that *Guy Domville* (1895) would not bring him is well documented. Wilkie Collins wrote thirteen plays between 1850 and 1885 while producing his best-selling sensation novels.[5] Charles Reade, too, flitted amongst the roles of novelist, playwright, and manager (he brought Ellen Terry out of retirement) while fellow sensation novelists Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Florence Marryat also fitted acting as well as writing for the stage into their busy fiction-writing careers. Bram Stoker, whose *Dracula* is examined in Leanne Page's article, famously worked as a secretary and manager for Sir Henry Irving during his years at the Lyceum. For many popular novelists, producing a dramatic version of their fiction was a means of capturing some of the profits that would otherwise go straight to the pirated play versions that were always attendant on the publication of a successful novel – often even before its serialisation had ended. Dickens was one among many irritated by this problem. Poets too turned to drama: Robert Browning, for example, had plays staged in the 1830s and the dramatic impetus of a volume like *Dramatis Personae* (1864) is

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3 Katherine Newey, 'Speaking Pictures: The Victorian Stage and Visual Culture' in *Ruskin, the Theatre and Victorian Visual Culture*, ed. Anselm Heinrich, Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 5.

4 Deborah Vlock, *Dickens, Novel Reading, and the Victorian Popular Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 3.

5 Richard Pearson's project to digitise Collins's plays has recently gone live at http://www.wilkiecollinsplays.net

fundamental to his work. Of course, some of those figures we know best for their dramatic work were also writing in other genres – Oscar Wilde being the most obvious example of a playwright who was also an author, poet and editor. Whilst twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship has often tried to categorise Victorian cultural producers into neat boxes (novelist, dramatist, journalist), the figures above, and many others, defy such attempts and ask us to consider the networked interconnections between their works amongst different genres.

Jonathan Buckmaster's essay turns to one of the figures central to debates about the relationships between Victorian forms of cultural production, namely Charles Dickens. There are many routes through which his attitude to the theatre and theatricality have been analysed: Dickens as the journalist commenting condescendingly on the stage in 'The Amusements of the People', Dickens as the sharp satirist of stage life in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), Dickens as enthusiastic amateur actor in *The Frozen Deep* (1866), and Dickens as addicted performer in his late readings.[6] Buckmaster adds fresh matter to these debates by turning to the less-read texts *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* (1838) and 'The Pantomime of Life' (1837). He reads the slippage between "onstage" and "offstage" life, or the authentic and the performed, as potentially threatening as well as comic in these texts and sees them as foregrounding the importance of these themes in Dickens's later works. Alice Crossley's essay also focuses on the perceived dichotomies of the sincere and the performed, the public and the private, and uses Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1848-50) to put forward a convincing case that when it comes to the dandy-figures in the novel, performance, particularly through costume, can be a means of distracting attention away from the male body and actually maintaining its privacy. She demonstrates the ways in which the novel draws upon theatrical tropes and foregrounds the theatricality of high society life. Both Crossley and Buckmaster also key into wider debates concerning the relationship between the theatre and the novel. Scholars such as Joseph Litvak in *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (1992) and Emily Allen in *Theater Figures: The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (2003) have explored the attraction-repulsion paradigm; Crossley and Buckmaster, while acknowledging that both Dickens and Thackeray felt some ambivalence or anxiety towards the stage, emphasise reciprocity and interdependence between the genres.

Anjna Chouhan takes us to the late-Victorian stage and the figures of Oscar Wilde and Arthur Wing Pinero. Arguing that in the case of *The Schoolmistress* (1886) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895), the conservatory functions as an urban replacement for pastoral escape and allows Pinero and Wilde to send up those conventions associated with on-stage pastoral. Utilising a theory of theatrical phenomenology, Chouhan

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6 See Edwin Eigner, *The Dickens Pantomime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) amongst many others.

concurrently explores the role of the imagination, for both actor and audience, in investing in these offstage conservatory spaces. Leanne Page's article is also theoretically informed, although here it is technological performance, previously only applied to twentieth and twenty-first century technologies, that illuminates an analysis of *Dracula*. The practice of shorthand, and the apparatus of the phonograph and the typewriter are given fresh resonance in this analysis as their performances are connected to the fallible individuals in the novel, and are evaluated in social settings. The theorising of different kinds of performance has been undertaken by scholars across disciplines such as Richard Schechner and Judith Butler.[7] It is Butler's influential ideas on performativity that several of these essays utilise. Her interest in the formation of the subject within gendered power structures, ultimately deriving from Foucault, has put her *Gender Trouble* (1990) on student reading lists across the arts and humanities. The postmodern contingency and constructedness of the gendered self, and of the body, brings performance off of the stage and into myriad other settings. Alice Crossley's article in particular demonstrates that while Butler's ideas come from a feminist perspective, they can also be put to use in the study of representations of masculinity. Jon McKenzie's work, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001), here put to innovative use in Leanne Page's article, also comes out of a Foucauldian interest in the formation of the subject through particular kinds of discourse, echoing Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) in its very title. This type of theoretical work also allows us to rethink notions of theatricality and performance as insincere or disingenuous. When performance is perceived as inseparable from the formation and expression of the self, the question of insincerity becomes irrelevant. Victorian thinkers often found themselves asking similar questions about the compatibility of sincerity and acting. G. H. Lewes, for example, in his *Actors and Acting* (1875) suggested that an artificially created emotion could provide the route to an authentic one for accomplished actors.[8] Theorising performance has not distracted scholars, particularly theatre historians, from digging through intransigent archives to try to increase our knowledge of the material conditions of theatrical practice in the nineteenth-century. Tracy Davis's meticulous work has helped us to understand the social position of the actress much more fully, and to complicate the narrative of 'the rise of the theatre' to cultural respectability by the end of the nineteenth century.[9] Katherine Newey has brought a

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7 See, for example, Richard Schechner's important work in performance studies including *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993) and his *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Butler's most widely read works are *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

8 See Lynn Voskuil, *Acting Naturally: Victorian Theatricality and Authenticity* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004) for more on Lewes's work.

9 Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991). See Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor* (London: Croon Helm,

number of forgotten women playwrights to our attention in her *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (2005). Whilst the theatrical or the performed have often been defined as ephemeral and intangible, more and more work on reception history, audience composition, and the architectural spaces of performance help us get closer to the fleeting moment of performance. Ventures such as 'The Buried Treasures Project' which catalogued plays deposited at the Lord Chamberlain's Office between 1652 and 1863 and the 'Victorian Plays Project' (www.victorian.worc.ac.uk) which digitised 360 of Lacy's Acting Editions of plays performed around mid-century have facilitated access to the fundamentals of theatre research – the plays themselves. The London Music Hall Database provides further access for researchers interested in productions outside the prestige venues of the West-End.[10] Digitisation will continue to open up little-known texts and archives to scholarly research and will provide source materials for doctoral projects of the future.[11]

The stimulating articles collected here provide a number of entry points into key debates surrounding theatricality and performance and attest to the healthy state of postgraduate work in this area. The hard work and professionalism of the team working on *Victorian Network* have made it a pleasure to be involved with this issue.

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1978) for the narrative against which Davis writes.

10 See www.rhul.ac.uk/drama/music-hall/index.asp. See also the project run jointly between Birmingham and Lancaster universities: 'The Cultural Politics of English Pantomime, 1837-1901'. http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/drama/research/pantomime/index.aspx

11 For a fuller discussion of digitisation projects in relation to Victorian theatre see Caroline Radcliffe and Kate Mattacks, 'From Analogues to Digital: New Resources in Nineteenth-Century Theatre',*19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 8 (2009) http://19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/issue/view/71/showToc

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'WE ARE ALL ACTORS IN THE PANTOMIME OF LIFE': CHARLES DICKENS AND THE *MEMOIRS OF JOSEPH GRIMALDI*

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Abstract

During the nineteenth century, a number of writers, including W.H. Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins, proposed a relationship between fiction and drama. A number of critics have also examined this relationship in the work of Charles Dickens, but one of his most theatrical texts, the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* (1838), has been given little critical attention.

Yet by examining the *Memoirs* within the context of Dickens's earlier essay, 'The Pantomime of Life' (1837), I argue that in the *Memoirs* Dickens foregrounds the themes of theatre and performance in his depiction of Grimaldi's "offstage" life. Dickens integrates the principal figure of the pantomime Clown into the *Memoirs*, and uses both text and illustration to demonstrate the theatrical quality of life through the persistent presence of a demanding pantomime audience.

In 'The Pantomime of Life', Dickens demonstrates the theatrical nature of life by mixing off-stage and on-stage scenes in a way that shows how the stock characters of the pantomime have identifiable counterparts in the "real" world. In particular, he focuses on the mischievous figure of the Clown (as formulated in Grimaldi's act), who appears in life as the confidence trickster who uses his play-acting skills to dupe an audience so socially self-conscious that they are willing to believe in the pretence. This sort of character had already briefly appeared in *Sketches by Boz* (1836) but had been developed further in *The PickwickPapers* (1837) through the character of Alfred Jingle. In the *Memoirs*, the fictional figure of Jingle is reformulated in the real-life villain, Mackintosh.

The other aspect of the theatrical dynamic is the persistent presence of a pantomime audience, which Dickens often conflates with a volatile public mob. In a number of episodes in the *Memoirs*, Dickens demonstrates how the audience's misreading of the boundaries between on-stage and off-stage, which initially made them so attractive to confidence tricksters, becomes something more threatening. Grimaldi's identity becomes fixed, as he is forced regularly to perform outside of the playhouse, either for a large and unregulated mob on the London streets, or for a smaller group of people in the barber's shop.

Despite the author's early optimism, the *Memoirs* was a commercial failure for Dickens and, unsurprisingly, he declined the offer of helping Tom Ellar with a similar project. However, the *Memoirs* is better seen as part of one of Dickens's early projects in characterisation, in which life was refigured as a pantomime performance. Theorised in 'The Pantomime of Life', this theme runs through much of his early work, from *Sketches by Boz* to *Oliver Twist* (1838) and is also a recurrent motif in later characters such as Seth Pecksniff and Wilkins Micawber. In this way, Dickens refigures the character of Grimaldi, taking him from the stage and into the pages of his novels.

Writing for the stage

During the nineteenth century, a number of writers proposed a relationship between

fiction and drama. For example, W.H. Ainsworth asserted that 'the novelist is precisely in the position of the dramatist', and according to Wilkie Collins 'the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the Family of Fiction'.[1] Both of these authors would indeed demonstrate these claims in their own sensation novels, which Joseph Litvak calls 'the most obviously theatrical Victorian subgenre'.[2] But perhaps the most theatrical of all Victorian novelists was Charles Dickens. Dickens claimed that 'every writer of fiction […] writes, in effect, for the stage', and the theatrical sensibility of his major fiction has been examined by a number of scholars. Edwin Eigner, for example, feels that Dickens was 'a delighted spectator and [...] serious critic' of pantomime, and regards it as 'the essential pattern of Dickens's comedy, the basis for his psychological insights and his social vision, as well as the modus operandi of his aesthetics'.[3] Juliet John similarly acknowledges that Dickens's 'dramatic' techniques of characterisation are associated with 'contemporary forms of popular theatre like pantomime'.[4] However, she places greater emphasis on melodrama, arguing that it was the more popular theatrical genre and also because the evanescent, constantly changing nature of the pantomime form means that 'selfhood is metamorphic from the outset', and 'not circumscribed but protean'. Because of this lack of fixity, John feels that we cannot formulate a complex emotional response to pantomime characters: we do not see them 'as emotional – or psychological – beings but as fantastical, kaleidoscopic figures'.[5]

This article builds on the work of both of these critics. Most significantly, neither has adequately examined Dickens's *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, a text in which there are clear affinities between theatre (including pantomime) and fiction. Moreover, while Dickens's 'pantomimic' clowns may not be as complex as his villains, they are not as ephemeral and evanescent as John suggests. Certain behaviours were expected of pantomime Clowns, and A. E. Wilson notes, pantomime was, in fact, 'a stereotyped and heavily conventionalised business'.[6] As I shall demonstrate, both Grimaldi and Dickens articulated a very definite image of the Clown and his role, which became a template to which both would regularly return in performance and fiction respectively.

Grimaldi, who died in May 1837, was the pre-eminent pantomime performer

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1 William Harrison Ainsworth, Preface to *Rookwood* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. xii.; Wilkie Collins, 'Letter of Dedication' in *Basil: A Story of Modern Life* (London: Blackwood, 1856), p. vi.
2 Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 129.
3 Edwin M. Eigner, *The Dickens Pantomime* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. x; Eigner, p. 8.
4 Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8.
5 John, p. 12.
6 A.E. Wilson, *Christmas Pantomime: The Story of an English Institution* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1934), p. 92.

of his age. The pantomime historian Richard Findlater comments that from '1800 onwards, within a year of his first appearance in the role, Grimaldi was recognised as one of London's leading clowns', as he reinvented the role from the more Shakespearean fool or country bumpkin.[7] His theatrical collaborator, Charles Dibdin, asserts that Grimaldi 'in every respect, founded a New School for Clowns', as he made the great innovations in the make-up, costume and technique of the Clown role and overtook the Harlequin role in terms of importance.[8]

Dickens became engaged with the *Memoirs* project in October 1837, after his publisher Richard Bentley had acquired a hack-written manuscript directly based on Grimaldi's reminiscences. Despite his own enthusiasm for pantomime and Grimaldi, Dickens reluctantly took on the job of reworking this manuscript at an already busy time for him, as he juggled the serials of *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) and *Oliver Twist* (1838) and the editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany*. Given Grimaldi's relatively recent death, time was of the essence, and Dickens agreed to produce his own edited version by February 1838. In the final published edition, Dickens claims to be merely the editor, yet his creative input is revealed when he admits that he was 'much struck' by a number of the episodes and 'told some of the stories in [his] own way'.[9]

Since its publication, most critics have held this text in low regard; for example, Forster noted its 'great many critical faults' and Peter Ackroyd sees it as something Dickens wrote just 'to fill up the empty days' between novels.[10] More recently Michael Slater has offered a more constructive reading, but Richard Findlater epitomises the popular view when he dismisses the *Memoirs* as 'a literary misalliance' and 'among the most disappointing reminiscences in our theatrical literature'.[11] Findlater's principal complaint against the *Memoirs* is its 'failure to suggest [Grimaldi's] theatrical genius', as he argues that it is too full of green-room trivia and makes 'merely perfunctory' reference to Grimaldi's art and technique.[12] However, by examining the *Memoirs* within the context of Dickens's essay 'The Pantomime of Life' (1837), I would suggest that Dickens foregrounds the themes of theatre and performance in the *Memoirs* through his depiction of Grimaldi's 'offstage' life. Dickens both integrates the figure of the pantomime Clown into the *Memoirs*,

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7 Richard Findlater, *Joe Grimaldi: His Life and Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 89-90.
8 Charles Dibdin, *Professional and Literary Memoirs of Charles Dibdin the Younger*, ed. by George Speaight (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1956), pp. 47-48.
9 *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, ed. by Charles Dickens, 2 vols, (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), I, p. x. Further references are given after quotations in the text, using the abbreviation *JG*; Letter to Dr J.A. Wilson (? 14 February 1838) in *The Letters of Charles Dickens,* ed. by Madeline House and Graham Storey, 12 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), I, p. 373.
10 John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 3 vols, (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1872) I, p. 122; Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Minerva, 1991), p. 254.
11 Findlater, *Joe Grimaldi*, pp. 246-247.
12 Findlater, p. 247.

and uses text and illustration to demonstrate another aspect of the theatrical quality of life, the persistent presence of an audience.

Section II of this article will examine Dickens's depiction of the Clown in the *Memoirs*. In 'The Pantomime of Life', in which Dickens demonstrates how the stock characters of the pantomime have identifiable counterparts in the "real" world, he focuses on the mischievous figure of the Clown. The Clown's real life equivalent is the confidence trickster, who uses his play-acting skills to dupe an audience so socially self-conscious that they are willing to believe in his pretence. This sort of character had already briefly appeared in Dickens's writing but had appeared in the more fully developed figure of Alfred Jingle in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837). I will show how the fictional character Jingle is reformulated in the *Memoirs* into the real-life villain Mackintosh.

In Section III I will consider the other aspect of the theatrical dynamic, which is the persistent presence of a pantomime audience. Dickens often conflates this group with a volatile public mob, and in the *Memoirs*, he demonstrates how the audience's misreading of the boundaries between on-stage and off-stage, which initially made them so attractive to confidence tricksters, becomes something more threatening. Grimaldi's identity becomes fixed by the mob, as he is regularly forced to perform outside of the playhouse, either out on the London streets, or for smaller groups of people in more domestic settings.

Finally, Section IV will consider the position of *the Memoirs* within Dickens's work as a whole. Despite its commercial and critical failure, it nevertheless represents one of Dickens's early projects in characterisation. Theorised in 'The Pantomime of Life', Dickens's variation on the theme of *the theatrum mundi* runs through much of his early work and is also a recurrent motif in later characters such as Seth Pecksniff and Wilkins Micawber. In this way, Dickens refigures the character of Grimaldi, taking him from the stage and into the pages of his novels.

The players in life's pantomime

Dickens's essay 'The Pantomime of Life' first appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany* in March 1837, and is crucial to our understanding of Dickens's conception of the pantomime Clown and his theatrical sensibility as a whole. Although it appeared under the inauspicious heading 'Stray Chapters by Boz', and was only included to make up the page count after a short number of *Oliver Twist*, it belies its 'makeweight' function and, as Michael Slater comments, it 'may be seen as a sort of artistic manifesto by Dickens justifying the essential theatricality of his art'.[13]

Dickens sets out the central premise of this theatricality in the essay's opening paragraphs. He praises pantomime as a spectacular form of entertainment associated with two of his key indicators of value, holidays and childhood. But then, in an echo

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13 Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 96.

of Hamlet, he explains its deeper appeal as 'a mirror of life', subtly interweaving depictions of pantomime scenes with episodes from everyday life in order to show how the stock types of pantomime correspond to real-life figures.[14] For example, the 'worthless and debauched' Pantaloon is twinned with 'that old gentleman who has just emerged from the *Café de l'Europe* in the Haymarket' (*PL*, p. 502). Dickens expects that his readers would know many such figures in their own social circles, and similarly claims that 'We see harlequins [*sic*] of so many kinds in the real living pantomime, that we hardly know which to select as the proper fellow of him of the theatres' (*PL*, p. 505). Even the supernumeraries, those 'men […] sent upon the stage for the express purpose of being cheated, or knocked down, or both' appear outside the playhouse as those 'odd, lazy, large-headed men, whom one is in the habit of meeting here, and there, and everywhere […] with no other view than to be constantly tumbling over each other, and running their heads against all sorts of strange things' (*PL*, p. 504). However, the central figure in this essay is the Clown, the figure that Dickens believes most suited to life in early nineteenth-century London. Grimaldi had developed the role of the pantomime Clown to be more than just the simple butt of the humour, and instead become 'very much the master of his fate' who 'displays the eager mischief of the *zanni*'.[15] Jane Moody neatly sums up the importance of Grimaldi's new Clown, when she describes him as 'the whimsical, practical satirist of the Regency city' who 'became a precious symbol of social licence'.[16]

In 'The Pantomime of Life', Dickens states that 'the close resemblance which the clowns [*sic*] of the stage bear to those of everyday life is perfectly extraordinary' and that 'Clowns that beat Grimaldi all to nothing turn up every day'. According to Dickens, in pantomime scenes in tailor's shops and boarding houses, the Clown creates 'the great fun of the thing' by 'taking lodgings which he has not the slightest intention of paying for', 'obtaining goods under false pretences' and 'swindling everybody he possibly can'. Moreover, the audience is enmeshed within a mutually gratifying relationship with the performer onstage; as Dickens asserts, 'the more extensive the swindling is, and the more barefaced the impudence of the swindler' then 'the greater the rapture and ecstasy of the audience' (*PL*, p. 503). As a real-life example of this character Dickens offers the example of 'Honourable Captain Fitz-Whisker Fiercy' who obtains a variety of goods based on his name and reputation. This reputation is maintained solely through performance, as he 'struts and swaggers about with that compound air of conscious superiority and general bloodthirstiness'

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14 Charles Dickens 'The Pantomime of Life', in *Dickens' Journalism: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers 1833-1839*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: Phoenix, 1996), pp. 500-7 (p. 500). Further references are given after quotations in the text, using the abbreviation *PL*.
15 Findlater, p. 117.
16 Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-184*0 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14.

expected of a military man (*PL*, p. 504). Eventually, however, he is exposed as an imposter and is imprisoned: in a pantomime ending, a kind of moral justice has been served. Crucially, however, Dickens once again points to the complicity of the Captain's 'audience' in his act. While *in* the theatre, the people whom the Captain defrauded happily sat in the front row and laughed the most exuberantly at the Clown's crimes. However, *outside* the playhouse, their confusion of onstage and offstage and willingness to believe the captain's performance have left them vulnerable to his deception.

Dickens's most significant inclusion of this Clownish figure in the *Memoirs* occurs in Grimaldi's encounters with the villain Mackintosh. This type of confidence trickster had originally appeared in *Sketches by Boz*, where figures like Horatio Sparkins, Theodosius Butler and Captain Waters used their most effective skills of impersonation to dupe an audience who were so anxious about their own social position that they were willing to believe these pretences of status. But the closest fictional prototype of Mackintosh is Alfred Jingle in *The Pickwick Papers*, the strolling actor thoroughly familiar with theatricality in all of its forms. Indeed, even the name of one of Jingle's assumed roles, 'Mr Charles Fitz-Marshall' carries echoes of the 'Honourable Captain Fitz-Whisker Fiercy'. In both the Jingle and Mackintosh episodes, Dickens demonstrates that the relationship between the pantomime player and the audience is based around two different types of assumption: the assumption of a role by the actor and the assumptions made by the audience about that actor.

Even before he appears in person, Mackintosh's audience articulate a number of preconceptions about him, which are later proved to be unfounded. For example, Grimaldi's friend Jack Bologna tells him that 'Mackintosh was understood to be […] a large landed proprietor, [with] most splendid preserves', only for it to be later revealed that the 'Mackintosh' named above the door of the public house is actually his mother (*JG*, I, p. 187). The villain knowingly reveals this with a wink and, while Bologna visibly displays his shock, Grimaldi laughs at this deception, which is a cue to us to read this incident like a piece of pantomime knockabout, a comical dig at the socially precious Bologna. Mackintosh explains his actions in terms that reveal his own awareness of this dual sense of assumption: 'I never let my London friends know who or what I am [...] I just lead them to guess I'm a great man, and there I leave 'em' (*JG*, I, p. 189). In a similar fashion, Jingle advises Tupman against announcing their names at the Rochester ball, asserting that 'Names won't do' and that '*incog.* [is] the thing', recommending that they pass themselves off as 'Gentlemen from London – distinguished foreigners – anything.'[17]

Both Mackintosh and Jingle develop this model of Clownish behaviour, adopting roles that artificially elevate their social standing. For example, Mackintosh takes his guests for a day's shooting on land that they mistakenly believe belongs to

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17 Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 33-34. Further references are given after quotations in the text, using the abbreviation *PP.*

him, and Dickens again treats this event ambivalently by suggesting that Bologna's over-inflated expectations are as much to blame as anything Mackintosh has said or done. When he shows them the field of pigeons they will be shooting, Bologna and Grimaldi claim that they expected to find proper game birds, such as pheasants and partridges. Mackintosh shows incredulity at this, and he tells them that 'I invited you down here to shoot birds - and pigeons are birds: and there are the pigeons; - shoot away, if you like. I have performed my part of the agreement' (*JG*, I, p. 191).

In a similar fashion, Jingle does not actually steal Nathaniel Winkle's jacket to wear to the ball, but assumes the role of a touring gentleman whose luggage is carried by barge. The suggestible Pickwick Club then assumes Jingle is the person he says he is, and provides him with a jacket: in which he can assume another role, that of Winkle. Furthermore, as Jingle's impersonation of Winkle progresses, Dickens continues to show how this performance relies on audience participation. Jingle gives no name at the door, and does not verbally identify himself with Winkle in any way at all. In fact, the powers of 'assumption' are so strong on *both* sides that Winkle mistakenly believes that he really must have done the things of which he is accused: 'The fact is, I was very drunk; - I must have changed my coat - gone somewhere - and insulted somebody - I have no doubt of it; and this message is the terrible consequence' (*PP*, p. 40).

In the *Memoirs*, Mackintosh dismisses the shooting episode as a 'little trick [...] played in mere thoughtlessness', and even Grimaldi himself regards it as an 'absurd scrape' (*JG*, I, p. 225). However, their second encounter has a more serious tone, and the player/audience dynamic of 'The Pantomime of Life', in which 'the more barefaced the impudence of the swindler', the greater the captivation of the audience, is strained even further. Mackintosh invites Grimaldi into a new group of friends in London, telling him that they were very wealthy and could be very useful to him, again relying on Grimaldi's own social expectations to make his own assumptions about how these people might be useful. Dickens indicates the facade of this act in terms that firmly position Grimaldi as an enraptured member of an audience. We are told that he had 'cause for astonishment' when he visited Mackintosh's new house and that, like someone watching one of his pantomimes, he 'actually began to doubt the reality of what he saw' (*JG*, I, pp. 226-227).

In *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens similarly depicts the coach journey to Rochester as one of the audacious actor entrancing his audience, as each member of the Pickwick Club takes his turn to demonstrate how far they are taken in by Jingle's act. They each accept the wildly varying tales he tells of his life to the extent that Pickwick and Snodgrass write them down as a matter of record, filling their notebooks with Jingle's adventures. When Jingle leaves the group at the end of the journey, Dickens leaves us in no doubt that all of the members of the Pickwick Club had been thoroughly taken in:

> "Evidently a traveller in many countries, and a close observer of men and things," said Mr Pickwick.
> "I should like to see his poem", said Mr Snodgrass.
> "I should like to have seen that dog", said Mr Winkle.
> Mr Tupman said nothing; but he thought of Donna Christina, the stomach pump, and the fountain; and his eyes filled with tears. (*PP*, p. 29).

When the crimes of both villains are finally revealed, they both display the sort of amused and mischievous contempt at the gullibility of their victims regularly displayed by Grimaldi's Clown as he fooled the Pantaloon or Dandy Lover. When confronted by Grimaldi's willingness to believe in Mackintosh's act even when he has been imprisoned, the imposter finds it hard to suppress his mirth, and explains his deceptions 'with a slight tremor in his voice which, despite his serious situation, arose from an incipient tendency to laughter' (*JG*, I, p. 5). Jingle acts in the same way; when Pickwick's coach crashes in pursuit of him, a 'shameless' Jingle shows mock concern: 'any body damaged? – elderly gentlemen – no light weights – dangerous work – very' (*PP*, p. 127). Wardle's designation of him as 'a rascal' seems to amuse him further and as his coach escapes, Jingle derisively flutters a white handkerchief from the coach window. These casual attitudes provoke angry responses in their victims, and in 'The Pantomime of Life' Dickens called this indignant reaction of the audience 'the best of the joke'. He observed that the member of the audience 'who is the loudest in his complaints against the person who defrauded him' outside of the theatre, was very often 'the identical man who […] laughed most boisterously at this very same thing' when in the theatre (*PL*, p. 504).

Accordingly, both Grimaldi and Pickwick express outrage towards figures who they had regarded with amusement not so long ago. In the face of Mackintosh's casual attitude, Grimaldi becomes very angry, 'starting up with uncontrollable fury', and seizing Mackintosh by the throat (*JG*, II, p.7). Similarly, when Jingle is bought off by Wardle, we are told that anyone watching Pickwick 'would have been almost induced to wonder that the indignant fire which flashed from his eyes did not melt the glasses of his spectacles – so majestic was his wrath. His nostrils dilated, and his fists clenched involuntarily' (*PP*, p. 142). Finally, the supposed epitome of Dickensian benevolence explodes, madly hurling an inkstand at Jingle and lunging at him.

Playhouse audiences and public mobs

These violent consequences demonstrate the sometimes volatile nature of the player/audience relationship and both 'The Pantomime of Life' and the *Memoirs* often suggest that the player has as much to lose as he has to gain from the transaction. Indeed, in his presentation of the audience as an unregulated mob providing their own unpredictable interpretations of the performances before them, Dickens reveals an anxiety about the overall value and limitations of the player/audience dynamic.

In this section, I will demonstrate how this is articulated through both text and illustration. The *Memoirs* was one of Dickens's four collaborations with George Cruikshank, who personally knew Grimaldi as an Islington neighbour and member of his 'Crib' drinking club. Through their work together here, I would argue that Dickens and Cruikshank refigure Meisel's assertion that the nineteenth-century play 'is the evident meeting place of story and picture' by making Grimaldi's story the meeting-place of theatre and picture.[18] In this subtle synthesis, Dickens invests this story with images of theatricality, while Cruikshank underscores this theatricality through his pictures. These plates are both 'realisations' and 'illustrations' according to Meisel's definitions of these terms; they both give a 'concrete perceptual form to a literary text' but also offer an 'interpretive re-creation' that enrich and embellish the text further.[19] To demonstrate this, I shall later examine a number of the scenes in the *Memoirs* that were presented as both text and picture.

Dickens establishes the uneasy nature of the relationship between performer and audience early on in 'The Pantomime of Life' when we are introduced to the elderly Pantaloon. His happiness is interrupted when he falls over in the street and is violently attacked by a 'noisy and officious crowd', much to the amusement of the audience, who 'roar', become 'convulsed with merriment' and 'exhausted with laughter'. But when Dickens describes the same scene in the real world, in the Stock Exchange or a tradesman's shop, the audience transform from being merely a passive group of spectators into the actual mob; they raise 'a wild hallo' and 'whoop and yell as [the man] lies humbled beneath them' (*PL*, p. 501). Within the same sentence, they are simultaneously actors and observers, both attacking him as he lies on the floor, and then mocking and deriding him as he tries to escape. The very quality that make the audience such an attractive prospect for confidence tricksters, which is the way in which they misread or even ignore the boundaries between theatre and real life, here becomes something disruptive and something to fear. Thus in the *Memoirs* the audience treat a very real and violent beating that young Joe Grimaldi receives onstage as part of his performance. They regard the thrashing of Joe, who cried and 'roared vociferously', as 'a most capital joke', laughing and applauding, while the reviewers comment that it was 'perfectly wonderful to see a mere child perform so naturally' (*JG*, I, p. 16).

In another episode from his childhood, Joe goes to visit his grandfather's in clothes that his father hopes will present him as 'a gentleman' to everyone who sees him on the street. But the boy is treated with derision rather than admiration by the passing public, as his performance is again misinterpreted and read as another comedy routine, rather than a serious social appearance. He is variously called a 'monkey', a 'bear dressed for a dance' and a 'cat going out for a party', and rather than

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18 Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 3.
19 Meisel, p. 32.

growing in status through his performance, he is diminished; the mob-audience 'could not help laughing heartily, and saying how ridiculous it was to trust a child in the streets alone' (*JG*, I, p. 24).

Cruikshank's accompanying illustration, 'Master Joey going to visit his Godpapa', develops these themes further. It shows the small figure of Joe promenading along the pavement as the very model of deportment, and striking an attitude appropriate to his gentleman's costume. He holds his head very upright, looking straight forward in the approved posture, and remaining solemnly aloof from the crowd gathering around him. Here he is very much in the role of the observed, and has attracted quite an audience, which Cruikshank carefully delineates for us. For example, the poor woman who receives Joe's guinea clasps her hands together as if begging or possibly even in anxious prayer for the boy's safety, and two taller figures are in conversation, discussing and reviewing the spectacle before them. The group of figures immediately behind him include a ragged collection of four or five boys that constitute the core of the mob-audience. They all menacingly dwarf 'Master Joey' and at least three carry the tools of various trades, denoting them as firmly proletarian: the centre boy carries a pair of baskets, the boy to his left a sack, and the boy to the right a broom (an early predecessor of Jo in *Bleak House* (1853)). As we have seen, Joe's life as a boy-actor was hardly a comfortable or genteel one, but his father's insistence that his son is 'a gentleman' puts him into stark contrast with these boys. Finally, right in the centre is the largest figure of all, who wears a tradesman's apron; his jaunty hat, coloured nose and slightly irregular eyes suggest drunkenness, in contrast with Joe's temperate father. The composition of the picture is such that Joe is enclosed on all sides by these characters, as well as by railings, a closed door and a brick wall in the background. He is forced to perform in the public space, and is at the mercy of their interpretation.

George Cruikshank, 'Master Joey going to visit his Godpapas' ('Memoirs', Book I)

A parallel episode occurs in *Oliver Twist*, a novel in which the narrative is driven entirely by the player/audience dynamic and the different reactions that the audience have to the main performer, Oliver. Like Joe's father, Mr Brownlow carefully prepares the runaway boy for his new role as a young gentleman, and Oliver's initial break from criminality and poverty is primarily signalled through a

similar set of stage props: a 'complete new suit, and a new cap, and a new pair of shoes'.[20] Oliver's performance is also a failure, as the people he meets on his way to the bookseller's designate him as a 'young wretch' and a 'little brute' (pp. 107-8). Although Bill and Nancy act as physical assailants, it is significant that Dickens tells us that what really overpowers the boy is the audience's unfavourable response to his performance, 'the conviction of the bystanders that he really was the hardened little wretch he was described to be' (pp. 107-8). J. Hillis Miller offers a similar interpretation, recognising how the "fourth wall", that gap between the player and their audience, has collapsed. He explains that 'the labyrinth' of the city has 'turned into a hostile crowd which, no longer remaining at a distance, turns on the protagonist and hunts him down'.[21] Here the mob-audience's malevolent intent is fully realised; 'the aim of the mob is not simply to catch him, but to 'crowd' him to death. The crowd 'jostles' and 'struggles' centripetally toward Oliver, and will suffocate him or crush him if it can'.[22]

Cruikshank's drawing of this scene, 'Oliver claimed by his affectionate friends', once again complements and reinforces the ideas of the text, and also echoes the *Memoirs* illustration. This time the figures are fewer, but are more tightly closed around the boy, who is far from the aloof and steady 'Master Joe': physically assailed on three sides by Nancy, Bill Sikes and even Bullseye, he looks upwards with visible anguish. The composed posture of young Grimaldi is replaced by the frightened Oliver desperately clutching the books that symbolise his more refined life with Mr Brownlow. The smarter setting of the *Memoirs* illustration, with its relatively genteel house-door, front railings and clear pavement is replaced by the more squalid doorway of a beer-shop. With its gaudy signage, this shop-front and doorway frames the scene like a proscenium arch, underscoring its theatrical nature further. The crowd no longer keep their distance; two of them have laid their hands on the boy, and one of them is a nightmarish distortion of the slightly drunken figure at the centre of the Grimaldi illustration; his benevolent smile has been replaced by the grim features of the heavy-drinking Bill Sikes.

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20 Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993), p. 96.
21 J. Hillis Miller, 'Oliver Twist' in *Oliver Twist* (1993), (pp. 432-441), p. 440.
22 Hillis Miller, *Oliver Twist*, p. 440.

George Cruikshank, 'Oliver claimed by his affectionate friends', Frontispiece to
'Oliver Twist' (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966)

Indeed, the careful composition of this illustration made it sufficiently theatrical to merit its remediation in J. Stuart Blackton's silent film version of the novel in 1909. Juliet John describes Blackton's film as 'the earliest screen version that is more than a filmed scene', but this close visual correspondence clearly owes a debt to the idea of the *tableau vivant*.[23] As Meisel demonstrates, in the theatre the *tableau* represented the fusion of narrative and picture, in which 'the actors strike an expressive stance [...] that crystallizes a stage of the narrative as a situation, or

23 Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 216n.

summarizes and punctuates it', and in the case of Cruikshank's illustration, this adaptation of a theatrical mode into a pictorial realization (which is then in turn reconfigured as an early cinematic technique) demonstrates the versatility of Dickens's imagery.[24]

It is also worth considering that Dickens's conflation of the raucous mob of the street with the playhouse audience was no mere imaginative construct, but carried a strong historical precedent in which both Grimaldi and George Cruikshank were implicated. During the 'Old Price' Riots of 1809 and 1810, during which theatre audiences at the Covent Garden theatre angrily protested against rises in ticket prices and the installation of private boxes, the audience *became* the mob and entirely collapsed the boundary between stage and audience. These events touched both Grimaldi, as a performer at Covent Garden, and also George Cruikshank, who, with his brother Robert, produced at least fourteen O.P. propaganda prints between October and November 1809. Robert's print 'Killing No Murder, as Performing at the Grand National Theatre' neatly encapsulates the porousness of the on-stage/off-stage boundary. The caption suggests that we will see the realisation of a play scene, but what we actually get is a grisly scene from the real-life drama that was happening within the audience. The original stage is curtained off to the right, and is peripheral to the real performance: the rioters are literally centre-stage here. Another figure taking his own type of performance outside of its usual bounds is the Jewish prize-fighter Daniel Mendoza, who is shown trying to put down the rioters on the theatre manager Kemble's orders.

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24 Meisel, p. 45.
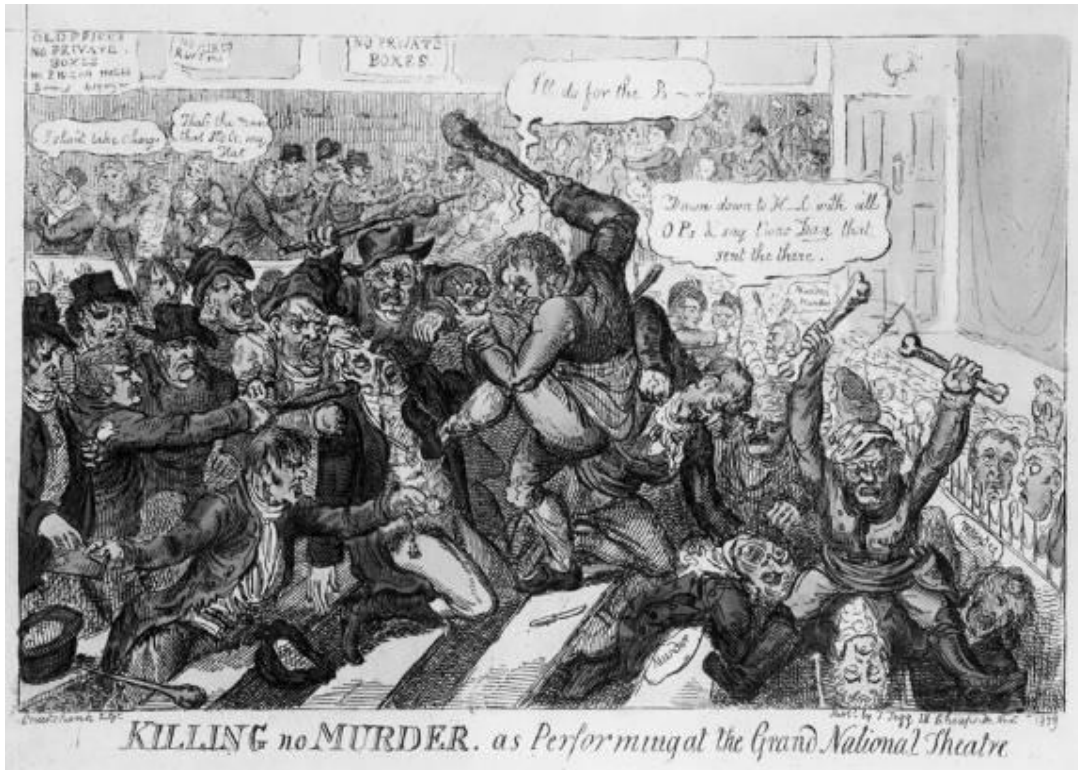
Robert Cruikshank, 'Killing no Murder, as Performing at the Grand National Theatre'
(1809)

Marc Baer also describes this participative trend in the theatre audience when the pit became 'the people's theatre' during the riots, as the crowds were 'prepared to answer the stage with dramatics of their own'.[25] For example, on the 23rd October 1809, during a pantomime containing gladiatorial combat, the audience staged mock fights of their own, thus destroying the "fourth wall" and making the entire auditorium a single playing space.

In the *Memoirs*, Dickens discusses the riots and shows how people in the audience used their own performances as an act of protest. Audience members take on new roles, such as the man who 'regaled himself and the company with a watchman's rattle', and another who rang 'a large dustman's bell […] with a perseverance and strength of arm quite astounding to all beholders'. Live pigs were brought into the playhouse and were 'pinched at the proper times', which 'added considerably to the effect of the performances' (*JG*, II, pp. 69-70). Moreover, as in Robert Cruikshank's print, the presence of the officially-designated performers was negated in other ways. In a parody of the usual theatrical etiquette, the theatre manager 'Kemble was constantly called for, constantly came on, and constantly went off again without being able to obtain a hearing'. The speeches usually heard from the

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25 Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 63.

officially designated stage were replaced with soliloquies from other parts of the theatre; 'scarce an evening passed', we are told, 'without flaming speeches being made from the pit, boxes and gallery' (*JG*, II, p. 70). The observers had become the observed and *vice versa*.

Throughout the narrative of the *Memoirs*, Grimaldi is revealed to be dependent on this audience-mob and their variable interpretations. In another episode, he is late for a show and runs through the streets in full costume and make-up. As soon as he is recognised as the famous Clown, 'on came the mob, shouting, huzzaing, screaming out his name, throwing up their caps and hats, and exhibiting every manifestation of delight'. He is eventually cornered in a carriage, and is only able to placate the mob by performing for them, even though he is outside the theatre and the official show is not scheduled to start yet he 'suddenly poking his head out of the window, he gave one of his famous and well-known laughs' (*JG*, II, p. 76). Because Grimaldi had performed his expected role to their satisfaction, the mob and audience show their approval through laughter and applause before helping him reach his destination.

The accompanying illustration, 'Appearing in public', contains the idea of the stage figure within its very title. Celebrities and professional performers often make public appearances that are seen as quite separate to their onstage performances, which are circumscribed within the conventional performing spaces of the stage and screen. To further develop the themes of the text, the audience for a performance and the crowd in the street are conflated into a single group, occupying both positions simultaneously. Within his stage-coach, Joe himself is once again framed upon a kind of stage as his head is framed by the window from which he leans out. This point is the focus of attention for every other figure in the picture, from the groundlings running alongside the coach, to the more privileged members of the audience seated on the coach at either side of him. Even if we disregard his incriminating slap and motley, this is clearly marked as a public performance by Grimaldi.
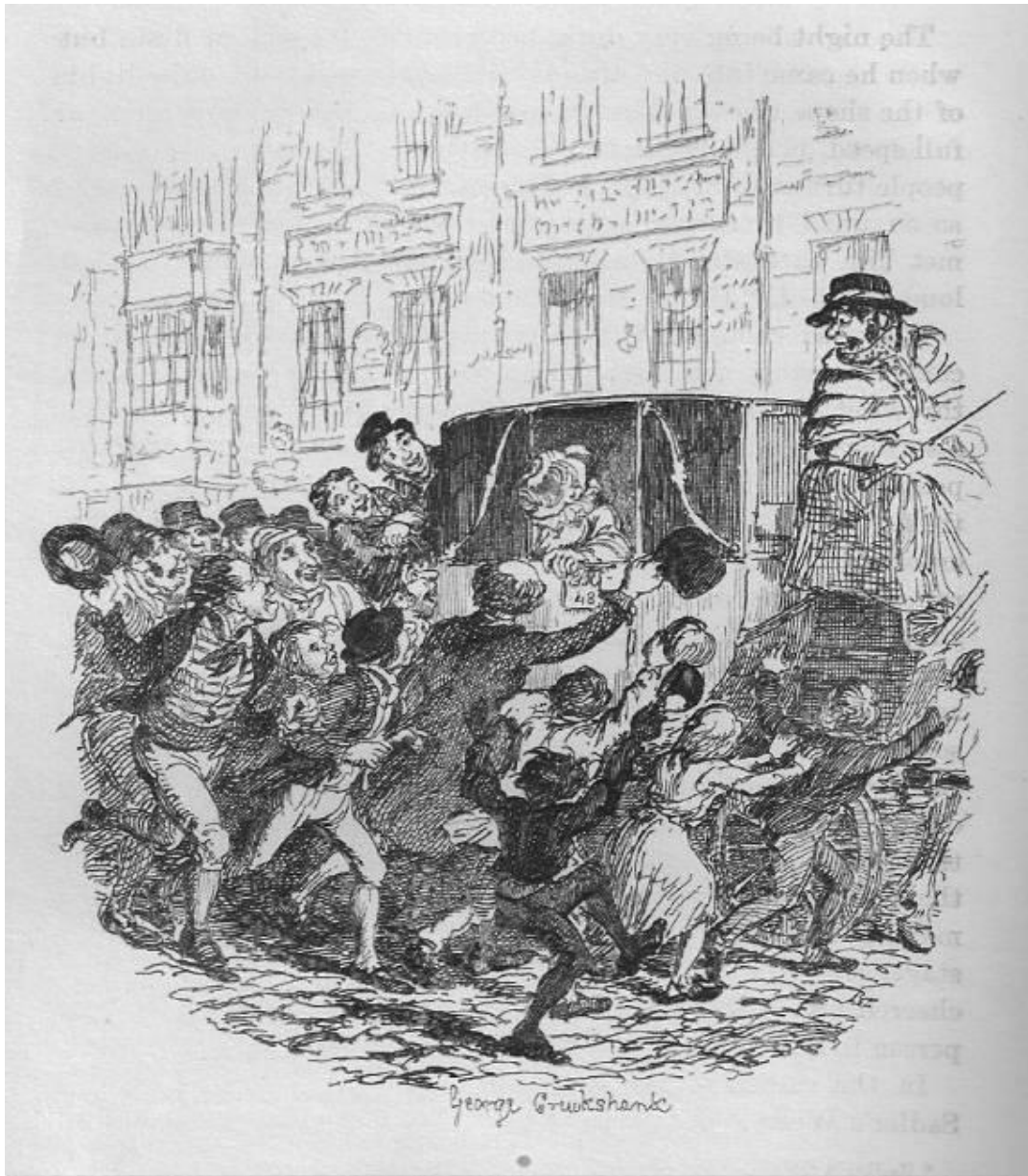
George Cruikshank, 'Appearing in Public' ('Memoirs', Book II)

To underline the relationship between the crowd outside and the audience inside, Dickens tells us that 'such of them as had money rushed round to the gallery-doors, and [made] their appearance in the front just as he came on stage, set[ting] up a boisterous shout of 'Here he is again!" (*JG*, II, 77). In their minds, there was no difference between the person on stage and the person they saw on the streets.

Furthermore, alongside these larger mobs there are many examples of Joe being asked to "perform" offstage for the benefit of smaller groups, even for just a handful of people: from the Earl of Derby asking the infant Joey to grimace and throw his wig into the green room fire, to a dinner at the house of a reverend

gentleman in Bath who only invites Joe in order for him to perform at the dinner table. One such domestic scene in which Grimaldi seems almost trapped into performing outside of the theatre is the barber-shop scene. Indeed, its suitability for the stage is underlined by Dickens when he indicates that Grimaldi was so amused by the episode that he wanted to develop it into a scene for one of his pantomimes. This telling detail of taking it off the street and onto the stage also represents an attempt to limit and contain its performance. But as we have seen, such containment is impossible; performance, and the interpretation of one's actions as performance, cannot be confined within the walls of the playhouse.

The episode itself is told in a very straightforward narrative that often reads as a series of stage directions, and the accompanying dialogue is equally stylised. For example, when Grimaldi returns to the barber's a third time to see if the proprietor had returned:

> The girl was still sitting at work; but she laid it aside when the visitors entered, and said she really was very sorry, but her father had not come in yet.
> "That's very provoking", said Grimaldi, "considering that I have called here three times already"
> The girl agreed that it was, and, stepping to the door, looked anxiously up the street and down the street, but there was no barber in sight.
> "Do you want to see him on any particular business?", inquired Howard [Grimaldi's companion].
> "Bless my heart! No, not I", said Grimaldi: "I only want to be shaved".
> "Shaved, sir!", cried the girl. "Oh, dear me! What a pity it is that you did not say so before! For I do most of the shaving for father when he's at home, and all when he's out".

Everything here is entirely on the level of surface and the conversation is unnatural for a real exchange, and yet quite suitable for the dialogue of a play. While in the barber's chair, being shaved by this young girl, the comic nature of the scene appeals to Grimaldi's compulsive desire to perform: we are told that he felt 'an irresistible tendency to laugh at the oddity of the operation' (*JG*, II, p. 117). Grimaldi finally succumbs to his performative side, and when the real barber returns, he discovers Joe 'with a soapy face and a gigantic mouth making the most extravagant faces over a white towel', and comments that 'that gentleman as was being shaved, was out of sight the funniest gentleman he had ever seen' (*JG*, II, p. 118).

This scene is illustrated in Cruikshank's plate 'The Barber's Shop', which once again reinforces the idea of an "offstage" Grimaldi performing for an audience. Here he is the focus of his audience's attention, and the whole scene is shown in a cut-away view resembling a stage set, with a subtle proscenium arch across the top that foregrounds its theatricality further.

George Cruikshank, 'The Barber Shop' ('Memoirs', Book II)

Moreover, with Joe seated in the centre surrounded by laughing onlookers, it shares visual motifs with the final illustration of the *Memoirs*, 'The Last Song', in which Joe is seated on the real stage at Drury Lane. The way in which the amused members of the front row have their heads thrown back in laughter, the posture of Joe's legs, even the way he positions his right hand, all carry associations with the earlier picture and underscore even further the theatricality of Joe's everyday life.
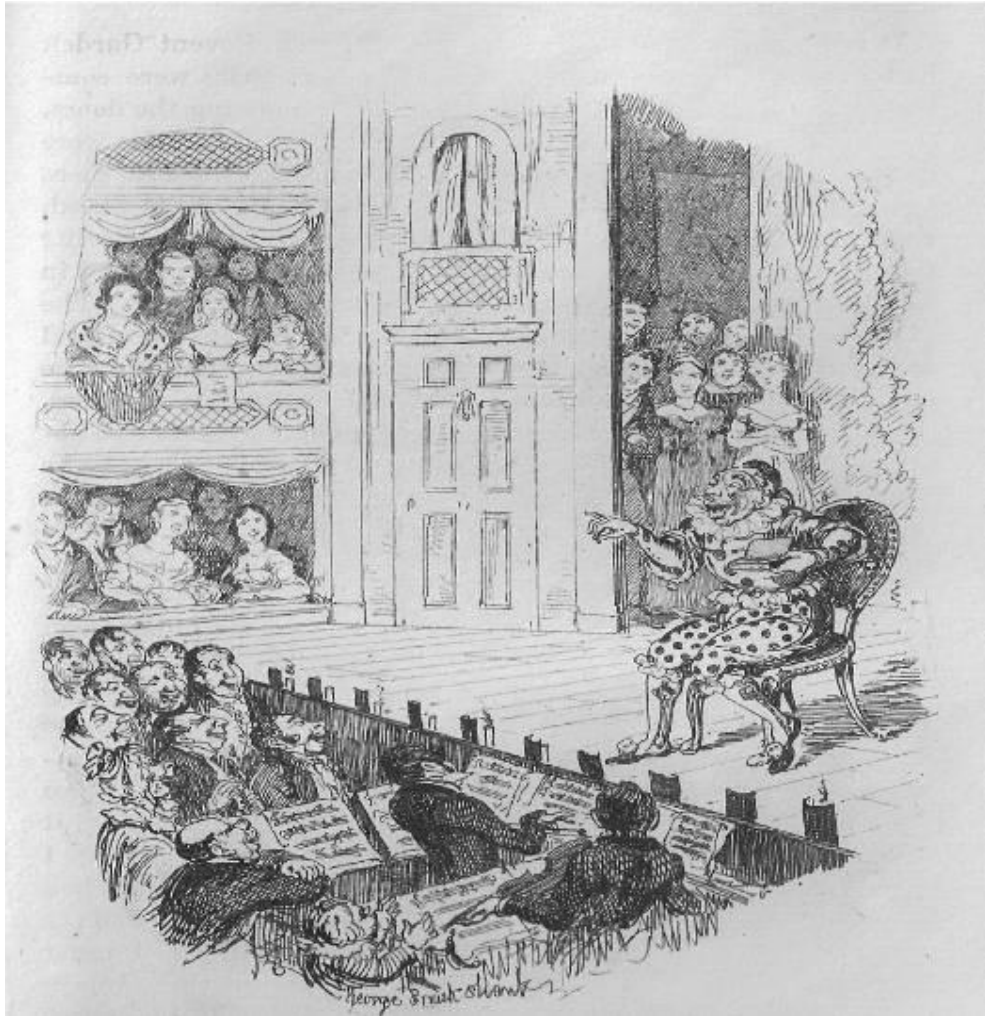
George Cruikshank, 'The Last Song' ('Memoirs', Book II)

This relentless presence of an audience follows Grimaldi almost to the end of his life. Even after his final farewell benefit at Drury Lane, an event which by its very nature is supposed to signify a closure for the performative side of Joe's identity, he is followed back to his home by a mob-audience. They still refuse to make a distinction between inside and outside the theatre, and could not 'be prevailed upon to disperse until he had appeared on the top of the steps, and made his farewell bow' (*JG*, II, p. 194), indulging them with one more theatrical gesture.

It is significant, then, that the only time Joe was without an audience was on his death-bed. Rather than the public, dramatic end reserved for great heroes, Joe Grimaldi slipped quietly away, alone in his bedroom: it was a few hours later that his housekeeper 'found him dead' (*JG*, II, p. 207). Dickens notes the significance of this in the final line of his 'Concluding Chapter', when he instructs his readers to remember that 'the light and life of a brilliant theatre were exchanged in an instant for the gloom and sadness of a dull sick room' (*JG*, II, p. 211). But it is only for an

instant. For the majority of his life, Joe was defined by an ever-present audience, and in the act of writing his memoirs, sought one even after his death.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the *Memoirs* can, to some extent, be seen as a rare false stroke for Dickens. Although he excitedly told Forster soon after its publication that 'Seventeen hundred *Grimaldis* have already been sold and the demand increases daily!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!' (with 29 exclamation marks), the remaining thirteen hundred of the initial run remained unsold. [26] Subsequent editions have been produced, most notably Charles Whitehead's in 1846 and Richard Findlater's in 1968, but neither provoked any substantial revival in critical interest. It is probably not surprising, therefore, that when Tom Ellar approached him with a similar biographical project, Dickens declined, feeling that all Ellar could hope to gain from 'such a proceeding' was 'disappointment and vexation'.[27] However, in this article I have demonstrated that a case can be made for its value in other terms. Although it certainly failed as a stand-alone commercial biography, the *Memoirs* is better seen as part of one of Dickens's early projects in characterisation, in which life was refigured as a pantomime performance. This project began in *Sketches by Boz*, was formulated into a central thesis in 'The Pantomime of Life', and was also worked through both *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, principally revolving around a central dynamic of the player and their audience.

Andrew McConnell Stott's recent biography, *The Pantomime Life of Joseph Grimaldi* (2009), interprets the offstage life of its subject through the art he practised on it, and in the *Memoirs*, Dickens similarly demonstrates how the world of the playhouse and the world outside of it cannot be separated in any comfortable and neat way. In his own memoirs, Tate Wilkinson observed of David Garrick that 'Mr Garrick was the actor on the stage of life; and on the stage itself he was not the actor, but the life's exact mirror he held to public view'.[28] It is through this clever inversion that Dickens's life of Grimaldi can be best understood.

In fact, this idea never really left Dickens. Throughout his career, he would populate his novels with other show-stealing characters whose very sense of self depended on both their skills at role-playing and the presence of audience who would be complicit in their performance. For example, the hypocrite Seth Pecksniff is constantly engaged in the manipulation of those around him through his exaggerated gestures, the management of his public appearances and his careful staging of supposedly spontaneous encounters with others. Similarly, as Stephen Wall notes, William Dorrit 'can only sustain his life as a prisoner by fictions and pretence', which

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26 Letter to John Forster (?Late March 1838), *Letters*, I, 391.
27 Letter to Thomas Ellar (27 September 1839), *Letters,* I, 586.
28 Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of his own life*, 3 vols, (Dublin, 1791), II, p. 37.

includes his performance of the roles of 'Father of the Marshalsea' and 'William Dorrit, Esquire', as well as careful attention to the response of the 'audience' members of Marshalsea 'College' and a London social scene which is itself based on pretence.[29]

In his 'Concluding Chapter' to the *Memoirs*, Dickens claims that 'the genuine droll, [...] grimacing [...] filching, irresistible Clown left the stage with Grimaldi, and though often heard of, has never since been seen' (*JG*, II, p. 209). Yet as I have shown, this is not entirely true; it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that he stepped off the stage and into the pages of Dickens's novels, where he would be endlessly revived for generations to come.

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THE PERFORMANCE OF PRIVACY: DANDYISM IN W.M. THACKERAY'S *PENDENNIS*

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Abstract

This article draws on Thackeray's appropriation of the apparatus of theatrical culture in order to examine the complex negotiation of public performance and private life engendered by the practices of dandyism in the period. In *Pendennis*, the figure of the dandy appears inherently artificial in its reliance upon spectacle and display, yet it also enables self-creation and the maintenance of privacy. Different types of the dandy are isolated in the novel as forms of masculine performance to be variously emulated or rejected in the formation of individual identity.

While Thackeray is often considered to be sceptical of dandyism, his sustained employment of dandiacal personas in this novel suggests that his view of such performative practices was more ambivalent. Costume here offers the allure of display to both fictional characters and actual readers, while retaining a potentially impenetrable barrier between self and society. In a society that seems at once to foster a culture of surveillance and spectacle, and to retreat from such theatrical practice as inauthentic and artificial, such close attention to dress may be considered as simultaneously suspiciously vulgar or effeminate, and cautious or protective. In the novel examined here, Thackeray charts the development of his hero with an emphasis on the role of costume in the experience of masculine identity. In doing so, this article suggests, the text engages in an exploration of performance as privacy.

Through an exploration of the dual influences of privacy and performance, W. M. Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1848-50) identifies the ways that male youth is able to create and sustain authenticity by means of negotiation between public indulgences or physical pleasures, and the moral values of the day which emphasised the primacy of interiority. Loosely adhering to the generic form of the *Bildungsroman*, the novel charts the fortunes of its eponymous hero from his university years, to dubious success as a writer for the periodical press. The text narrates Pen's various forays into love and friendship, concluding with his marriage to Laura Bell, who exerts a stabilising influence over the young man. *Pendennis* may be seen variously to draw on, or set itself against, popular and theatricalised performances of masculine types governing masculine development and the socialisation of young men in the mid-Victorian era. Thackeray's novel may be seen as an example of a growing acceptance in this period of the male body at its most obviously sexually fraught epoch. The physiological changes of puberty hold an obvious appeal for the emotional and psychological response elicited, and for the move towards social integration and participation that such a process may herald, particularly for male youth of the middle classes.

Pen's narrative development represents a growing awareness of a social cohort

that gains increasing visibility in mid-Victorian writing: adolescents. His youthful body is manipulated by Thackeray to indicate the precarious balance between public and private in youthful male experience, as adolescence emerges in the novel as a discrete age group responding to newfound freedom, a result of the move away from the parental home, and to the difficulties in forging an adult male identity in the wider world. Contemporary attempts to understand the ways that adolescence was constructed in this period placed a greater emphasis on its evolution as a social and cultural response rather than just a biological imperative, leading to recent observations that nineteenth-century adolescence 'was the response to an observable *fact* – the fact of a youth culture', that it was a 'social role', or 'a socio-cultural construction', rather than a period of purely physical change heralded by puberty and experienced in the same way by each generation.[1] This 'social role' or 'youth culture' is clearly gendered in *Pendennis*, producing coded types of masculinity through examples of the clothed male body on display.

Thackeray charts the history of his protagonist, Arthur Pendennis, with careful attention to both the individual and cultural significance of his physical presentation, and the reader is introduced to the different social functions of the male body. Pen's body is variously represented as a cover or screen, a highly visible source of pleasure, a means of self-display and ornamentation, or even as a disguise. Costume, as a visual indicator of the body beneath, therefore becomes a crucial part of Thackeray's interrogation of male development and exploration, drawing attention to the performances of masculinity in the social arena.

The novel draws frequently upon theatrical genres and tropes recognisable to a mid-Victorian reader. This extends from the use of pantomime imagery in the vignettes at the start of chapters and references to real contemporary figures of theatre and melodrama such as James Quin and Sarah Siddons, to fictional characters associated with the stage, such as the musician Bows and the provincial actress with whom Pen falls in love, Emily Costigan or "the Fotheringay". While much of the allure of theatre is later exposed in the novel as sham and artifice, forms of performance and theatrical suggestion remain a source of apparent fascination for both the young hero and for the author.[2] In particular, costume, or dress, features as a persistent reminder that the theatricalising gaze exists in polite society beyond the stage, and that flamboyant costume serves a cultural purpose in the formation of identity in everyday life, as well as for the dramatic purposes of play or production.

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1 John Demos and Virginia Demos, 'Adolescence in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31 (1969), 632-8 (p. 638); Jenny Holt, *Public School Literature, Civic Education and the Politics of Male Adolescence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008*)*, p. 8; John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain, 1860-1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 8.
2 Critics such as John Carey have noted Thackeray's interest in theatrical forms of entertainment, from plays and pantomimes to ballet and opera. See John Carey, *Thackeray: Prodigal Genius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), particularly chapter 5 on 'Theatre'.

As Emily Allen has outlined, 'theater provided the novel with an unstable opposite that served both to repel and attract.'3 Costume or clothing is isolated in Pendennis, especially in relation to masculine performance and development, as not merely functional, but as enabling a complex negotiation of the boundaries between social spectacle inviting the public gaze, and interiority or privacy. The binary of public and private evinced in the discussion of dress in this text may be seen as a response to this tension between the individual, isolated practice of novel-reading, and the collective, communal experience of theatre-going and public performance.[4]

In each stage of his career, whether first love, his time at Boniface College, or his forays into the bohemian London of the literary man, Arthur Pendennis is provided with a new opportunity for self-creation, both in the visual terms of his self-fashioning and in terms of his experience and subsequent (it is to be supposed) character development in the novel, as he learns from each new scene of his life:

> Mr Pen said that anthropology was his favourite pursuit; and had his eyes always eagerly open to its infinite varieties and beauties: contemplating with an unfailing delight all specimens of it in all places to which he resorted […] And, indeed, a man whose heart is pretty clean can indulge in this pursuit with an enjoyment that never ceases, and is only perhaps the more keen because it is secret and has a touch of sadness in it; because he is of his mood and humour lonely, and apart though not alone.[5]

Pen, as an occasional student of 'anthropology', observes those around him with the same interest and amusement as that of the reader when studying him. The process of observation or spectatorship, however, necessarily creates a distance between subject and object, and Pen finds that this 'pursuit', while enjoyable, is nonetheless isolating. By creating for his young hero this literary world full of other fictional people, however, Thackeray allows Pen to create an identity not just through his own

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3 Emily Allen, *Theater Figures: The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 7.

[4] Thackeray's reliance upon the theatre as a source of material for his journalistic work in particular, has been noted by Ann Horn in 'Theater, Journalism, and Thackeray's "Man of the World Magazine"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32:3 (1999), 223-238. Horn draws attention to Thackeray's self-conscious performance as author-editor for the *Cornhill* Magazine, although the relationship constructed between the theatre and periodical press may also be read into *Pendennis*. Richard Salmon has also noted the 'wilfully superficial and theatrical aspect of Thackeray's representation of fashionable society', in his book *William Makepeace Thackeray* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p. 57.

[5] William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis: His Fortunes and Misfortunes, His Friends and His Greatest Enemy*, ed. and intr. by John Sutherland (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 588. All subsequent references are to this edition, incorporated in the body of the text.

experiences, but also by distinguishing himself (and his body) in relation to other characters, or by imitating the physical presentation of those around him: Pendennis was a 'clever fellow, who took his colour very readily from his neighbour, and found the adaptation only too easy' (p. 476).

Pen's mimetic capacity for 'adaptation' figures his self-conscious presentation in terms of theatricality or performance. The constant possibility of comparison or contrast is what Peter Brooks in *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* identifies as an erotic dynamic. He states that:

> The relation to another body is repeatedly presented in visual terms, and the visual as applied to the body is often highly eroticised, a gaze subtended by desire. The desire can be a desire to possess, and also a desire to know; most often the two are intermingled.[6]

Through a process of coveting, emulating, or distinguishing himself against the bodies of the men that surround him in his fictional society, Pen creates a complex web of display and appropriation, in which he is regarded by the reader as 'apart, though not alone' (p. 588), and alienation becomes a positive, formative force. The interchange between desire and knowledge that Brooks identifies develops as Pen matures, and the resulting self-consciousness allows Pen to see his physical self as both a private and a public body. By regulating his image, and adapting the presentation of his body through dress, occupation, location and company, Pen learns confidence in both how he sees himself and how he is perceived by those around him.

Balanced against Pen's scopophilic urge, or eroticised desire to see those around him, is his developing awareness of himself and the figure that he presents to any chosen audience. Pen's initial, and hesitant, attempts to make himself a more noticeable figure in his community, are often associated with the theatre, or with different forms of theatrical display and performance such as burlesque or harlequinade. It is a typical of Thackeray's fiction that dress frequently indicates character, or reveals an individual's characteristics. In an echo of the significance accorded to dress in Thomas Carlyle's esoteric philosophy of clothes in *Sartor Resartus* (1838), J. C. Flugel writes in his work on the history of fashion:

> Apart from face and hands […] what we actually see and react to are, not the bodies, but the clothes of those about us. It is from their clothes that we form a first impression of our fellow-creatures when we meet them.[7]

Thus, in *Pendennis*, Blanche's pale costume, Foker's outlandish clothing,

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6 Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press,1993), p. 11.
7 J. C. Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes*, (New York: AMS Press, (1950, reprinted 1976), p. 15.

Warrington's jacket and Major Pendennis's cane, become emblematic of themselves as individuals, or symbolic of elements in their character. Blanche, who wears 'a dove colour, like a vestal virgin', is blankly white, her clothing providing a carefully chosen screen of impenetrability, and Major Pendennis's cane and corset declare both his age and his reliance on *la mode* of an outmoded and bygone era (p. 270). Both declare the body's presence, and obscure it. Clothes hold various functions, and as well as obscuring the body, they also ornament the body; costume transmits information about the person wearing it (such as class, wealth, occupation, gender, age), allows for the symbolic use of items of dress, and also provides crucial opportunities for self-creation.

Thackeray's novel, filled as it is with morally dubious men staking claims to fashion, is often cited as an example of the writer's disapproval of dandyism.[8] Pendennis's consciousness of his apparel and general adornment do seem to suggest that such concern for appearance is a corrupting vice. However, Thackeray's focus on clothing suggests a more ambivalent attitude towards dandyism. Pen's friend and mentor Warrington gently teases Pen about his excessive concern over his appearance. In comparison, Thackeray apparently set great store by the jacket as worn by Warrington, so much so that Ellen Moers has suggested that, 'the rough, manly, unadorned jacket was becoming a moral symbol to Thackeray; it was the costume of a gentleman.'[9] The value of the jacket, for Thackeray, was its simplicity and functionality as an everyday garment.

Warrington, as Pen's mentor, is often seen as more practical, steady, and honest than his young companion, all of which may be glimpsed in his lack of fine tailoring. This is in contrast with the moral ambiguity of Major Pendennis, who is often cited as suggestive of Thackeray's dislike of dandyism. In comparison with the honest, jacket-sporting Warrington, it is not only the previous generation in whom signs of foppish appearance suggest a suspect character. The Major and his superannuated friend Viscount Colchicum represent an older and outmoded form of dandyism, and provide Pen with examples of a style of masculinity affected in his father's time, complete

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8 This is an idea touched upon by, for example, Juliet McMaster in *Thackeray: The Major Novels* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), who states that 'the society satirized in *Pendennis* is that of the dandy' (p. 65). More recently, however, Thackeray critics are becoming sensitive to the complexity of the author's attitude towards dandyism, such as Robert P. Fletcher, in 'The Dandy and the Fogey: Thackeray and the Aesthetics/Ethics of the Literary Pragmatist', *English Literary History*, 58:2 (1991), 383-404, who suggests that 'the young dandy stands as individual, independent of the social conventions of family and work, and, in the metaphors of Thackeray's universe, as the figure of self-creation', (p. 401); and Claire Nicolay in 'Delightful Coxcombs to Industrious Men: Fashionable Politics in *Cecil* and *Pendennis'*,   *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 30:1 (2002), 289-304, who observes that 'dandyism served as a nexus for the declining aristocratic elite and the rising middle class, a site where each was transformed by the dialectic interplay of aristocratic and individualistic ideals.' (p. 289).
9 Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 203.

with corsetry, padded shoulders, and multi-layered great-coats as well as other, more ornamental *aides de toilettes*.[10] The Major, as explicit guardian of the young man, may be seen as occupying a paternal position in relation to Pen, as he takes on the role of father to his nephew, providing Pen with inflated ideas about his position in polite, aristocratic, society. For Clair Hughes:

> The Major serves as both role-model and warning to Arthur Pendennis, the novel's unheroic hero, whose career across the novel is charted in a series of exquisite outfits which throw no very favourable light on his character.[11]

Major Pendennis's dandyism provides one representation of manliness, which contrasts with that of Warrington, and offers one mode of performance for Pen to follow or reject in the text as 'both role-model and warning'. Being close to Pen in familial terms, he is naturally a significant influence in Arthur's life-choices and general code of conduct.

Henry Foker also turns out to be an influential figure for Pen. Initially styled as possessing a 'loud and patronising manner,' Foker is an old schoolfellow of Pen's, who has changed markedly in the course of a year:

> A youth […] now appeared before Pen in one of those costumes to which the public consent […] has been awarded the title of 'swell.' He […] wore a fur waistcoat laced over with gold chains; a green cut-away coat with basket buttons, and a white upper-coat ornamented with cheese-plate buttons […]; all of which ornaments set off this young fellow's figure to such advantage, that you would hesitate to say which character in life he most resembled, and whether he was a boxer *en goguette*, or a coachman in his gala suit. (pp. 38-9)

Even to Pen's untutored eye, his former acquaintance is vulgar, brash, and overly loud in his appearance. The colloquial appellation of 'swell' suggests that Foker appears as a person of rank, although his behaviour may be insolent or ungentlemanly. Nonetheless, his family's wealth and connections on his mother's side make Harry Foker a suitable friend in the eyes of Pen's uncle, who encourages the alliance. Pen's initial reaction is soon forgotten, too, in the potential for personal reinvention that he recognises in Foker. For all its vulgarity, Foker's performance of dandyism suggests a

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10 Major Pendennis encapsulates the style of dandyism made popular by King George IV, both during his period as regent and in his reign. For more specific examples of the evolution of fashion between 1810 and 1850, see C. Willett Cunnington and Phyllis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959). Although rather dated, this text still provides a detailed account of dress in the period, as does Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Men's Clothes, 1600-1900* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

11 Clair Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), p. 7.

social prominence that Pen envies. The excessive accoutrements which adorn the person of this young visitor signify to the reader Foker's aspirations of dandyism:

> It was in vain that Pen recalled to his own mind how stupid Foker used to be at school – how he could scarcely read, how he was not cleanly in his person, and notorious for his blunders and dullness. Mr. Foker was not much more refined now than in his schooldays: and yet Pen felt a secret pride in strutting down High Street with a young fellow who owned tandems, talked to officers, and ordered turtle and champagne for dinner.[12]

It is this brand of dandyism, the loudly-dressed, artificial, consciously performative form of dandyism, with which the modern reader is perhaps most likely to be familiar, rather than the understated elegance and stark simplicity of the early regency period with which George "Beau" Brummell's name has come to be associated. Foker, like a younger version of Major Pendennis, favours the more flamboyant, ostentatious costume typified by the latter years of the regency and of King George IVs reign which, in Thackeray's eyes in particular, was more morally ambiguous.[13]

Thackeray's ambivalence about the vulgarity of foppishness which, partly as a result of the influence of Pen's friend Foker and his uncle, is frequently adopted by young Pen, becomes visible throughout the novel. While it remains a largely innocuous vice in itself, Thackeray nonetheless tends to attach moral stigma to such excessive concern with adorning the body, a theme which occupies several entries in his *Mr Brown's Letters to a Young Man About Town* (1849) and is recurrent in his essay 'Men and Coats' (1841), among other contributions to contemporary journals. Ellen Moers states that:

> In the course of describing his own youth as the history of Pendennis, Thackeray came to the conclusion that dandyism was nothing more nor less than selfishness raised to the nth degree.[14]

Such selfish concern can bode ill for other areas of life, and Pen is frequently accused of selfish and narcissistic tendencies. Thackeray's final reduction of dandyism to 'nothing more nor less than selfishness', however, seems unconvincing, as the articulation of dandyism in the novel appears to be more subtle than the simple

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12 Ibid., p. 39.
13 See Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 77-226. In addition, Anne Hollander and Clair Hughes have both distinguished Brummell's style of dandyism as emphasising simplicity, cleanliness, and impeccable behaviour. Claire Nicolay has similarly commented that Brummell was 'the primary architect of dandyism' and that he 'developed not only a style of dress, but also a mode of behavior and style of wit that opposed ostentation.' ('Delightful Coxcombs', p. 289).
14 Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 212.

equation of modishness with self-obsession and anti-social behaviour. Thackeray's dandy is invested with an admirable sense of self-awareness, although the difficult balance between confidence and egotism in such performance is what draws Thackeray's attention.

As indicated above, the gaudy dandy is the type of dandyism which is most well-known, although the spirit and elegance of dandyism were more accurately embodied in the style of Brummell, whose emphasis on nature rather than artificiality may be perceived by Thackeray as a more masculine, rigorous enterprise that seeks to discipline theatrical culture, and therefore more respectable and worthy of emulation than louche foppery. Brummell emphasised the natural lines of the body, and demanded that tailoring should fit the body in its natural form (without the aids of devices such as buckram-wadding or lacing), and advocated sobriety in both colour and cut, favouring navy blue or other dark colours in his coats. His idea of sartorial sophistication valued the body and, above all, its cleanliness. While Thackeray is more severe on the theatrics of "butterfly" dandyism, the vigorous manliness of Brummellian dandyism was a form of attire and attitude towards the body that he does not entirely disparage. Thackeray muses in his essay 'Men and Coats', that:

> A man who is not strictly neat in his person is not an honest man. […] A man who wears a dressing-gown is not neat in his person; his moral character takes invariably some of his slatternliness and looseness of his costume.[15]

It is this element of neatness, honesty, and strictness that is of such value to Thackeray in Warrington's jacket. Care in dressing, if not taken to excessive lengths and applied to vulgar costume, may be a positive element reflecting good character. Pen's dandyism, then, is not necessarily indicative of moral laxity, as due attention to one's self-presentation may be beneficial during adolescent development, both as a means of self-creation, and as an expression of character.

The position of the male adolescent as regards the public and private spheres of Victorian society is fluid and unspecified. Pen spends the first half of the novel firmly attached to his family home of Fairoaks, where he lives a relatively quiet country life. On moving to London, however, Pen leaves his childhood home, and instead lives with George Warrington in shared accommodation in the Upper Temple. While Lamb Court provides Pen with a space to work and sleep, it is referred to as two sets of 'rooms' rather than "home", and Major Pendennis is shocked at his nephew's new and distinctly humble abode in the city (p. 359). Pen never entirely moves away from his home and family. He remains throughout most of the novel belonging to neither the external social sphere or to the private domestic realm, suspended between the two and occupying the liminal position of bachelor along with Warrington.

Pen's isolation echoes similar experiences of other young men in the process of

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15 Thackeray, 'Men and Coats', Vol. XIII, *Works*, p. 334.

social assimilation, before finding a suitable role as social participant. His psychological separation from those around him, as well as his choice to distinguish himself from others through his dandified dress, magnify this lack of involvement in others' lives:

> Neither did society, or that portion which he saw, excite him or amuse him overmuch. […] He was too young to be admitted as an equal amongst men who had made their mark in the world, and of whose conversation he could scarcely as yet expect to be more than a listener. And he was too old for the men of pleasure of his own age; too much a man of pleasure for the men of business; destined, in a word, to be a good deal alone. (p. 606)

Pen, who is 'destined to be alone', being both 'too young' and 'too old', belongs to none of the social groups identified as appropriate for male youth in this period and is therefore cast in the role of an observer. This maintenance of a psychological distance from those around him, however, is in fact its own kind of participation in a community of experience felt by similar youths in the same situation. A separation of self from others, especially by means of clothing, from those to whom the individual (such as Pen) is attached, (for example Helen or Laura), 'resolves an uncertainty as to who or what we are'.[16] Pen is able to sympathise with, for example, Foker's sense of loneliness and isolation in his infatuation with Blanche Amory, as well as his choice to distinguish himself from his fellow youths through the screen constructed from his dandyish clothes, and each is able to recognise in the other an emotional detachment from the world around them as they strive to create their own identity.

As a means of developing a greater sense of involvement with others, Pen attends various social occasions, firstly in his role of eager youth, and later as the disengaged dandy. Such social events, Pamela Gilbert has suggested, bridge the gap between the privacy of the home and the unchallenged gaze of the public:

> The social produced, mystified, mediated, and monitored the split between public and private: it produced it by providing an arena in which privacy was performed; in so doing, it mystified the tenuous and unstable nature of the distinction; thus, it mediated between public and private by providing a "buffer domain" in which the shifting distinction could be continually elaborated and affirmed; and therefore it provided a stage upon which demonstrations of privacy could eventually be publically monitored.[17]

Pen's social engagements, such as his visits to his Uncle, the Bungays, and the

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16 John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997 [1995]), p. 14.
17 Pamela K. Gilbert, *The Citizen's Body: Desire, Health, and the Social in Victorian England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), p. 76.

Clavering family provide opportunities for Pen to move between private and public, which have been typically conceived as gendered either feminine or masculine by Victorian writers.

Tony Chapman and Jenny Hockey have argued that the both the Victorian and the modern home:

> cannot be seen as a space which is beyond the gaze of the public world. However determinedly we police the boundaries of our "private" space, it is difficult to ignore or exclude the possibility of incursions into that space. The visit of outsiders […] brings into sharp relief the fragility of the boundary between the public world and the private domain.[18]

This problematic privacy of the typically "private" space, it has been suggested by Peter Brooks, is made doubly unstable through the presence of bodies within it.[19] In the same way that the interior of the home at this period is carefully constructed so as to separate public from private, then, the young male body in Thackeray's novel is comprised of both an interior, private sense of self, and of a more contrived, accessible or immediate version of the individual as perceived by society. Clothing or costume creates its own boundary between the secret, inner self and the exterior presentation of the individual consciously available to public scrutiny. Quiet, sartorial elegance, which in *Pendennis* resides somewhere between the 'rough and ready', yet honest Warrington, and Pen's attempts at fashionable smartness, provide an opportunity for continual individual privacy even while on display. As Thackeray discusses in 'Men and Coats', the right kind of tailoring may provide a sense of comfort, self-containment, propriety, and thoughtfulness so that, in effect, the private self may be legitimately performed in public situations.

The male body in *Pendennis* is inscribed as meaningful for its revelatory ability to project developing selfhood in social environments. It is also, however, valued for its facility in misleading and deflecting public scrutiny. The capacity for private agency and individual choice in carefully-constructed attire suggests the potential for authentic self-creation and interiority in Thackeray's representation of the youthful dandy. Judith L. Fisher in *Thackeray's Skeptical Narrative* writes of *Pendennis* that:

> The dandy-phase of the protagonist is the public version of his private search for self through love; the costume and mannerisms are performances of status.[20]

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18 Tony Chapman and Jenny Hockey, 'The Ideal Home as it is Imagined and as it is Lived', in Chapman & Hockey, (eds.) *Ideal Homes?*, pp. 1-13, (p. 10).
19 See Brooks, *Body Work*.
20 Judith L. Fisher*, Thackeray's Skeptical Narrative and the 'Perilous Trade' of Authorship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 115.

Pen's dandification results in a projection of this 'public version of his private […] self' by means of self-consciously adopted 'costume' and 'performance'. In the novel, Thackeray's emphasis on neatness and cleanliness in dress implies a hesitant sympathy with the austerity and simplicity, as distinct from the gaudy trappings of, for example, the dandyism of Byron, Bulwer and Disraeli. The preoccupation over dress and character in 'Men and Coats' (1841), *The Snobs of England* (1846-7) *Pendennis* (1848-50), and *Mr Brown's Letters to a Young Man About Town* (1849), coupled with his friendship around this time with the Count D'Orsay, Lady Blessington and the fashionable set at Gore House, Thackeray seems to have been intrigued by dandyism and its devotees, suggesting a fascination that went beyond absolute repugnance. Rather, Thackeray's interpretation of raiment and the dandy-ethos, – in *Pendennis*, evident in what Fisher has termed Pen's 'dandy-phase', informs the creation of an acceptable male identity during youth. Jessica Feldman has similarly commented on the dandy that:

> He is the figure who practises, and even impersonates, the fascinating acts of self-creation and presentation. He is the figure of paradox created by many societies in order to express whatever it is that the culture feels it must, but cannot, synthesize. This dandy is neither spirit nor flesh, nature nor artifice, ethical nor aesthetic, active nor passive, male nor female. He is the figure who casts into doubt, even while he underscores, the very binary oppositions by which his culture lives.[21]

The ability to 'synthesize' both private choice and public spectacle establishes a significant role for dress in the creation of adolescent identity in *Pendennis*. Pen is certainly seen to 'practise […] the fascinating acts of self-creation and presentation', first at university, where Pen himself becomes a figure to be 'admired' and even imitated (p. 224). Foker, for example, 'was exceedingly pleased at the success of his young protégé, […] admired Pen quite as much as any of the other youth', and 'it was he who followed Pen now, and quoted his sayings' (p. 224). Pen becomes his own text to be read or 'quoted', and creates himself as an object of fascination, leading other students to 'admire and obey' despite Pen's lack of commitment or academic advancement (p. 222). Pen's performance of the dandy, dressed exquisitely and removed from any emotional commitment, becomes both an acceptable display, but also a source of scandal and anxiety, which played on contemporary fears about the potential delinquency of juvenile behaviour.

The idea that the body is a legible text is similar to the discussion of the dandy as a fundamentally 'Clothes-wearing Man' in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, in which a

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21 Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993)

language of 'Symbols' represents 'Articles of Faith', which combine to illustrate 'the essential nature of the British Dandy, and the mystic significance that lies in him'.[22] Clothing is conceived, for Pen, in a similar manner, as a means of both concealing and displaying selfhood. As Anne Hollander has suggested:

> Nothing is more common than the metaphorical mention of clothing, first of all to indicate a simple screen that hides the truth or, more subtly, a distracting display that demands attention but confounds true perception. These notions invoke dress in its erotic function, as something that seems to promise something else.[23]

Envisaging Pen's clothes as both a 'screen' and as a 'distracting display' indicates 'the promise of something else' behind the immaculate layer of costume and ornament. In *Pendennis*, privacy is revealed as this 'something else' that is concealed from the gaze of the casual observer, protecting the youthful individual at the same time as advertising the self by means of theatrical spectacle and display.

Pen's production of his own autobiographical novel *Walter Lorraine*, and its publication, further complicates his dual attempt at self-concealment and self-presentation. As well as emphasising Pen's tendency to respond to external sources to prompt his development (in terms of literary style, but also his desire to emulate first Harry Foker, and then Warrington), *Walter Lorraine* nonetheless reflects much of Pen's early emotional development:

> There was not the slightest doubt, then, that this document contained a great deal of Pen's personal experiences, and that *Leaves from the Life-Book of Walter Lorraine* would never have been written but for Arthur Pendennis's own private griefs, passions, and follies. […] the young gentleman had depicted such of them as he thought were likely to interest the reader, or were suitable for the purposes of his story.[24]

In this fictional account of his 'personal experiences', Pen is able to regulate the exposure of his 'private griefs, passions and follies' for the consumption of the reader. *Walter Lorraine* reveals Pen to his readers in a carefully modulated light (which Warrington finds amusing, and Fanny Bolton finds romantic and attractive), without revealing all of Pen's 'private' experiences so that he is still in control of this 'private' self. The appeal of the fictional narrative is that it seems to reveal more of Pen than it

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22 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Times of Herr Teufelsdröckh*, intr. By Alasdair Gray (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2002), p. 279; p. 223; p. 281.
23 Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp.445-7.
24 Ibid., p. 521.

does, as it is written in the sentimental style of the 'fashionable novel', and so, because Pen's tales of heartbreak at the hands of 'Leonora' and 'Neaera' fall so neatly into a burlesque of the typical narrative exploits of the hero of such novels, Pen's 'private' experiences are effectively disguised as those of a 'youth' who 'will fetch some price in the market' for, as Warrington comments, 'the rubbish is saleable enough, sir' (p. 511, p. 519, p. 523).

'*Fashionable Novels*' are similarly employed to reflect the egotism of the dandy in *Sartor Resartus*, and are denounced as 'Sacred Books' in which the 'true secret' and 'physiology of the Dandiacal Body' may be glimpsed.[25] Pen's promotion of himself, among his own social acquaintance as a dandy, and in the public at large as both Walter Lorraine, the sentimental young hero, and the author of *Walter Lorraine* the novel, emphasise his text as revelatory, but also as a means of deflecting the public gaze away from Pen himself. Herbert Sussman, in his informative work *Victorian Masculinities*, has noted that, 'For Carlyle, the interior space of the male body, or, more accurately, of the male self […], is characterized by unstable fluidity.'[26] Sussman's analysis of Carlyle's use of such language raises the 'unstable' boundaries of the 'hydraulic' male body as a cause of concern (p. 19). Pamela Gilbert has similarly observed a tendency of anxiety in Victorian narratives of embodiment:

> The pulpiness within the dangerous body was always threatening to burst the bounds of the skin, which defined and disciplined individual embodiment. Disease, lack of self-control, femininity, and madness were all aligned with liquidity, liquefaction, and perhaps putrefaction as well – those who lacked self-control and possessive individualism were liable to melt back into a primal flow of dangerous ooze.[27]

In *Sartor Resartus*, this 'primal flow of dangerous ooze' is described as 'watery, pulpy, [and] slobbery'.[28] Thackeray's figure of the dandy in *Pendennis*, raising as it does fears about the effeminacy of the male body on display, does not, however, define Pen in terms of either 'liquidity' or 'pulpiness'. Instead of expressing concern about the 'pulpiness [...] threatening to burst the bounds of the skin', the integrity and fixity of Pen's body is tested by images of water and 'liquidity' as an external rather than an internal threat. His early emotional attachment to Blanche Amory, for example, is reciprocated by means of Blanche's ability to 'compassionate other susceptible beings like Pen, who had suffered too' (p. 280). Pen's 'susceptib[ility] is assaulted by Blanche's 'plaintive outpourings' in the literary endeavours of *Mes Larmes*, her

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25 Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, p. 285.
26 Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 19.
27 Gilbert, *The Citizen's Body*, p. 134.
28 Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, p. 68.

reflective diary and volume of sentimental poetry (p. 280):

> It was a wonder how a young creature […] should have suffered so much – should have found the means of getting at such an ocean of despair and passion (as a runaway boy who *will* get to sea) […]. What a talent she must have had for weeping to be able to pour out so many of *Mes Larmes*! (p. 281)

Pen is eventually able to withstand the effect of 'Miss Blanche's tears', although other images of water in the novel threaten to thwart Pen's advancement as a young man (p. 281). On being 'plucked' from Oxbridge, to the 'terror of Pen's tutor and tradesmen', Pen's hat is found 'near a mill-stream; and, for four-and-twenty hours, it was supposed that poor Pen had flung himself into the stream' (pp. 242-3). Major Pendennis, when hearing the news that Pen has been rusticated, states angrily 'You are of age, and my hands are washed of your affairs' (p. 246). The language of washing, drowning, or being swept away suggests that Pen must learn to fight against the 'liquidity' or 'pulpiness' of the social world around him, and to differentiate himself from the fluidity and instability of others on 'the voyage of life' (p. 767). Pen must struggle to retain his authentic interiority as distinct from the corrupting theatrics of the social stage.

In the process of self-definition outlined by Pen's adolescent development, however, Pen aligns himself with other, successful young men whose maturation appears more fully advanced, as well as using characters such as the vulgar Sam Huxter or foppish Mirobolant against whom to define himself. Peter Brooks, in *Body Work*, contends that this process is frequently articulated in the novel:

> In modern narrative literature, a protagonist often desires a body (most often another's, but sometimes his or her own) and that body comes to represent for the protagonist an apparent ultimate good, since it appears to hold within itself – as itself – the key to satisfaction, power, and meaning.[29]

In this way Pen is initially drawn to his friend Harry Foker as emblematic of a kind of sophistication and polish that he himself lacks. His affair with Fanny Bolton provides, on the other hand, an example of auto-erotic desire, as Pen's desire is for 'his own […] body', and such narcissism is at the root of Pen's subsequent illness. The body which is constructed as the most desirable to Pen is that of his friend and mentor George Warrington. The dynamic of their relationship is distinctly homoerotic, and Pen's reactions to his older friend are frequently phrased with a feminine inflection. Warrington is most frequently cited as an example of vigorous heterosexual masculinity in Thackeray's novels, as a gentleman without pretensions who chooses to wear a manly jacket rather anything more ornamental, who claims 'I

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29 Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 8.

like to talk to the strongest man in England, or the man who can drink the most beer in England […] I like gin-and-water better than claret', and who likes the company of such men 'better than that of his own class, whose manners annoyed him' (p. 376). In comparison, Pendennis's own dandyism marks him out as exhibiting contrary indicators about the extent of his own manliness (such as the rigours of self-fashioning in the persona of the dandy, but also the effete connotations of such attention to both dress and to self).

Fig. 1 *Illustration from Pendennis, 'Pen pursuing his law studies'*

Warrington is one of the very few characters in the text who is able to penetrate past Pen's carefully-constructed, dandified, protective clothing, to the private body and personality beneath this exterior shell. This is signified through the private life that they share by living together at Lamb's Court, and by means of their shared history as Boniface men and occupation as professional men of letters. The dynamic of their friendship, and their physical occupation of these rooms, are clarified in Thackeray's accompanying illustrations to the novel. In the two illustrative plates that show Pen and Warrington in their rooms, Pen is clearly feminised not only through his softer features, but also through his posture (see figures 1 & 2). In both pictures Pen is on a lower level than his friend, and is more self-conscious of his body as he crosses it or partially obscures it from Warrington, who is more upright and who takes an aggressively masculine stance, with his legs apart, and who observes Pen from his higher vantage point.

Warrington's assumption of authority in their friendship is conceived of as natural, and it allows Pen to view Warrington's body, reciprocally perhaps, in terms of desire. In the suggestive terms outlined by Brooks, Warrington becomes the symbolic 'key to satisfaction, power, and meaning,' so that Pen is both drawn to Warrington and wishes to emulate him, adopting his mannerisms and occupation, and, towards the end of the novel, even by plagiarising his interest in Laura Bell (of whom he displays little awareness prior to Warrington's expressions of esteem). [30] Pen's admiring response to his friend draws on both Pen's immaturity (and so as a natural reaction to Warrington's 'rough and ready' performance of masculinity), and on his own pursuit of manliness through his attempts to negotiate the blurring of gender boundaries involved in dandiacal project. Pen's physical answer to Warrington's touch, for example, parallels the hetero-normative love affairs of youth:

"I think [the manuscript of *Walter Lorraine*] is uncommonly clever," Warrington said in a kind voice. "So do you, sir." And with the same manuscript which he held in his hand, he playfully struck Pen on the cheek. That part of Pen's countenance turned as red as it had ever done in the earliest days of his blushes: he grasped the other's hand, and said, "Thank you, Warrington," with all his might. (p. 524)

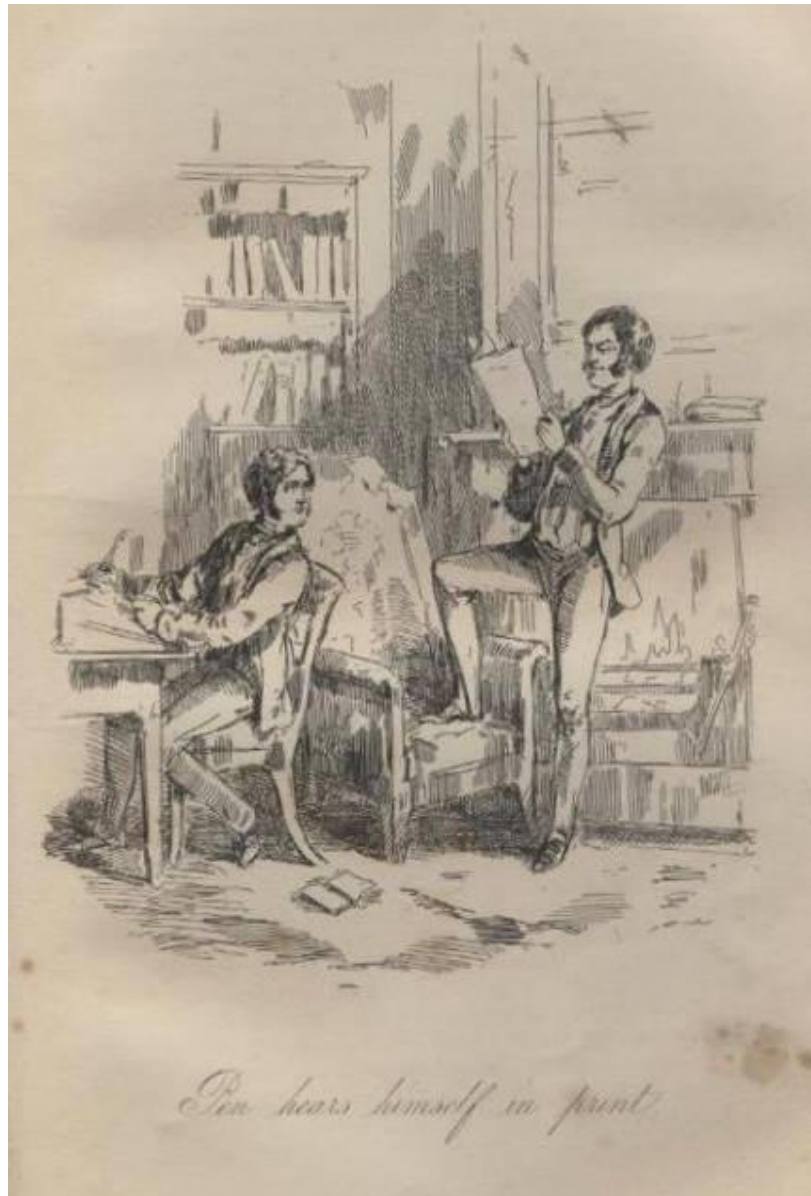30 Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 8.

Fig. 2 *Illustration from Pendennis, 'Pen hears himself in print'*

The homoerotic subtext of their friendship, including Warrington's theatrically staged mock-chastisement of Pen, who 'blushes' and thanks his friend, informs Pen's adolescent development and his struggle to find a suitable, masculine identity to display to the world. Warrington's cynicism and apparent bachelor status provide Pen with a steady and responsible role-model. The functional and unfashionable jacket, simple shirt, and humble pipe of tobacco which become associated with Warrington, are emblematic of a new brand of honest, and manly Englishness, which led one reviewer for the *Spectator* to claim that:

> A 'healthy animalism' is still a prominent characteristic of our better classes of young men; and in spite of much dissipation, much dandyism, and much pseudo-philosophy, it is no very rare thing among that class to find the best scholars and the truest gentlemen neither too fine to drink beer and smoke short pipes.[31]

This friendship with Warrington, the wearer of the honest jacket, in conjunction with the value for privacy established in the text and with the potential for dress as a means of both self-creation and defence, is a crucial part of Pen's experience of maturation.

The theatrical and dandified body is central to Thackeray's discussion of masculine identity in *Pendennis*, as an isolated individual and as part of a wider community. Joseph Litvak has suggested that, despite being renowned for their emphasis of privacy, nineteenth-century novels are founded 'in a widespread social network of vigilance and visibility – of looking and of being looked at – [that] renders them inherently, if covertly, theatrical.'[32] This 'network of vigilance and visibility' is translated in this text to emerge as a society conscious of constant impact of spectacle and surveillance, which is therefore, as Litvak suggests, 'inherently […] theatrical'. To engage in the theatrical presentation of one's own body to society, Thackeray implies in *Pendennis*, enables the necessary balance between privacy and display required for healthy individual development, and in a manner which may be both liberating and socially legitimate.

Thackeray's novel, responding to a cultural environment in which masculinity could be defined in terms of physical presence, energy, ability and healthfulness, emphasises the social value placed on performances of manliness. While the potential merit of sexual exercise forms part of the novel's discussion, the moral necessity for physical awareness develops the erotic functions and uses of the costumed body to focus on forms of display as informative for masculine development. Dandyism,

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31 R. S. Rintoul, from 'Thackeray's *Pendennis'*, *Spectator* xxiii (21 Dec., 1850), 1213-5 (pp. 101-2).

32 Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p. x.

while remaining an ambivalent subject for Thackeray, nonetheless holds a fascinating appeal for the author in its combination of anti-theatrical austerity and theatrical display. The use made of dress and costume in the novel, as part of the apparatus of theatricality, is used not only to signify personality or traits of character but also to enable self-projection as well as the deflection of the hurtful public gaze on the vulnerable private self, which allows Thackeray to create a complex representation of masculine identity in mid-Victorian society. Self-conscious performance, by means of adaptation, emulation, or rejection of the different styles of masculinity on offer in the novel, serves to enable and sustain an essentially private identity from the onslaught of intrusive public life.

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'SHE HAD HER ROLE TO PLAY': THE PERFORMANCE OF SERVANTHOOD IN *EAST LYNNE* AND OTHER SENSATION NOVELS

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Abstract
In its original novel form and subsequent theatrical versions, Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) tells the story of Lady Isabel, who infiltrates her former home disguised as a servant. This essay explores Isabel in the context of other acting heroines of sensation novels by Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins. These actresses give performances as servants as an unexpected means to gain access to the domestic space and to achieve personal independence. While the servant who acts and dresses above her station has been recognized as a stock character of sensation fiction, the lady-qua-servant merits equal attention. The servant and the actress share an ambiguity of class and the stigma of sexuality that make them a natural fit for sensation fiction's tropes of illicit behaviour, secret identities, and forbidden romance. The actress-servant is able to use her attention to costume, her emotional control, and her performance of helplessness to deflect suspicion from her true motives. While the other actresses largely use their servant roles for mercenary purposes, Isabel poses as a governess to reclaim her titles of 'mother' and 'wife', literalising the subservience she previously performed as a 'lady.'

A stock character of Victorian sensation fiction is the "adventuress", a woman who attempts to "marry up" in order to achieve higher status, wealth, and power. Examples of what Sally Mitchell dubs 'Becky Sharp's children' might include Lucy Graham of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Magdalen Vanstone of Wilkie Collins' *No Name* (1862), and Lydia Gwilt of Collins' *Armadale* (1866).[1] These adventuresses share the same initial strategy to set their plans for marriage in motion: like Becky Sharp, they act as domestic employees. Unlike Becky Sharp, however, they enter servanthood as performers taking on a role, forging their references, altering their identities, and adopting appropriate costumes to create a convincing performance. Although sensation fiction is stuffed with servant characters, the aforementioned 'actresses' remain distinct from true domestic employees; for example, Magdalen Vanstone, who plays the role of a maid and a governess, pities her sister Norah, who must become a "real" governess. Although an adventuress who is attempting to advance her social status might be expected to play a role above, rather than below, her station, servants are allowed a freedom of mobility that women of higher classes are denied.

In Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), Lady Isabel Vane performs the role of a governess in order to achieve a kind of personal freedom denied her as a lady and

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1 Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading 1835-1880* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1981), p. 76.

wife. After Lady Isabel leaves her husband and children to have an affair with the wicked Sir Frances Levison, she is disfigured and nearly killed in a train accident. Her husband, Archibald Carlyle, has divorced Isabel, and when he believes her to be dead he remarries the middle-class Barbara Hare. In order to live in her family estate and to be close to Carlyle and her children once more, Isabel transforms herself by acting as the governess 'Madame Vine'. Despite the class difference between Isabel Vane and the other aforementioned adventuresses of sensation fiction, all of the women are 'actresses' who perform the part of a domestic servant as an unexpected means to achieve independence, whether financial or emotional.

The 'lady-qua-servant' character type I explore here offers a foil to the 'upwardly-mobile "imposters"' that Deborah Wynne identifies as stock characters in Victorian sensation fiction.[2] Contemporary publications expressed ridicule for the practice that *Punch* dubbed 'Servantgalism': servants who attempt to dress or act like their masters. While the middle and upper classes may be quick to condemn the behavior of the class-climbing servant, the opposite phenomenon, adopting a costume to 'lower' oneself into servanthood, does not at first appear to pose the same threat. The pretentious servant, represented in *East Lynne* by the hired 'companion' Afy, is an object of scorn and distrust, but by mimicking the climb down, rather than up, the social ladder, Isabel Vane, the lady-qua-servant, deflects suspicion and attention. As Eve Lynch explains, the 'surface dirt' of the servant 'provides a costume or method for suppressing true recognition'.[3] Taking on the appearance of a servant can efface a heroine's identity, and the invisibility expected of servants within a household offers further anonymity for criminal or illicit acts. Thus, *No Name*'s Magdalen Vanstone chooses to pose as a maidservant when she wishes to search a house for secret documents, and Margaret Wentworth of Braddon's *Henry Dunbar* (1864) impersonates a maid when she wishes to mislead a police officer on the trail of her criminal father. Eve Lynch explores how adopting 'the masquerade of servitude' can prevent 'exposure for females escaping the domestic site', but in the case of *East Lynne*, the performance of servanthood allows an upper-class woman access to the domestic sphere that she was previously denied.[4]

For a lady whose dress and actions may fall under particularly intense scrutiny, the possibility of inconspicuousness may be particularly enticing. When Isabel Vane is seen as Lady Vane, she is monitored by a house full of gossiping servants who appear to understand her household and her relationships better than she does. Later, when she plays the role of 'Madame Vine' the governess, Isabel is paradoxically allowed more mobility within her home and is less subject to surveillance than she

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2 Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 50.
3 Eve M. Lynch, 'The Masquerade of Servitude in Victorian Literature', *Pacific Coast Philology* 31.1 (1996), 88-106 (p. 88).
4 Lynch, p. 88.

was as a lady.[5] Most importantly, her ability to act, to perform a servant role convincingly, enables her to interact more freely with her family. It is only through her performance as a governess that Lady Isabel is able to become Carlyle's 'wife' and her children's 'mother' in defiance of the social expectations for how she should perform those roles.

The servant and the actress occupied similarly indeterminate positions in the social and class hierarchy of mid-Victorian England. In his article on the Victorian maidservant, Louis James describes how the social position of servant women was itself quite malleable: 'One could enter service from a number of different backgrounds; if one left, one was relatively mobile socially to go into a variety of occupations. The servant was subject to her employer, yet she was also identified with the household in which she worked.'[6] Tracy Davis' book *Actresses as Working Women* offers a strikingly similar description of a different profession for women:

> Victorian performers were […] recruited from all classes of society. While performers repeatedly demonstrated that class origins could be defied by hard work, talent, or strategic marital alliances to secure some a place in the most select company, others lived with and like the most impoverished classes. Unlike other occupational groups, performers' incomes spanned the highest upper middle-class salary and the lowest working class wage, and were earned in work places that ranged in status from patent theatres to penny saloons.[7]

The Victorian maidservant and actress thus had much in common: they were recruited from across the class spectrum, they existed on the fringes of 'good' society, and they fell within a diverse hierarchy of rank and earning power. Servants were also characterised as deceptive, resourceful, and fond of dress, all traits that suggest performance. *Our Plague Spot* (1859), an anonymous collection of essays on the condition of England, contains a vignette that offers a very unflattering depiction of the servant as an actress:

> This lady fancied she had a respectable, *and always nicely dressed* servant, as attendant upon her Baby […] [O]ne day on going through some distant part of the Town, she beheld in a beggarwoman's arms, *her own child dressed in filthy*

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5 Although she is recognized as a gentlewoman in her capacity as governess and is of a higher rank than other, more menial domestic employees, I refer to Isabel's role as that of a 'servant' because it is how she perceives herself. She bemoans that she must live in her own former home 'as a subordinate, a servant—it may be said—where she had once reigned, the idolized lady' (399).
6 Louis James, 'The Trouble with Betsy: Periodicals and the Common Reader in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England', *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 349-66 (p. 353).
7 Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 3.

rags, and in its pretended mother—equally revoltingly attired—her *tidy respectable nursery maid!*[8]

While this scenario is intended to strike fear in the hearts of middle-class mothers, it also reveals the freedom servant women were perceived to possess. Both the servant and the actress are mobile and can explore alternative lives and selves, while the middle-class mother's role is more limited.

Unmarried middle-class women had so few jobs available to them that many viewed their choice of employment as limited to becoming either an actress or domestic employee. In her essay 'The Woman I Remember', Mary Elizabeth Braddon recalls how her younger self struggled with this decision:

Of all those gates which are now open to feminine suitors there were but two open to her. She could go out into the world as a governess, like Jane Eyre, in an age when to be a governess in a vulgar family was worse than the treadmill; or she could go upon the stage, a proceeding which convulsed her family, to the most distant cousin, a thing to be spoken of with bated breath, as the lapse of a lost soul, the fall from Porchester Terrace to the bottomless pit.[9]

The perceived "fall" from virtue that Braddon describes here could be equally applicable to women in either profession, since both the actress and the female servant shared a certain social stigma of being "fallen women". As Mary Poovey suggests, any type of paid work for women could invite comparisons to prostitution, but the servant and the actress seem particularly prone to such accusations.[10] In fact, one of the most popular names assigned to servants, 'Mary Anne', was a slang term for a prostitute.[11] In his note in *London Labour and the Poor* (1861), Bracebridge Hemyng declares that 'there can be no doubt that the tone of morality among servant-maids in the metropolis is low' and suggests that a large percentage may be working prostitutes.[12] *Our Plague Spot* offers a purportedly true sensational story of a nursemaid in Edinburgh who would leave her charge in the care of a friend while she

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8 Anon., *Our Plague Spot: In Connection With Our Polity and Usages as Regards Our Women, Our Soldiery, and the Indian Empire* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1859), p. 378. Emphasis in original text.
9 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 'The Woman I Remember', *The Press Album* (London: John Murray, 1909) pp. 3-6 (p. 5).
10 Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 145-6.
11 Davidoff, Leonore and others, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy 1830-1960* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), p. 172.
12 Bracebridge Hemyng, 'Prostitution in London', in *London Labour and the London Poor*, IV, ed. by Henry Mayhew (New York: Dover, 1968) 210-72 (p. 257).

went to her second job in a brothel.[13]

     Sensation fiction and the Victorian theatre were closely connected from the genre's beginnings. Both Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a former actress, were playwrights as well as novelists, and the novels they wrote were often adapted by others for the theatre. *The London Review* describes the novels themselves as mere vehicles for their inevitable stage adaptations: 'We can hardly take up a *Times* without perceiving the skeleton of a sensation novel only waiting to be appropriated by Mrs. Wood or Miss Braddon, and put on the stage tricked out with the necessary amount of tawdry morality and high-flown sentiment.'[14] A review in *The Christian Remembrancer* similarly derides Braddon's novels as overly theatrical:

> The world is essentially a *stage* to Miss Braddon, and all the men and women, the wives, the lovers, the villains, the sea-captains, the victims, the tragically jealous, the haters, the avengers, merely players. We could extract pages, fit, as they stand, for the different actors in a melodrama, vehemently and outrageously unnatural.[15]

The novel *East Lynne* often intentionally uses the language of theatre; for instance, when Carlyle is first introduced in the serial version, the text advises the reader to '[l]ook at the visitor well […] for he will play his part in this history.'[16] Many of the *East Lynne*'s characters are 'actors': not only does Lady Isabel Vane play her part, costumed as a French governess, but the accused killer Richard Hare dons false whiskers to elude capture, Frances Levison masquerades as Captain Thorn, and the servant Afy Hallijohn dresses like a gentlewoman. Although Wood's novel was popular with readers, the story of *East Lynne* achieved even greater public recognition through its numerous theatrical productions by T. A. Palmer, John Oxenford, Lilla Wilde, Clifton Tayleure, and Hamilton Hume, among others. The popularity of the play made the phrase 'Next week—*East Lynne*!' become a clichéd promise among theatre companies vying to please their audience.

     Many of the plays stayed fairly true to Wood's original story and borrowed some of the novel's most memorable and melodramatic lines for their scripts. Most of their pathos derives from Lady Isabel agonizing over the alienation of her husband's affection and the psychological torture she endures once she returns to East Lynne but cannot reveal her true identity. However, Hamilton Hume took a very different approach for his theatrical adaptation, *The Tangled Path, A Tale of East Lynne*. Only fifty copies of Hume's play were printed, which Hume states are 'solely intended for

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13 *Our Plague Spot*, p. 379.
14 'Aurora Floyd', *The London Review*, 14 February 1863, p. 175.
15 'Our Female Sensation Novelists', *Christian Remembrancer*, July 1864, p. 236.
16 Ellen Wood, 'East Lynne', *The New Monthly Magazine,* January 1860, p. 29.

the amusement of private friends.'[17] His version essentially de-sensationalizes Wood's sensation novel by omitting the bigamy, illegitimacy, and divorce. Hume explains in an introduction that he 'found it perfectly impossible, in the limited space to which I was restricted, to carry out the idea of the authoress and let [Isabel] return to East Lynne in the capacity of governess' so he omits that part altogether and relegates Isabel's character to a fairly minor role.[18] Hume de-emphasizes two character types that are often prominently featured in the sensation genre: strong women and influential servants. In fact, the *Saturday Review* saw Wood's depiction of female servants as one of the strongest aspects of her writing:

> [Mrs. Wood] has one knack which is a great help to a novelist of family life— she can draw servants. There are two half-sisters, both in service, who make a great figure in the book. One of the old respectable family servants, and the other the flighty, fashionable lady's-maid of the present day. The latter is drawn with a relish and a liveliness that show the authoress to have studied lady's-maids almost as much as she has studied attorneys.[19]

Hume's choice to eliminate or downplay the servant roles differs radically from the approaches of the more successful playwright T. A. Palmer, who cast his own wife in the crucial role of the servant Joyce, and Clifton Tayleure, whose version highlights Lady Isabel's tragic act as a servant in her own home and thus made the career of the stage actress Lucille Western.

Andrew Maunder's article '"I will not live in poverty and neglect": East Lynne on the East End Stage' describes W. Archer's 1864 adaptation for the Effingham Theatre titled *Marriage Bells; or, the Cottage on the Cliff*, which differed from most West End versions of the story in its increased focus on the working class.[20] Maunder's article points to the play's focus on working-class issues as a reflection of the class demographics of East End audiences, and further suggests that the altered focus of the Effingham production 'builds upon elements latent in the novel [and] the bourgeois ethos of self-help that the text espouses.'[21] The East End version of the play taps into a theme of undervalued working-class power, which recurs in *East Lynne* and other sensation novels. In Wood's novel, members of the working classes are primarily represented by servants: Joyce, the faithful lady's maid, Wilson, the outspoken nurse, and Afy, the class-climbing 'companion.' Lady Isabel eventually

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17 Hamilton Hume, *'The Tangled Path', A Tale of East Lynne, a dramatized version of Mrs. Henry Wood's celebrated novel* (Calcutta: Savielle and Cranenburgh, 1863), p. v.
18 Ibid., p. vi.
19 'Reviews: *East Lynne*', *Saturday Review*, 15 Feb 1862, p. 187.
20 Andrew Maunder, '"I will not live in poverty and neglect": East Lynne on the East End Stage', *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, ed. by Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2006) 173-187 (p. 178).
21 Ibid., p. 181.

joins their ranks, posing as a servant herself, in an act that has often been described as penance, but that I see more as part of the 'bourgeois ethos of self-help' that Maunder identifies.[22]

Samuel Smiles' groundbreaking book *Self-Help* (1859) contains biographies of men who accomplish impressive feats through integrity and perseverance. Its profiles of great men are remarkably similar in tone and content to the instructive and inspirational tales included in *The Servants' Magazine or, Female Domestics' Instructor* from the same time period. This periodical, which was intended to reach a literate servant audience, offers accounts of servants who are recognized by their employers and even promoted within the domestic ranks due to their honesty and spirit of industriousness. *Self-Help* promotes the idea that men from all classes can become great men:

> Riches and ease, it is perfectly clear, are not necessary for man's highest culture, else had not the world been so largely indebted in all times to those who have sprung from the humbler ranks. An easy and luxurious existence does not train men to effort or encounter with difficulty; nor does it awaken that consciousness of power which is so necessary for energetic and effective action in life. Indeed, so far from poverty being a misfortune, it may, by vigorous self-help, be converted even into a blessing; rousing a man to that struggle with the world in which, though some may purchase ease by degradation, the right-minded and true-hearted find strength, confidence, and triumph.[23]

Indeed, although there is a section on 'Industry and the Peerage', the bulk of the biographical stories are about 'common' men of unremarkable class or rank who are depicted as admirable role models.

Smiles' description of 'illustrious Commoners raised from humble to elevated positions by the power of application and industry' seems most applicable in *East Lynne* to the character Archibald Carlyle, a middle-class lawyer who marries an earl's daughter, buys her family estate, and eventually is elected to Parliament.[24] The earl's daughter in question is Isabel Vane, who follows an opposite trajectory: she marries a man of lower rank, loses her reputation and identity, and must ultimately live in her former family home as a paid domestic. However, the goals of rank, legislative power, and national renown that Smiles sees as markers of success for men do not apply in the same way for women. Isabel's reclamation of her life in the guise of a governess suggests that she uses her ingenuity and industriousness to achieve recognition on her own terms as a woman and mother rather than a statesman or

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22 Ibid., p. 181.
23 Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help, with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 16.
24 Ibid., p. 132.

business leader. Isabel uses a corrupt version of the principles of 'self-help' to fuel her new life as an actress, 'perform[ing] respectability' as Rebecca Stern describes it, and 'counterfeiting the self'.[25] She actively takes control of her own life and becomes an autonomous woman, breaking out of the successive roles of obedient daughter, passive wife, and submissive lover that she has heretofore been expected to play. By playing the role of a servant, Isabel literalizes her previous performances of female subservience and uses it as an unexpected source to attain power over herself, her relationships, and her choice of role within her own home, which is now inhabited by the middle-class lawyer Carlyle and his second wife Barbara.

Deborah Wynne describes a 'covert power' that the middle class wields over the upper class in the novel.[26] The balance of economic power is shifting in favour of members of the rising middle classes, like Barbara Hare and Archibald Carlyle, while Isabel and her father the earl are represented as outdated relics. As Lady Vane, Isabel was a symbol of conquest; as Wynne points out, she is appropriated by the middle-class Carlyle almost as part of a package with the house and grounds of East Lynne.[27] In fact, Wynne sees Carlyle's 'bowing habit' as part of a middle-class strategy to achieve power through unexpected means:

> For Wood's quiet revolution to take place it is necessary that her middle-class heroes and heroines remain outwardly deferential towards the class they mean to usurp. We learn that Carlyle 'received the training of a gentleman' at both Rugby and Oxford, and is well-equipped to meet the upper classes on their own territory.[28]

The middle classes, then, originated the strategy of the performance of subservience that Lady Isabel herself will adopt to regain power within the home that has exiled her.

Lady Isabel's experience of feeling suppressed or oppressed by middle-class women like her oppressive sister-in-law Miss Corny or Carlyle's second wife Barbara Hare provides one of her first experiences as an 'actress.' Ann Cvetkovitch sees 'the strategy of submission' that Isabel must play as Carlyle's wife as the same one 'that will later be played out in more exaggerated terms when she returns to East Lynne.'[29] Before her downfall, Isabel meets social expectations by performing submission and subservience, and keeping her emotions under control in order to convincingly play

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25 Rebecca Stern, *Home Economics: Domestic Fraud in Victorian England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), p. 65.
26 Wynne p. 73.
27 Ibid., p. 68.
28 Ibid., p. 68.
29 Ann Cvetkovitch, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992) p. 101.

the part of 'The Angel in the House.' When Isabel's loyal maid, Joyce, learns that her mistress has left her husband for another man, she affirms Isabel's longstanding status as both 'angel' and 'servant' that she held in her capacity as wife and mistress of the house. Joyce tells Miss Corny,

> "I say she has been driven to it. She has not been allowed to indulge a will of her own, poor thing, since she came to East Lynne; in her own house she has been less free than any one of her servants. You have curbed her, ma'am, and snapped at her, and made her feel that she was but a slave to your caprices and temper. All these years she has been crossed and put upon; everything, in short, but beaten—ma'am, you know she has!—and she has borne it all in silence, like a patient angel, never, as I believe, complaining to master." (p. 279)

Tricia Lootens suggests that since a nineteenth century woman cannot become a literal angel, she becomes an 'Acting Angel' instead.[30] The 'Acting Angel' is described as a woman who 'commit[s] herself to a life of strenuous spiritual asceticism, [so] she could seek booth to impersonate and to act as a stand-in for the Victorian female ideal'.[31] Isabel resigns herself '*to take up her cross* daily, and bear it' as she willingly adopts a life of self-denial, but her aspiration is to servanthood rather than sainthood (p. 398, italics original). Thus, *East Lynne* can be viewed as 'an extended parable of the problems of the gentlewoman in Victorian England.'[32] Paradoxically, an ideal gentlewoman, wife, and mother, must also be an actress. As suggested in *Vanity Fair*, 'your domestic models, and paragons of female virtue' are 'hypocrites' who are praised for their 'pretty treachery' of performance.[33] Succinctly put, '[a] good housewife is of necessity a humbug'.[34]

The 'actresses' of sensation novels such as *East Lynne* reveal the Victorian ideals of class and femininity as constructs through their 'performances' whether they are featured on the literal or domestic stage. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas further describes how 'sensation novels, by featuring actresses or female characters playing parts, heighten the paradoxical construction of womanhood, so perfectly illustrated by the actress herself, simultaneously embodying feminine beauty and female fashion while transgressing woman's sphere by stepping out onto the working/public stage'.[35]

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30 Tricia Lootens, *Lost Saints: Silence, Gender, and Victorian Literary Canonization* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 57.
31 Ibid., p. 57.
32 Jeanne B. Elliott, 'A Lady to the End: The Case of Isabel Vane', *Victorian Studies* 19.3 (March 1976): 329-344 (p. 331).
33 William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (New York: Harper, 1848), p. 83.
34 Ibid., p. 84.
35 Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007) p. 135.

Even an upwardly-mobile middle-class wife such as Barbara Hare feels pressure to play a role, although it may be less overt. Barbara is so concerned with maintaining an appearance of wealth and status and appearing to be a model of middle-class womanhood that she is overly concerned with expensive dress, remains wary of her servants, and believes she must keep her children at a distance. Both Barbara and Isabel feel that they must maintain composure and control their display of feeling in order to play their parts convincingly.

As might be expected of a domestic melodrama, *East Lynne*'s heroine does indulge in emotional outbursts, but they are more often expressed internally than externally; part of Isabel's acting skill is seen in her ability to repress emotion. The moment that Isabel chooses to return to East Lynne as a governess, she decides that 'her own feelings, let them be wrung as they would, should not prove the obstacle'.[36] Dan Bivona suggests that '[e]motional control' like Isabel's 'can only be achieved in the moment in which the actor directs herself on stage, the moment in which she acts out her emotions while critically regarding them from a spectator's distance'.[37] Isabel does this when her son William is dying, as she contemplates 'the dreadful misery of the retrospect' and the novel describes how '[t]he very nails of her hands had, before now, entered the palms, with the sharp pain it brought [...] there, as she knelt, her head lying on the counterpane, came the recollection of that first illness of hers' (p. 587). But, as Cvetkovitch asserts, 'playing the pathetic woman is not the same as being the pathetic woman'.[38] *Armadale*'s Lydia Gwilt, for example, plays the pathetic woman in order to deflect suspicion from herself; she asks for Mr. Bashwood to support her, claiming, 'My little stock of courage is quite exhausted' as '[t]he woman who had tyrannized over Mr. Bashwood' disappears and '[a] timid, shrinking, interesting creature filled the fair skin and trembled on the symmetrical limbs of Miss Gwilt'.[39] While Isabel may have less guile than Gwilt, who is a practiced con artist, she still is able to maintain her performance. Isabel frequently feels anguished about her role as governess, but she never drops her disguise, and her true identity is only discovered by her former maid, Joyce, when Isabel believes there is a fire and leaves her room without her tinted glasses.

Isabel's ability to act identifies her as the heroine in the sensation mode. As Elizabeth Gruner notes, 'proper' Victorian heroines often 'prove their virtue by failing

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36 Ellen Wood, *East Lynne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 398. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text. References to the earlier serial version or other adaptations will be indicated.
37 Dan Bivona 'The House in the Child and the Dead Mother in the House: Sensational Problems of Victorian "Household" Management', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 30.2 (June 2008), 109–125 (p. 116)
38 Cvetkovitch, p. 98.
39 Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 371. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

as actresses'.[40] A typical Victorian courtship plot concludes when the heroine 'must cast off one role—usually that of daughter or eligible young thing—for another— usually that of wife, although sometimes (in the case of the transgressive heroine) mother or mistress', since she must 'be one thing only; [she] must not act roles, but embody them.'[41] As Helena Michie describes, the sensation novel heroine embraces acting:

> Sensation novels abound with women who disguise, transform, and replicate themselves, who diffuse their identities […] In the cases of Lady Audley and Isabel Vane this duplicity, this multiplicity of identity, is explicitly marked by the text as criminal; it is the job of the reader and/or the detective figure of each novel to sort through the multiple identities offered by each heroine, to work against her self-reproduction, and to close the novel with a woman confined to a single identity, a single name, and a single place—in both cases, the grave.[42]

The criminal nature of acting does require 'punishment' for the transgressive heroine of the sensation novel, but for the majority of the text, acting also offers her power. While the heroine of *Lady Audley's Secret* is punished by society for her social pretensions, Lady Isabel dies of natural causes and is able to achieve closure with her family before her death. Other sensation heroines who play roles, like Lydia Gwilt, Magdalen Vanstone, and Margaret Wilmot, are allowed to repent and attempt to redeem themselves.

Despite their social transgressions and criminal acts, these heroines, particularly Isabel, appear to be designed as unexpected sources of reader empathy by their novels' end. Although Isabel is initially presented as a fallen wife and mother, she redeems herself through renewed devotion to her children and even rekindled passion for her husband. Isabel and her pathetic inability to fully reclaim her roles as wife and mother evoked more sympathy from contemporary critics than her rival does. As Margaret Oliphant put it in her 1863 review, 'When [Isabel] returns to her former home under the guise of the poor governess, there is not a reader who does not feel disposed to turn her virtuous successor to the door, and reinstate the suffering heroine, to the glorious confusion of all morality.'[43] A critic for the *Saturday Review* similarly opined, 'Although, at the close of the story, the whole of the attorney's affections are most properly concentrated on his living wife, the reader is not sorry to

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40 Elizabeth Rose Gruner, 'Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 16.2 (Autumn 1997): 303-325 (p. 303).
41 Ibid., p. 303.
42 Helena Michie, *Sororophobia*: *Differences Among Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 59.
43 Margaret Oliphant, 'Novels', *Blackwood's Magazine,* August 1863, p. 170.

be permitted to have a slight preference for the dead one.'[44] The *London Quarterly Review* even worried that Lady Isabel's likability might undermine readers' sense of morality:

> *East Lynne* is one of the most powerful, but one, also, of the most mischievous, books of the day. Throughout an exciting, though very improbable story, our sympathies are excited on behalf of one who has betrayed the most sacred trust man can repose in woman. All that the union of beauty, rank, talent, and misfortune can do to create a prejudice in favour of the criminal is done, while the sense of the enormity of her crime is greatly enfeebled by the unamiable light in which her husband is presented.[45]

Surprisingly, some modern critics have suggested that in *East Lynne*, Barbara Hare is intended as the primary source of reader identification. Both Barbara and Isabel fit the description the text offers of its expected reader as a 'Lady—wife—mother'; the primary difference between them is that of class (p. 283). Deborah Wynne suggests that the hoodwinking of the aristocratic Lord Vane by the middle class Carlyle, or the triumph of Barbara Hare over Lady Isabel, 'may have had an appeal for the 'solid' middle-class readership of the *New Monthly Magazine*.'[46] Jeanne Elliott describes Wood's audience as likely consisting of 'the wives and daughters of the newly prosperous and upwardly mobile mercantile classes', much like Barbara.[47] In addition, Lyn Pykett notes that some critics may see the author herself as more like Barbara, citing the novel's 'straining for gentility as evidence of Wood's own social insecurities as the daughter of a glove manufacturer.'[48] However, Barbara shows herself to be a petty woman and a jealous wife throughout the novel, and she fails to show maternal affection for her stepchildren. While Isabel may be an actress, the poverty, humiliation, deformity, and physical and emotional suffering she endures are quite real, while Barbara's life remains 'relatively carefree.'[49] Unlike the downfall of the murderer and fellow adulterer Sir Frances Levison, whose sentence of hard labour prompts the narrator to jeer: 'Where would his diamonds and his perfumed handkerchiefs and his white hands be then?' Isabel's fall from grace invites reader sympathy and understanding. Her first fall may be divine retribution for her sins, but her second fall is a self-designed martyrdom. The better analogue to Levison would be Afy, the maid who has lofty aspirations of social climbing.

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44 'Reviews', p. 187.
45 'Thackeray and Modern Fiction', *London Quarterly Review*, April and July 1864, p. 406.
46 Wynne, p. 73.
47 Elliott, p. 330.
48 Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 119.
49 Richard S. Albright, *Writing the Past, Writing the Future: Time and Narrative in Sensation Fiction* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2009), p. 201.

Both Afy and Isabel are defined by their sexual transgressions, Pykett says, but their difference in class means that 'Afy is not required to undergo the punitive moral, emotional and physical suffering which is constructed for Isabel.'[50] The text suggests that Isabel feels immediate remorse because, as one of the 'women in the higher positions of life Lady Isabel was endowed with sensitively refined delicacy, with an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong' (pp. 283-84). Pykett suggests that:

> Afy is required to suffer less than Isabel because of the presumption (heavily underlined by the narrator) that she is less emotionally and morally refined than her social superior.   Afy's fall is presented by the narrator as a mixture of folly and willfulness; if the character reflects upon her situation at all is to see it as a career move. However, Isabel's is a fall from grace, which is accompanied by exquisite agonies of moral scrupulousness and emotional self-torture, both of which are presented in class terms.[51]

I would further suggest that the difference in the severity of their crimes is mitigated both by the class they are born into and the class they attempt to enter. Isabel's performance as a domestic servant threatens stability within her home, but Afy's pretensions to a higher class offers a more wide-reaching and dangerous threat to the social hierarchy.

Afy's proclivity to '"dress outrageously fine"' and her '"disreputable"' social pretensions are evidence, in Miss Corny's opinion, of '[t]he world's being turned upside down' (p. 382). Although Afy is hired as 'three parts maid and one part companion', and is not permitted 'to sit or dine' with her employer, she 'was never backward at setting off her own consequence, [and] gave out that she was "companion"' (p. 390). Lyn Pykett describes Afy as 'a stock character of Victorian fiction […] the saucy servant who apes her superiors and attempts to achieve her social ambitions by sexual means'.[52] When Afy learns she will not be able to rise in class rank through marriage as she had planned, and instead must accept a marriage proposal from a shop-keeper, she consoles herself with the promise of certain outward signs of her change in financial status: 'He's having his house done up in style, and I shall keep two good servants, and do nothing myself but dress and subscribe to the library. He makes plenty of money' (p. 565). Langland outlines how numerous manuals and tracts reveal the contemporary obsession with the importance of outward appearance, particularly dress, in defining a person's class.[53] *Etiquette for*

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50 Pykett, p. 123. Barbara too could be considered "sexually transgressive", since she is in love with another woman's husband. It is open to debate how much she is "punished" for this—or how much she in turn punishes her rival's children.

51 Ibid., p. 123.

52 Ibid., p. 123.

53 Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian*

Ladies and Gentlemen (1876) warns the *nouveaux riches* never to 'dress *above* your station; it is a grievous mistake and leads to great evils, besides being the proof of an utter want of taste'.[54] While Afy attempts to 'marry up' by dressing above her station and fails, the woman who chooses to perform a servant's role defies expectations by dressing below her station, which allows her to succeed her goals without appearing to present a threat.

Many of the freedoms allowed a servant 'performer' are made possible due to the disguising nature of the servant costume. While both her sister-in-law Miss Corny and her former lady's maid Joyce see Madame Vine's uncanny resemblance to Isabel, it is the clothing and accessories that Isabel wears that conceal her true identity. A servant is defined by her dress. This point is driven home in Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853), when Lady Dedlock meets with Jo disguised in her servant Hortense's clothes. When Bucket asks Jo why he previously misidentified Hortense as the lady in question, he insists,

> "cos that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd. It is her and it an't her. It an't her hand, nor yet her rings, nor yet her woice. But that there's the wale, the bonnet, and the gownd, and they're wore the same way wot she wore   em."'[55]

The rings, however, set Lady Dedlock apart and reveal her inexperience as an actress. The sensational heroine with performing experience knows to pay minute attention to detail in costuming. In *No Name*, the former stage actress Magdalen asks her maid Louisa to teach her how to perform a servant's duties so she can convincingly play the part of a parlourmaid at St. Crux. While Louisa worries that the other servants 'would find [Magdalen] out', Magdalen knows the most important trick of performance: 'I can still *look* the parlour-maid whom Admiral Bartram wants.'[56] When Magdalen adopts the clothing of her maid, she 'becomes' the maid. Magdalen succinctly defines the only difference between a lady and her maid thus: 'A lady is a woman who wears a silk gown, and has a sense of her own importance' (p. 613). She is able to provide Louisa both necessary elements and successfully pass her off as a lady, effectively demonstrating the ambiguity of the boundary between 'lady' and 'maid' (p. 613).

Sensation novels also repeatedly show how the true age of a servant, which determines both the employment prospects of servant girls and the possibility of their sexual appeal, is difficult to ascertain because it is so easy to disguise. When Isabel returns as a governess she has become disfigured, and, '"hough she can't be more than

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Culture (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 35.
54 Ibid., p. 35.
55 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 336.
56 Wilkie Collins, *No Name* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 613. Emphasis in original text. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

thirty, her hair is grey', which is a source of curiosity for other women, who wonder at her true age (p. 398). In *No Name*, it is suggested that the housekeeper Mrs. Lecount could 'ha[ve] struck some fifteen or sixteen years off her real age, and […] asserted herself to be eight and thirty, [and] there would not have been one man in a thousand, or one woman in a hundred, who would have hesitated to believe her' (p. 275). Similarly, Mother Oldershaw of *Armadale* tells Lydia Gwilt,

> "The question is—not whether you were five-and-thirty last birthday; we will own the dreadful truth, and say you were—but whether you do look, or don't look, your real age [...] If you will follow my advice about dressing, and use one or two of my applications privately, I guarantee to put you back three years more [...] you [will] look no more than seven-and-twenty in any man's eyes living—except, of course, when you wake anxious in the small hours of the morning; and then, my dear, you will be old and ugly in the retirement of your own room, and it won't matter." (p. 152)

Gwilt is thus able to play the part of a young, attractive governess in order to seduce Allan Armadale, her wealthy target. As texts as diverse as *Jane Eyre* (1847), *My Secret Life* (1888) or the diaries of Hannah Cullwick might suggest, female servants held a distinct sexual attraction for middle- and upper-class men.

As Cullwick's diaries reveal, Arthur Munby so fetishized Hannah's position as a servant that he asked her to costume herself and perform as different kinds of domestics or labourers, even blackening her body to achieve the necessary look her roles would require. As Elizabeth Langland describes it, '[T]he dirtiness that was initially only the consequence of her labour quickly became a staged performance.'[57] After she married Munby, Hannah additionally 'performed' as a lady, complete with the appropriate costume: 'a felt hat & plume of cock's feathers to wear, & a veil, & a new brooch to pin my shawl with & a new waterproof cloak', but she is relieved to return to her own clothing, 'my dirty cotton frock & apron & my cap', afterwards.[58] The simple dress of the servant retains the same sexual appeal for gentlemen in sensation novels. In *No Name*, Magdalen dresses as a servant in 'a lavender-colored stuff-gown […] a white muslin apron, and a neat white cap and collar, with ribbons to match the gown' (p. 621). Her employer the Admiral keeps an all-female servant staff and 'insists on youth and good looks' in his maids, leaving any more practical qualifications for the job to the discretion of his house-keeper (p. 609). The text explicitly states how enticing Magdalen is to her master in her 'servant's costume':

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57 Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 216.
58 Hannah Cullwick, *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant,* ed. by Liz Stanley (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984), p. 266.

in this simple dress, to the eyes of all men, not linen-drapers, at once the most modest and the most alluring that a woman can wear, the sad changes which mental suffering had wrought in her beauty almost disappeared from view. In the evening costume of a lady, with her bosom uncovered, with her figure armed, rather than dressed, in unpliable silk, the Admiral might have passed her by without notice in his own drawing-room. In the evening costume of a servant, no admirer of beauty could have looked at her once and not have turned again to look at her for the second time (p. 621).

Similarly, in *Armadale*, the text suggests that Lydia Gwilt's appeal lies in her 'subtle mixture of the voluptuous and the modest which, of the many attractive extremes that meet in women, is in a man's eyes the most irresistible of all' (p. 367).

While the actress recognizes the paradoxical allure of plain dress, members of the rising merchant class, like Barbara Hare, try to mimic what they imagine the wealthy should wear. Barbara is greatly concerned with fashion, as evidenced by the initial synechdocal description of her as she appears on the street: 'A pink parasol came first, a pink bonnet and feather came behind it, a grey brocaded dress and white gloves' (p. 64). While all of 'West Lynne seems bent on outdressing the Lady Isabel', Isabel knows the allure of modest garb (p. 65). Barbara observes that even as Lady Vane, Isabel '"has no silks, and no feathers, and no anything!"'—in short, '"She's plainer that anybody in the church!"' (p. 65). When Isabel trades her modest dress for the even plainer costume of a servant, she is able to largely avoid the gaze of others and gain access to her former home to watch her husband and children surreptitiously.

Jeanne Fahnestock suggests that *East Lynne* is unique among 'bigamy novels' for the intensity of its voyeurism, particularly among its servant characters. [59] Servants cannot be policed in the same way that they police their own employers, a fact that many enterprising characters are able to turn to their advantage. Afy admits to 'listen[ing] at keyholes', and Wilson 'carr[ies] on a prying system in Mrs. Hare's house' (pp. 333, 180). As Magdalen affirms in *No Name*, '[s]ervants' tongues and servants' letters […] are oftener occupied with their masters and mistresses than their masters and mistresses suppose' (p. 609). Brian McCuskey's article points to this proliferation of servant surveillance in the novel as a means of keeping the members of the household in check: 'At the end of the long arm of the law, we find the servant's hand'. [60] Because of their own devotion to voyeurism, the servants are convinced that the meddling Miss Corny must reciprocate and 'listen' in the same way, but the text assures us, 'in that, they did her injustice' (p. 347).

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59 Jeanne Fahnestock, 'Bigamy: The Rise and Fall of a Convention', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 36.1 (1981), 47-71 (p. 54).
60 Brian W. McCuskey, 'The Kitchen Police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-Class Transgression', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2000), 359–375.

When Isabel acts as a governess, she becomes privy to everything in the home; as E. Ann Kaplan notes, 'she becomes the voyeur; she is able to look and grieve, but unable to have the gaze of recognition blaze back on her'.[61] She and Barbara have effectively switched places, since Barbara once gazed longingly Carlyle during his marriage to Isabel, and now Isabel must witness his married life with her former rival. T. A. Palmer's theatrical adaptation of the novel emphasizes the particular pain Isabel's gaze causes her. She laments:

> My sin was great, but my punishment has been still greater. Think what torture it has been—what it has been for me to bear, living in the same house with— with—your wife; seeing your love for her—love that once was *mine*. Oh, think what agony to watch dear Willie, and see him fading day by day, and not be able to say "he is my child as well as yours!"[62]

There are also limitations and rules that Isabel must follow as a subordinate member of the household. Although as a governess at East Lynne, she is still 'regarded as [a] gentlewom[a]n', Isabel faces a lack of free access to objects in her former home (p. 401). In the novel, Isabel glances 'with a yearning look' inside her old dressing-room at 'the little ornaments on the large dressing-table, as they used to be in *her* time; and the cut glass of crystal essence-bottles' (p. 401). She has lost the right to hold or even safely look at these objects, but she has traded it for the right to see and touch her husband and children.

In her introduction to the Oxford edition of *East Lynne*, Elisabeth Jay describes the novel as suggesting that:

> [t]he greatest threat posed by the governess to middle-class families was not, as Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, might lead us to suppose, an illicit romance with the master […] but the danger of hiring a woman whose class pedigree and moral qualifications for superintending children were not what they seemed.[63]

Although Isabel's role as governess does allow her access to her children on false pretences (which will be discussed later), it can be argued that it also rekindles and even deepens her love for her 'master' Carlyle. Although she does not have a physical relationship with Carlyle as Madame Vine, even while living in the house under his

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61 E. Ann. Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 83.
62 T. A. Palmer, *East Lynne: A Domestic Drama in a Prologue and Four Acts* (London: Samuel French, 1875), IV.2.
63 Elisabeth Jay, 'Introduction', *East Lynne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) vii-xxxix (pp. xxx-xxxi).

new wife the text states that '[Isabel], poor thing, always regarded Mr Carlyle as *her* husband' (p. 591). At the end of *East Lynne*, Isabel tells Carlyle, 'I never loved you so passionately as I have done since I lost you' (p. 615). After Isabel admits that she returned in disguise to be with him as much as her children, Carlyle tenderly touches her hair and nearly kisses her, a scene that is described with tantalizing suspense in the *New Monthly Magazine*'s serial version of *East Lynne*: 'What was he about to do? Lower and lower bent he his head, until his breath nearly mingled with hers. To kiss her? He best knew. But, suddenly, his face grew red with a scarlet flush, and he lifted it again.'[64] The sentence containing the word 'kiss' was deleted from this scene in the first edition, although the intentions behind Carlyle's aborted gesture remain clear. Moments later, as Isabel 'clung to his arm' and 'lifted her face, in its sad yearning Mr. Carlyle laid her tenderly down again, and suffered his lips to rest upon hers' (p. 617). In response to her final words, 'farewell, until eternity [...] Farewell, my once dear husband!' he replies, 'Until eternity' (p. 617). His words suggest that Isabel may realise her 'one great hope [that they] shall meet again […] and live together for ever and ever' (p. 617).

When Carlyle reveals to Barbara that his former wife has been living with them in disguise and his new wife plaintively asks if Isabel's presence 'has […] taken [his] love from [her]', he reassures her with a far less intimate gesture: 'He took her hands in one of his, he put the other round her waist and held her there, before him, never speaking, only looking gravely into her face' (p. 623). He also does not directly answer her question, and the novel's narrative commentary, 'Who could look at its sincere truthfulness, at the sweet expression of his lips, and doubt him? Not Barbara', is less than definitive. Surely the reader who has just 'witnessed' the heart-wrenching scene between the two former spouses is not so easily assured. Barbara might maintain her status as Carlyle's wife, but Isabel ensures that Barbara will never usurp the role of mother to Isabel's children.

Ellen Bayuk Rosenman's article describes how, by becoming a servant, Isabel suffers in order to achieve intimacy with her children and suggests that 'Isabel's new role reveals the class-specific constraints on maternal emotion implicit in the Angel in the House.'[65] As a parvenu, Barbara feels she must subscribe wholly to social expectations of her, so she strives to embody what she imagines a wealthy mother should be, showing a reserved love at a distance. When she first hires Isabel as governess, Barbara explains her beliefs about motherhood. She claims that

"too many mothers pursue a mistaken system in the management of their family […] They are never happy but when they are with their children: they

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64 Ellen Wood, 'East Lynne: Part the Twenty-First', *The New Monthly Magazine*, September 1861, p. 45.
65 Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, '"Mimic Sorrows": Masochism and the Gendering of Pain in Victorian Melodrama', *Studies in the Novel* 35.1 (Spring 2003), 22-43 (p. 29).

must be in the nursery; or, the children in the drawing-room. They wash them, dress them, feed them; rendering themselves slaves, and the nurse's office a sinecure" (p. 406).

Isabel is a willing 'slave', then, by being close to her children and tending to their needs. Rosenman sees this as means of 'fling[ing] off the constraints' of this unfulfilling model for middle-class motherhood.[66]

Early in the novel, Isabel pleads to take her children to the seaside with her, insisting, 'I will get well all the sooner for having them with me', but her sister-in-law Miss Corny will not allow it (p. 201). At this point Isabel is still recognized as their mother and as an upper-class woman, so it is somewhat surprising that Miss Corny's reasons for refusal are the stresses associated with mothering children and the expense of transporting them, which Miss Corny even implies could 'ruin' Carlyle financially (p. 200). As Rosenman points out, Isabel 'soon learns to control herself and accede to the commands of Cornelia and her doctor', one of her first steps toward becoming an actress through the performance of submission.[67]

Andrew Maunder suggests that '[i]t is only by controlling (as far as she is ever able to) the 'impulsive' and 'lower' instincts and taking on the middle-class virtues of 'labour and self-sacrifice' that Isabel herself can be reunited with her children' since 'Wood seems to suggest that successful and rewarding mothering is only for the more deserving members of humanity'.[68] However, I believe the text more clearly suggests that motherhood is not bound by class, but that good mothers are united across class lines by maternal feeling: 'Let the mother, be she a duchess, or be she an apple-woman at a stand, be separated for awhile from her little children; let *her* answer how she yearns for them' (p. 390, italics original). Certainly Isabel adopts the positive middle-class virtues Maunder identifies, but Barbara Hare, the text's example of a middle-class mother, hardly demonstrates these qualities herself. Early in the novel, Wilson, the most prescient of the servants, hopes that 'nothing happen[s]' to Lady Isabel, since '[Barbara] would not make a very kind stepmother, for it is certain that where the first wife had been hated, her children won't be loved' (p. 179). When Isabel is presumed dead and separated from her children, she anguishes about her children: 'Would they be trained to goodness, to morality, to religion?' (p. 390). The report she receives from Afy confirms her fears. Afy thinks Barbara does not 'ha[ve] much to do with them', and Isabel realizes 'she had abandoned them to be trained by strangers' (pp. 395, 390). Anxieties about a 'stranger' raising a child in lieu of its natural mother were common at the time. *The English Schoolroom* (1865) harshly

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66 Ibid., p. 29.
67 Ibid., p. 28.
68 Andrew Maunder, '"Stepchildren of Nature": *East Lynne* and the Spectre of Female Degeneracy, 1860-1861', *Victorian Crime, Madness, and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 59-72 (pp. 67-68).

condemns mothers who allow their children to be educated by a governess: 'The mistake once made will be repented for ever, and a conviction will haunt her, when too late, that she had far better have done her duty to the full, and subject to any inconvenience […] rather than have given over her offspring to the stranger'.[69] To right this wrong, Isabel returns in the guise of a stranger to ensure her children are properly cared for.

As Ann Cvetkovitch suggests, 'Whenever a social problem is dramatized through the sensational figure of a mother separated from her child, melodrama is producing not just tears but social policy', which is undoubtedly the case in *East Lynne*.[70] In *The Domestic Revolution*, Theresa McBride makes a case for the decreased demand for servants toward the end of the nineteenth century being a result of 'a growing intimacy within the middle-class family, and to a wish to be closer to, and provide better care for, one's children'.[71] Smiles' *Self-Help* even gives a nod to the importance of good parenting in shaping a child's future success: 'The characters of parents are thus constantly repeated in their children; and the acts of affection, discipline, industry, and self-control, which they daily exemplify, live and act when all else which may have been learned through the ear has long been forgotten.'[72] Barbara, however, leaves this duty to a woman whom she believes to be a mere governess: in Tayleure's play, she tells the disguised Isabel, 'I trust you may be able to instill such principles into the mind of the little girl, as shall keep her from a like fate [to her mother].'[73] The irony that Barbara would trust a stranger living under an alias to teach the children morality would not have been lost on the audience. The play's sympathetic depiction of Isabel upholds the idea that regardless of her sins, the children's mother will have their best interest at heart.

Servants could also be perceived as dangerous intermediaries who appropriate children's affections that should be reserved solely for their own parents.[74] Ellen Wood's biography *Memorials of Mrs Wood* (1894), written by her son Charles, seems to show the validity of this fear. Charles Wood describes a beloved French nurse who cared for him and Wood's other children as '[a] faithful, self-sacrificing, duty-fulfilling woman, [for whom] neither time nor infirmities would have separated her from her beloved masters and charges'.[75] In what is ostensibly a biography of his

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69 Anthony F. Thompson, *The English Schoolroom; or, Thoughts on Private Tuition, Practical and Suggestive* (London: Sampson Low, 1865), p. 24.
70 Cvetkovitch, p. 127.
71 Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 67.
72 Smiles, p. 294.
73 Clifton Tayleure, *East Lynne, A drama in five acts, adapted from the novel* East Lynne*, written by Mrs. Henry Wood*, in *British Plays of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology to Illustrate the Evolution of the Drama*, ed. by J. O. Bailey (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), pp. 306-27 (IV.1).
74 McBride, p. 67.
75 Charles W. Wood, *Memorials of Mrs. Henry Wood,* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1894), p. 56. Further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

mother, Wood devotes an entire chapter to this nurse. Most tellingly, he opines 'Her charges had always been *her children*, and those yet living are so still' (p. 56; italics original).

One incident in particular suggests that this nurse may have been a model for Isabel or the servant characters in *East Lynne*. Ellen Wood's first daughter, Ellen, fell ill with scarlet fever, and, as Charles Wood describes it:

> The doctors treated her according to the fashion of the day. They first starved her almost to death, and, then she was sinking from exhaustion, ordered leeches to be applied to the throat. The nurse cried to her master in agonies of grief, "do not allow it. If leeches are used, the child will die. I know it from experience." But she was powerless. The leeches were applied, the little throat closed up, and the child died (pp. 51-2).

East Lynne contains very similar scenarios of servants 'knowing best' even though their advice remains unheeded. The servant Wilson proves that, through her previous experience tending those with consumption, she can predict the trajectory of William's illness more accurately than the doctor (p. 580).[76]

When Isabel was still recognized as an aristocrat and her father was dying, the doctors who attended him concealed the worst of his condition from her, and even Carlyle would 'soften down the actual facts', which infuriated her (p. 87). As a governess, Isabel ensures that she is with the doctor more frequently than either Barbara or Carlyle are and is thus best able to hear his straightforward medical opinions (p. 442). When the doctor speaks to Carlyle, he neglects to reveal the worst. As Wilson says, 'if he saw the child's breath going out before his face, and knew that the next moment would be his last, he'd vow to us all that he was good for twelve hours to come' (pp. 579-80). Although the doctor tells William's 'new mother' Barbara that William 'will outgrow' his cough, causing her to dismiss it by suggesting, 'perhaps a crumb went the wrong way', Isabel is immediately able to identify William's condition as consumption (pp. 408, 419). In her capacity as servant, Isabel is able to 'make [her child's] health [her] care by night and day' (p. 422). She is able to treat her son with cream, since she says she '[has] known cream to do a vast deal of good in a case like William's', and believes 'no better medicine can be given', even though at that point Carlyle is still relying on the doctor's mistaken opinions (p. 442).

Isabel is also the only person present with William when he finally dies. Although this is a scene of protracted anguish for Isabel, it also provides closure. When her father was dying, Isabel was denied the right to see him, despite her repeated entreaties, precisely because she is a female and a family member. As her father dies in the next room, she accuses Carlyle, 'It is cruel, so to treat me […] When

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76 Later, only the maid Joyce recognizes that Isabel is dying; in response, Barbara declares the servant to be "a simpleton" (611).

your father was dying, were you kept away from him?' (p. 87). He responds, 'My dear young lady—a hardy, callous man may go where you may not' and when she exposes the flaw in his rationale, pointing out that Carlyle is neither hardy nor callous, he avers that he 'spoke of man's general nature' (p. 87). Eventually, Carlyle explains that the truth is that '[her father's] symptoms are too painful', and if she 'were […] to go in, in defiance of advice, [she] would regret it all [her] after life' (p. 87).

As the governess Madame Vine, however, she is able to be part of William's death in a way she could not have been as Isabel Carlyle. Although she famously mourns that 'not even at that last hour […] dared she say [to William], I am your mother', it is precisely because she is *not* perceived as his mother that she can be the one alone with him at his deathbed (p. 586). T. A. Palmer's play milks further pathos from this scene with the famous line, 'Oh, Willie, my child! dead, dead, dead! and he never knew me, never called me mother!'[77] However, in John Oxenford's adaptation, William rewards Isabel's efforts by seeing through her disguise at the last minute and calling her 'Mamma' once before he dies.[78] However, after she has revealed her true identity, Isabel dies from grief; her seemingly contradictory roles of mother, wife, lady, actress, and governess cannot survive publicly reconciled in one body for long.

Charles Wood describes a similar scenario occurring when Ellen Wood's own daughter died and was attended by the French nurse:

> The faithful nurse was almost equally stricken [as the child's father]. She was one of those strong and determined characters who must have their own way in everything: the under nurses had to obey her every look and word—even the mother's authority in the nursery was quite a secondary consideration. But she was as tenacious in her affections as she was strong in character. None but herself was allowed to perform the last sad office for the pure and beautiful little creature who had gone to a better world. With her own bare hands she placed her in her little coffin, watched over it night and day until the little body was consigned to the earth and hidden away from mortal eyes for ever (p. 52).

In *East Lynne*, William's death signals the end of Isabel's performance as Madame Vine, and she removes her disguise (p. 588). Nina Auerbach sees 'Isabel's eulogy [as] less a eulogy for her son than for her own lost roles', or more specifically, as I would suggest, the only role she chose for herself.[79]

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77 Palmer, III.3

78 John Oxenford, 'East Lynne', in *The Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve Nineteenth-Century Melodramas*, ed. by Michael Kilgarriff (London: Wolfe Publishing Limited, 1974), pp. 278-306 (III.3).

79 Nina Auerbach, 'Before the Curtain', *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. by Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 3-14 (p. 12).Here Auerbach refers to the same death scene in T. A. Palmer's 1874 stage version.

     Memorials of Mrs Wood describes how, shortly after Wood was married, her husband suggested that they visit the monastery Grande Chartreuse together. The surprised Wood responds, 'But I thought women were not admitted over the threshold? What Open Sesame would unbar the doors to me?' (p. 124). The 'Open Sesame' solution her husband devises is to disguise Wood as a monk so that she might tour the monastery and not arouse suspicion. Isabel Vane and other sensation heroines stage their own means of 'Open Sesame' access to the middle-class home by adopting the similarly unobtrusive disguise of a servant. While characters like Lydia Gwilt or Magdalen Vanstone use the role of servant in attempts to illicitly gain wealth and revenge, Isabel more subtly subverts the class system. By choosing to perform a climb down the social ladder she is able to express love for her children as a mother and feel passion as a wife to Carlyle in ways previously denied her as Lady Vane.

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'THE USUAL PALM TREE': LOVERS IN THE CONSERVATORY ON THE LATE VICTORIAN STAGE

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Abstract

In the late nineteenth century, urban gardens, parks and conservatories had become fashionable as well as culturally and socially accessible. Creating pockets of nature within towns fused the spheres of countryside and city into one location.

The escapism inherent in nature is a common theme in literature and art, as well as the theatre. Because the countryside within drama often functions as an escapist location, the late-Victorian penchant for faux or urban nature posed important questions for dramatists of the period. The dramatic paradigm of escape to the pastoral and return to the town, notable in Shakespearean plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, hinges around the idea that identity can be established by the act of travelling.

However, the fascination with urban gardens and conservatories challenged conceptions of territorial shifts as integral to the process of self-discovery. It was, therefore, within the realm of the urban conservatory that the late century playwrights Arthur Wing Pinero and Oscar Wilde subverted the traditional theatrical pastoral escape. In Pinero's farce *The Schoolmistress* (1886), and Wilde's society comedy *An Ideal Husband* (1895), rather than retreating to the countryside, characters retire to the palm trees in the conservatory to find escape and, more importantly, lovers.

This paper is an exploration of how these playwrights used the domesticated conservatory to negotiate the concepts of escape and return. By addressing the image of the conservatory as a late Victorian substitute for the pastoral escape, and probing the construct of the off-stage space, this article ultimately argues that romantic escapism, particularly within the parameters of the stage, does not necessarily require travel to a rural or idyllic location. Rather, the whole construct of the dramatic pastoral escape for lovers hinges not so much on 'usual', physical territory as the idea of imaginary experience.

Northrop Frye's twentieth-century paradigm of the pastoral or countryside setting in drama established a discourse within which to approach the 'green world' or place where 'the comic resolution is attained and the cast returns with it to their former world'.[1] Frye used Shakespeare's comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream and As You Like It*, with their respective dream and golden-world atmospheres, to demonstrate how physical movement to woods and forests beyond social order allows 'normal' or town rules to be temporarily suspended (p. 141). Experiences of inversion, saturnalia and festival are wound into the 'green worlds' of these plays, meaning that individuals subjected to their influences undergo a holiday or dream-like experience which furnishes them with sufficient insight and confidence to return to their homes

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1 Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 141.

and combat the very things from which they sought escape. The point, of course, was that a shift to a 'green world' was often integral within Elizabethan comedy to the linear trajectory towards self-discovery and resolution.

Anticipating Frye's dramatic paradigm of territorial escape to a 'green world' and return to a homeland in Shakespeare's drama, Victorian literary scholars such as Charles Knight (1791-1873) and the Anglo-Irish Edward Dowden (1843-1913), agreed on the power and significance of nature within Shakespeare's comedies. In the 1840s, in what Frye would later call 'green world' drama, Charles Knight suggested that the plots unfold 'till the illusions disappear and the lovers are happy'.[2] Much later than Knight, in 1875, Dowden observed that these plays hinge around 'the woodland scene […] possessed of a flora and fauna that flourish in spite of physical geographers'.[3] Whether it was Dowden's concept of self-sufficient nature, or Knight's focus on lovers at the centre of Shakespeare's pastoral comedies, these attitudes are indicative of a Victorian trend in approaching the pastoral plays: that is that the action occurs within a natural idyll, and keeps going until lovers are united. To echo *Twelfth Night's* Feste, 'journeys end in lovers meeting'.[4]

As well as the relationship between nature and the romantic plot, Victorian dramatists like Oscar Wilde and Arthur Wing Pinero appropriated the journey of self-discovery through exposure to nature into their late-century dramatic worlds. For instance, in Pinero's farce *The Amazons* (1895), a piece that Pinero himself described as 'mainly sylvan', three tomboy sisters escape to the forest in order to discover their femininity and, of course, to encounter lovers.[5] Similarly, the transfer from urban to rural surroundings as a pretext for a simultaneous shift of personality is demonstrated by Wilde in a comedy from the same year: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). In this play, the name and personae of the protagonist, John Worthing, are dependent on his geographical location. But what can this dramatic fusion of self-development, nature and romance reveal about late Victorian theatre? To answer this question, it is necessary to turn to the nineteenth-century glass construction: the conservatory.

This paper argues that the conservatory can be seen as a romantic, imaginative space like the mystical pastoral realms of Shakespeare's drama. This study uses two late century plays, *The Schoolmistress* (1886) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895), as a means of entering the Victorian world of the glasshouse in order to question the concept of the conservatory as a territory for escape and, most significantly, imagination. First, Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934), a London born actor and

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2 Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare: Forming a Companion Volume to Every Edition of the Text* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p. 213.
3 Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875), p. 80.
4 William Shakespeare, 'Twelfth Night' (2.3.42), *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 691-714.
5 Arthur Wing Pinero, *The Collected Letters of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero*, ed. J. P. Wearing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 139.

playwright best known for his comedies, wrote the farce *The Schoolmistress* which was first performed in 1886 at the Court Theatre, London. The play was the second in a series of five comedies which became known as Pinero's 'Court Farces'.[6] Despite being described as 'a fragile thing' by the manager Augustin Daly (*Pinero Letters*, p. 90), the play was a success, albeit short-lived. Secondly, just under a decade later than Pinero's *Schoolmistress*, Oscar Wilde's society comedy *An Ideal Husband* opened in early January of 1895 at the Haymarket. During its opening week, the theatrical paper *The Era* dismissed the drama as a 'deep and bitter disappointment'.[7] Nevertheless, the play has stood the test of time, having been adapted for the screen on at least three occasions in the twentieth century, as well as having its most recent stage revival at the London Vaudeville in 2010. Both *Schoolmistress* and *Husband* subvert preconceptions, such as that of Charles Knight, about comic plots being driven by pairs of lovers, and involve peripheral couples who, after the fashion of the travellers in Shakespeare's 'green worlds', seek escape, not through a geographical shift to the rural space, but by the establishment of a faux countryside within the urban territory in the form of an off-stage conservatory.

In order to understand the conceptual significance of the conservatory, it is necessary to begin with the Victorian literary interest in nature. George Levine has discussed the notion of the 'landscape' in Victorian fiction as a fusion of the 'sublime' and 'mundane'. Levine traces the Victorian Realism of George Eliot and John Ruskin, arguing that 'for Ruskin, as for the Realist novelists everywhere, the quotidian, the merely human, must fill up the space of the sublime'.[8] By imbuing the mundane with an inherently 'sublime' experience, Levine suggests that Victorian writers and artists drew upon traditional conceptions of an idyllic, pastoral world that R. L. Patten has recently defined as having 'sunshine, birds, blue sky, green fields, vitality, beauty, happiness, and peace'.[9] All of these 'ingredients' (p. 154), as Patten terms them, are part of what Andrew Griffin has called the Victorian 'thirsty yearning' for landscapes: a yearning that is 'touched by nostalgia'.[10] This provides a tidy segue to the concept of 'nostalgia' which Ann C. Colley has defined as a combination of melancholy, longing and recollection.[11] Colley challenges the sense of *un*fulfilment suggested by

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6 Jeffrey Huberman, *Late Victorian Farce* (Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press, 1986), p. 91.

7 'An Ideal Husband', *The Era*, 5 January 1895. April 2011. www.galegroup.com.

8 George Levine, 'High and Low: Ruskin and the Novelists', *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U. C. Knoepflmacher and G. B. Tennyson (California: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 137-52; 149.

9 Robert L. Patten, '"A Surprising Transformation": Dickens and the Hearth', *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U. C. Knoepflmacher and G. B. Tennyson (California: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 153-70; 154.

10 Andrew Griffin, 'The Interior Garden and John Stuart Mill', *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U. C. Knoepflmacher and G. B. Tennyson (California: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 171-86; 171.

11 Ann C. Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 1998).

these terms by discussing Victorian literature, such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), that draws on sentimentalised conceptions of 'an arcadian past' in order to impress upon readers the significance and demands of the present (pp. 76-7). This circles back to Levine's observation that Victorian fiction and art drew longing for a lost 'pastoral' world into everyday 'mundane' activity.

Nevertheless, 'recollection' and 'longing' for a pre-lapsarian arcadia, however 'naïve' (Colley, p. 77), is decidedly regressive in a culture that admired the social reformer Samuel Smiles' (1812-1904) ethos of 'self-help', and Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) model of survival and progress. In real terms, Patten's pastoral 'ingredients' provided an idealised escape from labour and industry associated with city life. Thus the countryside became an increasingly popular working-class holiday retreat. [12] From the mid-nineteenth century, high levels of employment and the development of friendly societies encouraged a saving culture amongst working-class families. Samuel Smiles argued that 'honest earning and the frugal use of money', together with 'prudence and self-denial' offer 'hope until better days come around'.[13] Given the dedication involved in saving money, holidaying in the countryside proved that individuals could elevate themselves, their situations and futures through self-help. In other words, progress or self-improvement was necessary in order to realise a nostalgic dream of the 'pastoral'.

Ideas of renewing influences within rural atmospheres were arguably fuelled by Darwin's theory of natural selection (1859). The 'healing' or reviving elements of the countryside could be likened to the power within nature to adapt or 'select' species for survival. Nature, by Darwin's logic, transforms individuals into physiologically and mentally adept beings. But this progressive influence conflicted with the connotations of nature as a pre-lapsarian idyll. If the need for rural escape pertains to nostalgic desires for a pre-industrial, agrarian utopia, how could it signify an evolutionary, teleological movement towards perfection? Michael Waters has offered a solution to this seeming paradox by claiming that Victorian gardens and rural recreations were 'visionary and forward-looking rather than nostalgic genuflections to the myth of a Golden Age', and that it was precisely this 'forward' ideology that underpinned the 'thirst' for nature.[14]

Assuming that nostalgia, the 'sublime' and 'mundane' are reconcilable concepts, what happens when the essential 'ingredients' of the pastoral world are missing or unattainable? It is here that the 'imagination' becomes paramount. In his essay on the Victorian suburb, Walter L. Creese suggests that, in the urban landscape where a 'Wordsworthian' escape is desirable but unfeasible, public gardens were designed to

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12 Incidentally, the sea-side did become a popular holiday destination. See John K. Walton, 'The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays in Victorian England', *The Economic History Review* 34 (May, 1981), pp. 249-65.
13 Samuel Smiles, *Self Help* (London: John Murray, 1905), p. 295.
14 Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1988), p. 218.

provide 'a maximum variety of spacial experience' with trees planted in such a way as to obscure the view of the ugly suburban world (p. 58). In short, nature was brought into the city and suburbs in much the same way that the 'sublime' was introduced into the everyday world in literature. Public gardens were spaces in which various fantasies (nostalgia and the pastoral) combined to form an imaginary retreat within an urban environment. The imagination, Creese suggests, gave writers, artists, architects and landscapers the potential to bring together seemingly disparate worlds: the urban and the rural, and reality and nostalgic fantasy.

With respect to the depiction of the garden in literature, Waters has observed that 'when used as a pastoral metaphor, "garden" inevitably defines the country as something to look upon and enjoy rather than as something from which to derive a living' (p. 185). Gardens, in this way, transcended all suggestion of urban and rural labour, becoming realms in which observers and participants could indulge in the aesthetic quality of nature. Because of agricultural hardship and the labourer's subjection to economical fluctuations, gardens became miniature, idealised and, most importantly, controllable recreations of rural landscapes. The artistic and entirely manageable patch of land provided an alternative to what Oscar Wilde called 'uncomfortable' nature in which 'grass is hard and lumpy and damp'.[15]

The fusion of 'pastoral' fantasy or imagination and reality, in literature, drama, poetry, art, parks and gardens: in short, the Victorian world in general, was encapsulated nowhere more fittingly than in the image of the Victorian conservatory. It is this domesticated form of nature preserved under a glass roof that offers a unique insight into late-Victorian dramatic engagements with the 'green world' paradigm and the romance plot. By focusing on the non-presence of the conservatories on stage, this paper draws on Bert O. States' theory of theatrical 'phenomenology' whereby the complex realm of the 'stage' calls upon actors and audiences to offer up their collective imaginations, giving 'meaning' to signifiers like props and sets, and incorporating the boundaries between on- and off-stage spaces into the imaginary dramatised world.[16] By playing on audience conceptions of the 'pastoral', escape, conservatory, expectations of comedy and willingness to suspend belief in favour of 'phenomenology', this paper argues that Pinero and Wilde, within the paradigm of drama and the equally artistic parameters of the conservatory, were consciously experimenting with the notion of imaginary spaces.

The conservatory

The fusion of urban and rural landscapes into a domesticated, fantasy territory, in the

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15 Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', *Blitz Editions: The Works of Oscar Wilde* (Leicester: Bookmark Limited, 1990), pp. 909-31; 9.
16 See Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: The Phenomenology of Theatre* (London: University of California Press, 1985).

shape of parks and gardens, offers important conceptual groundwork for the study of Victorian dramatic conservatories. Michael Waters and, more recently, Isobel Armstrong have both observed the significance of the conservatory within Victorian literature. Armstrong notes that the conservatory is often a place of romantic 'licence' which, through its proximity to the home, operates 'in dialogue' with the domestic space.[17] Similarly, Waters proposes that conservatories, again in Victorian fiction, appear 'within the here-and-now world of the privileged classes' where 'lovers find privacy, and experience a sense of being in an other-world environment' (p. 270). According to Waters, conservatories 'captured the Victorian imagination', because while gardens involved 'uncomfortable' nature, and uncontrollable climates, the conservatory had manageable 'airiness and profusion, and darkness and luminosity' (ibid.).

Together with ideas about domesticated nature and its conduciveness towards wooing, in Armstrong's study of Victorian conservatories there is a clear 'imaginative' theme that comes to the fore. Under a grand glass roof, with rigid temperature control, seasons could be artificially created, the town house and city itself transported into rural and even exotic worlds, and socio-economic reality temporarily broken down in public glasshouses where everyone is part of an organic community united by nature. The whole idea, Armstrong suggests, made the glasshouse 'an exercise in imagining another time' (p. 180).

Although ideas of imagination, nostalgia and romance all echo through these discourses on the fictional Victorian conservatory, collective focus on the glasshouse does not extend to the off-stage experiences of characters within plays in the performative context of the theatre. What, if anything, does the 'imagined' space of the conservatory bring to the study of late nineteenth-century drama? In order to answer this question, the following sections examine Wilde's and Pinero's uses of the conservatory as a romantic territory, a site of escape and a marginal, imaginary zone where peripheral characters and plots can thrive without interrupting the main action of the drama.

Romantic spaces

Like Waters' notion of privacy for lovers within literature, *The Schoolmistress* and *An Ideal Husband* present the conservatory as a designated spot for love making. Beginning with *Schoolmistress*, the first mention of a conservatory is by the schoolgirl Dinah Rankling, who claims that 'Reginald proposed to me in the conservatory […] then we went into the drawing room and told Mamma'.[18] The

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17 Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 182.
18 Arthur Wing Pinero, 'The Schoolmistress', *Plays by A. W. Pinero*, ed. George Rowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 17-74; 21.

conservatory is, here, a space for romance, necessitating a shift to the more practical, social territory of the drawing room within the house in order to engage with the real world. Conversely, in the third act, a different couple move from the drawing room into the conservatory. The character Mallory questions, 'is the conservatory heated?' to which Peggy replies, 'I don't mind if it isn't', whereupon they both exit through glass doors (pp. 61-2). They re-emerge much later when Mallory announces, 'while looking at the plants in the conservatory, I became engaged to Miss (Peggy) Hesslerigge' (p. 71). The heat, plants and alternative atmosphere of the conservatory seem to render it a conventional love-making territory. Proposal occurs very matter-of-factly in the conservatory 'while looking at the plants'. So conventional is the conservatory that characters treat it as a tactical, pragmatic arrangement rather than a liberating retreat.

After a similar fashion, in *An Ideal Husband*, the conservatory is another off-stage space in which characters engage in flirtation. The dandyish figure Lord Goring encounters a former fiancée, Mrs Cheveley, who claims that their engagement ended because he 'saw, or said (he) saw, poor old Lord Mortlake trying to have a violent flirtation with me (Mrs Cheveley) in the conservatory at Tenby'.[19] But the chief conservatory related incident in *Husband* relates to Lord Goring's current love interest, Mabel Chiltern. After having received a proposal from Goring, Mabel instructs him to enter the conservatory and find the 'second palm tree on the left' or 'the usual palm tree' (p. 253). She also confesses that Goring's proposal 'makes the second today': 'it is one of Tommy's days for proposing. He always proposes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the season' (p. 250). The audience is led to assume that the 'usual palm tree' is the place where these frequent proposals occur.

Like *Schoolmistress*, the would-be romantic experience is compressed into a pre-meditated, practical affair. Mabel precludes any romantic spontaneity by providing her suitor with strict instructions about his proposal. Similarly, Mrs Cheveley's 'violent flirtation' or deviation from propriety is thwarted by Goring's intrusion into the conservatory at Tenby. As Russell Jackson has pointed out, Wilde included a longer exchange concerning Tenby between Goring and Mrs Cheveley in his initial draft of the play. Goring was to make the observation 'you had not quite realised that conservatories have glass walls. They are not like boudoirs. They are not so convenient' (p. 333). The transparent walls, rather paradoxically, draw attention to the false nature of the liberty or licence attributed to the literary and dramatic conservatory. Despite the omission of this observation in the play itself, Goring's discovery of the clandestine affair, coupled with Mabel's clear wooing instructions, all contribute to the overwhelming sense of *control* encapsulated by the heated, transparent and law-abiding glasshouse.

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19 Oscar Wilde, 'An Ideal Husband', *Two Society Comedies: A Woman of no Importance and An Ideal Husband*, eds. Ian Small and Russell Jackson (New York: W.W Norton & Company Inc., 1983) pp. 121-270; 233.

Here, it is worth noting Wilde's claim in his essay *The Decay of Lying* (1891):

> Out of doors, in nature, one becomes abstract and impersonal, one's individuality absolutely leaves one […] if nature had been comfortable, mankind would never have invented architecture, and I prefer houses to the open air. (p. 909)

The confined and paradoxically unnatural natural retreat, in this way, is a space in which identity can be retained and controlled, rather than expanded and challenged. So, far from being a zone of spontaneous romantic licence where rules are broken down, Mabel perceives the transparent conservatory as a 'usual', designated and navigable space where rules are to be observed.

Escape

If nature is 'unnatural', how can the characters find their 'pastoral' escape? Given the lack of liberty within the glass walls of the conservatory, the supposedly subversive experience of the 'green world' becomes limited. As François Laroque has argued, 'alternation, contrast and reversal are the basic concepts that are always inseparable from the phenomenon of festivity' within the plays of Shakespeare.[20] This allows for the rejection of the order associated with what Frye called 'irrational society' (p. 141). Plunging into Bakhtinian carnivalesque or saturnalian anarchy, though not of the bodily kind, was something that could be explored within the genre of Victorian farce.

Thus Pinero emulated the mysterious experiences of liberty and subversion in Shakespeare's woods within the confines of Admiral Rankling's home in *The Schoolmistress*. The schoolgirls and their headmistress Miss Dyott, at the close of the play's second act, become homeless. Their college is burnt down by the pyromaniac serving boy Tyler, forcing them to seek refuge in the home of Dinah Rankling's strict and unforgiving father. The scene in this home is entitled 'Nightmare' and occurs in the darkness. The characters cannot sleep so they drift into the drawing room, one by one, triggering a farcical series of events. The girls must hide themselves from Admiral Rankling on several occasions, together with Dinah's clandestine fiancé Reginald, who has been barred from the house. Throughout this scene there are characters hiding from and chasing one another, as well as lovers attempting to find solitude in the conservatory. Time is suspended here, forcing the characters to exist in a preternatural world between night and day. The repeated calls for daylight amplify the sense of lost time: 'you didn't meet any daylight on the stairs did you?', 'there wasn't any daylight in your room when you came down, was there?', 'are we never

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20 François Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 235.

going to have any more daylight?' and 'oh will it never be daylight?' (pp. 56-62). The characters are stuck in a kind of limbo, each craving the sanity and security of morning and, therefore, the rediscovery of time. Thus the confusion of the scene coupled with the atmosphere of mystery created by the darkness offer to replicate the experiences in the Shakespearean 'green world' within the confines of an urban townhouse.

It is important to be aware that the 'Nightmare' scene unfolds *outside* of the conservatory. Turning to the plot, during the Christmas holiday, the girls at Volumnia College abandon their regimental routines while their schoolmistress is away, culminating their frivolities at the moment of the incineration of their school. One example of their saturnalian experience is a feast that takes place during an illicit wedding party thrown for Dinah Rankling. Once the schoolmistress is out of sight, the girls become careless with expenditure and indulge themselves with food. Practical finances such as rent, fire insurance and wages are spent on 'oysters and a *paté de foie gras*', 'lobster salad', 'lark pudding', 'champagne', 'tarts and confectionery' and 'a wedding cake' (pp. 36-7). Emily Allen has recently observed that the wedding cake was a 'symbol of social standing', noting that royal cakes were produced 'for ocular not oral consumption'.[21] Indeed, Pinero's wedding cake is never consumed, and nothing of the other victuals is even touched by the characters around the dinner table. This on-stage *non*-feasting expresses a desire for unfettered and infinite supplies of food without regard for availability and budgets, and places the action within a subversive realm where the rules of everyday, economically bound existence have no place. By the time the girls reach the 'Nightmare' scene, therefore, the sense of lawlessness has been well established.

While the anarchy within and preceding Pinero's 'Nightmare' brings the *lack* of mystery in the conservatory to the fore, Wilde seems to have subverted the entire notion of the festive, saturnalian experience in *Husband*. Having entered to meet Mabel under their palm tree, Goring 'returns from the conservatory looking very pleased with himself and with an entirely new buttonhole that someone has made for him' (p. 259). Earlier in the play, Goring makes some comic and essentially nonsensical remarks about the importance of buttonholes, concluding with the ridiculous request, 'for the future a more trivial buttonhole […] on Thursday evenings' (p. 214). That a flower can be trivial, age-enhancing or even, as in *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), 'as beautiful as the seven deadly sins' attributes to nature inappropriate, potentially impossible qualities.[22] Goring, then, emerges from the 'usual' dramatic 'green world' brandishing a piece of nature as an aesthetic garment.

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21 Emily Allen, 'Culinary Exhibition: Victorian Wedding Cakes and Royal Spectacle', *Victorian Studies* 45 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 457-84; 65, 77.

22 Oscar Wilde, 'A Woman of No Importance', *Two Society Comedies: A Woman of No Importance and An Ideal Husband*, eds. Ian Small and Russell Jackson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1983), pp. 11-129; 28.

The traditional sense of mystery or anticipation about 'green worlds' like the Forest of Arden, for instance, is parodied by Wilde through Goring's reaction to Mabel's invitation to the conservatory: 'second on the left?', and her rather flippant response delivered 'with a look of mock surprise': 'yes, the usual palm tree' (p. 253). Just as Goring's pre-escapist experience seems underwhelming, so too does his emergence from the conservatory make him predictably *au fait* with the 'green world' experience. As well as incorporating nature in a sartorial accessory, when conversing with his father, Goring unconsciously refers to the conservatory as 'the usual palm tree' (p. 262). So, whereas the 'usual palm tree' was an unintelligible euphemism for the conservatory before his visit, it is readily adopted into his discourse upon his emergence.

Wilde, it seems, refused to engage with the details of experience within the mock 'pastoral' realm, reducing romantic symbols and gestures to comic banter and commonplace locations. Assimilators of Wilde's epigrams delight in listing witty truisms about love and romance, and indeed Wilde's comic phrases coalesce in his depictions of actual lovers' unions within his drama. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, for instance, Algernon claims that 'the very essence of romance is uncertainty'.[23] Marriage, on the other hand (according to Mrs Cheveley, in *Husband*) is categorised as a 'settlement' (p. 222). The polarised concepts of 'uncertainty' and 'settlement' reflect Wilde's equally disparate definitions of romance and marriage; and it is these opposites that he brings together in the 'romantic' but ritual wooing ground of the conservatory with its navigable layout and rigidly controlled climate. Just as matrimony is a 'settlement', so too does the romantic experience become localised and organised: in short, it is categorically *un*romantic.

In both plays, the 'sublime' escapist experiences are fused comically with the 'mundane' worlds of townhouses and their adjoining conservatories. In fact, the conservatories are accessed via doors that lead straight into them, narrowing the distance between the natural and urban spheres. Far from moving to the 'green world', the alternative territory is brought to the urban or, what Shakespeare terms, 'the working-day world'.[24] The proximity of the romantic glasshouse to the home domesticates what ought to be a character-challenging 'green world'. By their very natures as conservatories, rather than woods, forests or even gardens, these spaces inhibit the escapist, character-developing experiences around which the 'green world' paradigm hinges. It is not, in other words, in the conservatories – the designated 'green world' space – that anything approaching saturnalia takes place in these plays because the glasshouse's 'pastoral' significance seems to be entirely imaginary.

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23 Oscar Wilde, 'The Importance of Being Earnest', *Blitz Editions: The Works of Oscar Wilde* (Leicester: Bookmark Limited, 1990), pp. 321-69; 23.
24 William Shakespeare, 'As You Like It' (1.3.12), *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 627-52.

Peripheral plots and spaces

Shifting farcical and seemingly lawless activities into the urban territory outside of the designated escapist space seems to defy all concept and, ultimately, purpose of the 'green world'. If the lovers choose to retreat to a quasi-pastoral ground, why opt for the conservatory? As well as its inherently paradoxical status as domestic, organised house of nature and the exotic, the conservatory exists on the boundary between the in- and outsides: in other words, it occupies a peripheral territory.

On the subject of the 'peripheral', it is necessary to turn to the love plot. An article in the weekly theatrical paper *The Era*, from the end of 1881, suggested that 'few plays, if any, fail when they possess real love interest' and that 'if love proved of so much value to the Elizabethan playwright, what must it not be for the Victorian playwright?'[25] Given the supposed indispensability of romance within comedy, it is fascinating that the love plot has been shifted by both Pinero and Wilde away from the 'reality' of the performance space. Before turning to performance theory to expand on this business of relocating plots, it is vital to return to the plays in question.

Romance, within these comedies, is entirely secondary or supplementary to the plots. A significant indicator of Pinero's and Wilde's respective successes in demoting romantic interest can be found in reviews of each original production. In newspapers as socially and culturally diverse as the weekly *The Era*, the cheaper *Penny Illustrated*, the high-brow *Morning Post* and the daily *Pall Mall Gazette*, a common complaint about both plays was the superfluity of the final acts and, crucially, the lovers' unions. For instance, of Pinero's farce, *Pall Mall* claimed 'if the author will only cut two pieces of dialogue out of the last act […] *The Schoolmistress* will not be far from the cleverest and best-acted farce for a good many years'.[26] Similarly, of *Husband*, *The Morning Post* complained that the last act is full of 'disjointed and ineffective incidents'.[27] Together with these concerns about the closing scenes, the romantic unions occurring in the conservatories were considered unnecessary by reviewers. The *Pall Mall* suggested that the wooing between Goring and Mabel in *Husband* has 'nothing whatever to do with the development of the play'.[28] A similar sentiment was expressed earlier by *The Era* in relation to *Schoolmistress* in which Peggy and Mallory's wooing was dismissed as 'a bit of love making'.[29]

But the 'bit of love making' in each play seems to have been consciously incidental. In Pinero's initial manuscript for *The Schoolmistress*, the play concluded

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25 'Love Dramas', *The Era*, 19 November 1881. June 2010. www.galegroup.com.
26 'Mr Pinero's New Play', *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 March 1886. April 2011. www.galegroup.com.
27 'Haymarket Theatre', *The Morning Post*, 4, January 1895. April 2011. www.galegroup.com.
28 'The Theatre', *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 January 1895. April 2011. www.galegroup.com.
29 'The London Theatres', *The Era*, 3 April 1886. April 2011. www.galegroup.com.

with Mallory's proposal to Peggy.[30] Pinero himself considered Peggy – played by the actress Miss Norreys – to be '*the* hit of the piece' (*Pinero Letters*, p. 86). It is surprising, then, that the final version banishes this character's marriage proposal to the conservatory, and the play closes not with the prospect of matrimony, but rather with the promise of a new career for the titular schoolmistress, Miss Dyott. By shifting the focus away from the love plot at the close of the play, Pinero clearly privileges the practical, real world over the romantic 'green world'.

This prioritising can also be distinguished in *An Ideal Husband* when Lord Goring coaxes his father, Lord Caversham, into the conservatory to woo his fiancée on his behalf with the request, 'just go in here for a moment, father, third palm tree to the left, the usual palm tree' (p. 262). By abandoning Mabel and the conservatory, Goring chooses the real world over the escapist albeit limited, licence of the glasshouse. Interestingly, Goring mistakes the location of the palm tree, which Mabel specifically refers to as 'the second on the left'. Of course, this demonstrates a dismissive attitude towards the romantic quality of the 'nature' within the conservatory. Rather than wooing centre-stage, Goring tactfully ushers the peripheral characters into the confined, navigable conservatory, remaining on-stage to join the chief non-romantic plot. Curiously, in a letter from 1894, Wilde claimed, 'I like comedy to be intensely modern, and I like my tragedy to walk in purple and to be remote'.[31] The comic wooing in *Husband*, by this logic, becomes a 'modern', commonplace or 'mundane' activity. In fact, Sos Eltis has suggested that the play 'criticises ideals'.[32] Though Eltis refers specifically to political and marital 'ideals', the play's 'critical' stance on *un*reality can easily extend to the issue of romance. In other words, just as consciousness stricken politicians and ideal husbands are imaginary, so too is romance 'remote' in the 'modern' world of 'mundane' reality. Like *Schoolmistress*, then, the climax of *Husband* does not hinge around the union and marriage of the lovers. The inevitable linear movement towards matrimony within comedy appears to be mocked in these plays so that not only are lovers and nature no longer centre-stage, but they are no longer centre-plot.

If the conservatory is the single locus upon which escapist fantasies about heat, fertility, beauty and peace are thrust, it becomes a peripheral territory between reality and the imagination. Since the stage itself exists in a temporal and spacial reality, it seems fitting to navigate any potentially fantastical or romanticised activity away from the 'reality' of the performance space. It is here that performance theory becomes a useful medium through which to conceptualise the off-stage conservatory as an imagined territory.

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30 See George Rowell's Appendix to *The Schoolmistress*, pp. 73-4.
31 Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, eds.   Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart
(London: Fourth Estate Limited, 2000), p. 626.
32 Sos Eltis, *Revising Wilde: Society and Submission in the Plays of Oscar Wilde* (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 148.

Taking *Schoolmistress* as an example, Peggy and Mallory leave the drawing room in order to pursue their flirtation in the privacy of the conservatory. By denying the audience access to this space, Peggy and Mallory are offered a period of privacy. But the characters' experiences in this conservatory depend on the audience's ability to extend belief in their existence and activities away from the visible performance area. As Jeffrey Huberman has noted, 'reported spectacle' 'accounts for nearly all of the play's knockabout' (p. 97). Indeed, this is the case throughout the drama, but with respect to the conservatory, upon opening the adjoining door, one character reports seeing 'two persons under a palm tree' (p. 22). Theatrical reported action and dramatic irony, coupled with the act of moving on and off the stage, all raise questions about the concept of physical, territorial escapism.

Performance theory, then, offers a way of approaching the issue of on- and off-stage movement. The dramatic and literary theorist Bert O. States categorised the theatre as a phenomenological experience in which 'signs', defined as actors and props, 'achieve their vitality […] not simply by signifying the world, but by being *of* it' (p. 20). Because of this theatrical occurrence where the performed is, marginally at least, 'real', the stage as a territory in its own right becomes another kind of phenomenon. States observes that:

> Theatre is the paradigmatic place for the display of the drama of presence and absence; for theatre produces […] its effect precisely through a deliberate collaboration between its frontside ("on" stage) and its backside ("off" stage) whereby anticipation is created through acts of entrance and exit (the recoil of the world beyond), and finally between the frontside illusion (character and scene) and the backside reality (the actor, the unseen stage brace that "props" up the illusion).[33]

In other words, the entire experience of observing performance hinges on self-deception and the illusion that the stage space is its own reality, its own world. Reconciling the front- and back-sides with the illusion of the stage evokes the 'dialogue' that Armstrong argues is present between the conservatory and the home. Crossing the thresholds between both worlds depends on an act of faith or, ultimately, imagination.

It is possible to liken this enigmatical theatrical 'dialogue' between 'presence and absence' on and off the stage, to nineteenth-century assumptions about travel between town and country. Since the country was away from over-populated industrial areas, it was immediately associated with health and wellbeing. In 1898, the town-planning enthusiast Sir Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) argued that while towns were valuable for the establishment of communities, 'the country is the symbol

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33 Bert O. States, 'The Phenomenological Attitude' *Critical Theory and Performance*, eds. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (U.S.A: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp. 26-36; 28.

of God's love and care for man […] its beauty is inspiration[…] it is the source of all health'. [34] It follows that travelling between the town and countryside was a simultaneous accumulation of experience, wellbeing and a widening of ideological spheres.

This idea that physical and mental identity can be established through the act of territorial shifting evokes Salman Rushdie's twentieth-century theories of migration as integral to artistic productivity. Rushdie claims that the process of being uprooted through travel enables individuals to develop a 'fractured consciousness' which provides 'new angles at which to enter reality'.[35] This, incidentally, seems to echo Wilde's image of a stable personality being expanded or 'lost' in the act of travelling out of doors. Perhaps more pertinent to the issue of self-discovery through urban and rural travel or 'migration', is Rushdie's concept of the homeland as 'imaginary' and, ultimately, independent of physical territory and geographical location (p. 10).

Rushdie's conception of the imaginary 'land' is, arguably, a helpful way of approaching the problem of the off-stage glasshouse for lovers. Despite the signifiers of escape: the trees and plants that audiences assume are contained in the conservatory, the very fact that neither it nor its natural contents can be seen suggests that escapism is, to some extent, imaginary and dependent not on locations or even surroundings, but on the propensity to create a mental space within which the rules of normality associated with town life can be deconstructed.

It is necessary, then, to return to the original questions posed earlier: why the combination of romance, the conservatory and the imaginary? What can the dramatic fusion of self-development, nature and romance reveal about late Victorian theatre? What, if anything, does the 'imagined' space of the conservatory bring to the study of late nineteenth-century drama? It seems that the literal marginality of the escapist territory in both plays implies that the conventional dramatic trope of the romantic 'pastoral' retreat had become a commonplace at the end of the nineteenth century. The temperate, contrived and domestic conservatory tamed nature in much the same way that audience expectation of comic linear plots had stripped love making of its 'romance' and spontaneity. The self-conscious futility of the love plots in both Pinero's and Wilde's comedies draws attention to the equally superfluous construction of the expensive, aesthetic glasshouse, and so both constructs, romance and the conservatory, become peripheral. The only way to inject an element of real romance, however ironic, back into this 'mundane' wooing ritual, was to shift the entire episode and its 'green world' surrounding to an imaginary, invisible territory: the off-stage.

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34 Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1946), p. 48.
35 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books, 1992), p. 12.

Conclusion

When transferred onto a stage signifying a townhouse and travel between *thresholds*, rather than geographically and ideologically disparate *territories*, the uprooting, challenges, and regeneration of characters that should occur through movement between town and country enter this microcosmic world of on- and off-stage movement. In an age when transport between town and country could be made frequently with ease, the rural haven, to some degree, was losing its novelty and, more importantly, in its very accessibility, was devoid of social exclusivity. It was, it seems, within the domain of upper and middle class urban gardens and conservatories that escape could be, not necessarily found, but certainly evoked in the same way that drama does not transport audiences to, but rather *signifies* other worlds.

Levine's notion of drawing together the 'sublime' and 'mundane' in Victorian art hinges around the imagination in a similar way to States' phenomenological theatre where the real and unreal coalesce rather than collide.
As Wilde argued:

Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place. As for the infinite variety of Nature, that is a pure myth. It is not to be found in Nature herself. It resides in the imagination, or fancy (*Decay of Lying*, p. 909).

The 'myth' that nature is implicitly purifying and, ultimately, ideal, is asserted by the imagination and its manifestation, art. Fashioning a perfect natural retreat under a glass roof is arguably the quintessential aesthetic response to the tension between reality and the fancy. It is, essentially, within the imagination that all alternative, escapist and even romantic experiences occur; and there is no better way, both Pinero and Wilde seem to suggest, to convey this ambiguous territory of the mind than within the equally imaginative parameters of the transparent, unnatural conservatory that is not-quite present on the phenomenon that is the stage.

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[all articles are taken from www.galegroup.com]

PHONOGRAPH, SHORTHAND, TYPEWRITER:
HIGH PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGIES IN BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*

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Abstract

The theoretical concept of technological performance has emerged only recently with the publication of Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* in 2001. McKenzie develops a general theory of performance based around the development of three performance paradigms: cultural performance, organizational performance (or performance management), and technological performance. In his examination of the techno-performance paradigm, he focuses primarily on late twentieth and early twenty-first century 'high performance' technologies such as computers, guided missiles and space shuttles. While he acknowledges that the concept of performance does not apply only to technologies in this period, his analysis implicitly suggests that high performance technologies are a unique invention of the modern age. This essay confronts McKenzie's restriction of techno-performance to the post-WWII period by demonstrating how technologies performed and were seen to perform in the late nineteenth century through a techno-performance reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The late Victorian period saw startling innovations in information and communication technology (such as the overseas telegraph, the typewriter, and the gramophone), which were marketed as high performance technologies, though not in those words. To contextualise my reading of *Dracula*, I examine contemporary Victorian advertisements for communication technologies to demonstrate how such technologies were viewed as high performance products by Victorian advertisers and consumers.

Technology in *Dracula* has usually been read as a metaphor. I employ McKenzie's concept of techno-performance to examine the performative functions of technology in *Dracula* that have not yet been explored by Victorianist scholarship. McKenzie notes two challenges posed by techno-performance: first, the challenge posed by a developer to his/her technological product, to perform or be classified as obsolete; and, second, the challenge posed by technology to its user to perform or be regarded as outmoded. I argue that Stoker's *Dracula* takes up both of these challenges. Emergent technologies sometimes perform in unexpected and potentially disruptive ways, much like the space shuttle Challenger cited by McKenzie; at the same time, such technologies oblige their users to perform in unexpected and disruptive ways. This essay examines emergent technologies in *Dracula* to highlight the relationship between individual and technological performance in the late nineteenth century.

When we reflect on performance in the Victorian period, we are unlikely to consider the model of technological performance. Technological performance itself is not a particularly well known concept: it has only recently emerged with the publication of Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* in 2001. McKenzie develops a general theory of performance based around the development of three performance paradigms: cultural performance, organizational performance (or performance management) and technological performance (or techno-

performance). This essay will confront McKenzie's restriction of techno-performance to the post-WWII period by demonstrating how communication technologies performed and were seen to perform in the late nineteenth century through a techno-performance reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Technology in *Dracula* has usually been read as a metaphor, but I will employ McKenzie's concept of techno-performance to examine the performative functions of technology in *Dracula* that have not yet been explored by Victorianist scholarship. I will begin with a critique of McKenzie's concept of techno-performance. Through an examination of depictions of communication technologies in late Victorian print media, I will demonstrate that the technologies we see in *Dracula* were conceived of by the late Victorians as high performance technologies. I will then use my expanded version of techno-performance to conduct a techno-performative reading of *Dracula*, and to examine emergent technologies to highlight the relationship between individual and technological performance and performative failures in the late nineteenth century.[1]

In his examination of the technological performance or *techno-performance* paradigm, McKenzie focuses primarily on late twentieth and early twenty-first century high performance technologies such as computers, guided missiles, and space shuttles. For McKenzie, 'high performance' technologies explore the limits of what is technically possible (particularly in terms of speed, capacity, and efficiency), so that what is high performance at the time of an object's production will no longer satisfy the requirements of high performance years later. While he acknowledges that the concept of high performance does not apply only to technologies in this period, his analysis implicitly suggests that high performance technologies are a unique invention of the modern age, particularly with the development of what he refers to as the 'military-industrial-academic complex'.[2] Consequently, McKenzie examines the 'sense of performance used by engineers, technicians, and computer scientists' rather than the sense of performance employed by consumers and users of technology, and is mostly concerned with 'computer, electronics, and telecommunication industries'.[3] I would argue, however, that high performance technologies existed long before the invention of the digital computer, the smart phone, or the smart bomb. As Friedrich A. Kittler suggests, late nineteenth-century communication technologies such as the phonograph or the typewriter 'ushered in a technologizing of information that, in retrospect, paved the way for today's self-recursive stream of numbers'.[4]

Stoker's novel depicts some of the startling innovations in information and

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1 Scholars such as Carol A. Senf have examined how modern science and technology fail Dracula's protagonists so that they have to make use of older methods to stop Dracula; however, these studies do not consider the *performative* failures of technology in *Dracula*.
2 Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 24.
3 McKenzie, p. 10; p. 11.
4 Friedrich A Kittler,, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. xl.

communication technology, such as the typewriter, the gramophone, long-distance telephone lines, and undersea telegraph cables, that emerged in the late Victorian period. Herbert Sussman argues that 'the Victorians loved machinery' and that they regarded the advances of new technology with 'pride, admiration, [and] awe'.[5] The Victorians had a conflicted attitude towards emergent technology, however: many Victorians regarded the advance of increasingly 'high performance' technology with apprehension, even predicting futures in which the earth would be controlled or devastated by sophisticated machines, as in H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898) or in the chapter titled 'Shadows of the Coming Race' in George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879). In particular, the Victorians were concerned about the development of machines that could perform if not humanity then something like it: as Sussman suggests, the Victorians 'were preoccupied with the mechanical/organic problematic raised by the unprecedented self-acting machines of the textile mills as well as the Babbage Engines, which transformed the meaning of 'computer' from a human being who calculated to a machine that thinks'.[6] In addition to the industrial technology Sussman describes, the late nineteenth century saw advancements in communication and information technologies that resulted in the dissemination of mass produced commodities that were also high performance technologies.

This essay will focus on the three high performance technologies featured most prominently in *Dracula* and will provide a degree of historical context for each: shorthand, which Mina and Harker use to write their journals and letters to each other; the phonograph, which Dr. Steward uses in his medical practice and the typewriter, which Mina uses to compile various documents into a coherent narrative. Carol A. Senf suggests that Stoker was an enthusiastic proponent of technological advance, and that all but one of his literary works represent optimistic views of science and technology.[7] In *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula*, Robert Eighteen-Bisand and Elizabeth Miller document that Stoker integrated current communication technologies such as the phonograph and the typewriter from the start of the novel's composition.[8] Although the author of an unsigned review in *The Spectator* included stenographic handwriting or shorthand as an example of the 'up-to-dateness' of *Dracula*, shorthand was actually an ancient method of transcribing speech phonetically, with early forms dating back to Greek, Roman and European Renaissance history.[9] While shorthand had existed in earlier periods, it became much

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5 Herbert Sussman, 'Machine Dreams: The Culture of Technology', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28.1 (2000), 197-204 (p. 197).

6 Sussman, p. 202.

7 Carol A Senf,'*Dracula* and *The Lair of the White Worm*: Bram Stoker's Commentary on Victorian Science', *Gothic Studies* 2.2 (2000), 218-31.

8 Robert Eighteen-Bisand and Elizabeth Miller, *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula: A Facsimile Edition* (London: McFarland, 2008), p. 35.

9 Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897), ed. by Maurice Hindle (London, UK: Penguin, 2003), p. 483;

more prominent in the nineteenth century, which E. H. Butler describes as being 'the most prolific [century] ever known in shorthand invention'.[10] Certainly, shorthand is represented as a nineteenth century technology in *Dracula*: Harker describes the act of 'writing in my diary in shorthand' as evidence that 'It is nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance'(p. 43).

The second 'up-to-date' technology incorporated into *Dracula*'s self-reflexive narrative is Edison's phonograph, which both recorded and reproduced sound – unlike Berliner's later invention, the gramophone, which could only reproduce sound recordings.[11] Edison indicated that the phonograph could be used for taking dictation, recording legal testimony, teaching languages and recording correspondence and even military orders.[12] It seems likely that Stoker first encountered phonographic recordings while visiting Tennyson with Henry Irving in 1890, and later incorporated the technology into his novel.[13] There are two phonographs in *Dracula*: the first belongs to Dr. Steward and is used for making clinical records; the second belongs to Lucy Westenra, presumably used for social and entertainment purposes, which Dr. Steward also employs. Jennifer Wicke suggests that Dr. Stewart's phonographic diary is 'a technologized zone of the novel, inserted at a historical point where phonography was not widespread'; however, Edison had invented the original tin foil phonograph in 1877 and the more recent wax cylinder model described by Stoker in *Dracula* was invented in 1888.[14] According to Eighteen-Bisang and Miller, the practice of using the phonograph to record clinical notations had become common at the time Stoker started to write the novel, and Kittler describes Dr. Steward's phonograph as belonging to a category of 'recently mass produced' technology.[15]

Like the phonograph, the typewriter was a nineteenth-century invention. In the later nineteenth century, companies in England, France, Germany, and the United States competed to produce the best, most efficient, most affordable and most versatile machines. Mina's typewriter in *Dracula* represents the results of such intense competition, and its portability is represented as a recent innovation: in her journal, Mina writes 'I feel so grateful to the man who invented the "Traveller's" typewriter [...]. I should have felt quite astray doing the work if I had to write with a pen' (p. 372). At the time *Dracula* was written, the Hall typewriter proclaimed itself to be the only portable typewriter available [FIGURE 1]. Many typewriters in the late nineteenth century made similar claims, however: for instance, an 1897

Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Writing* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 310. Subsequent references are to this edition, incorporated in the body of the text.

10 E. H. Butler, *The Story of British Shorthand* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1951), p. 100.

11 Kittler, p. 3.

12 Ibid, p. 78.

13 Picker, John M, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 125.

14 Wicke, Jennifer, 'Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media', *English Literary History*, 59 (1992), 467-93 (p. 470).

15 Eighteen-Bisang & Miller, p. 79; Kittler, p. 87.

advertisement for the Hammond Typewriter describes its product as 'Strong and Portable for Travellers' [FIGURE 2]. Mina's typewriter is not only portable; it is also capable of making multiple copies. Mina uses the 'manifold' function of her typewriter to make three copies at once (p. 239). Manifold paper was available in the late nineteenth century; according to Steven Fischer, carbon paper had been invented before 1880. [16] Although it was originally intended for making handwritten duplicates, manifold paper was also used to make typewritten copies. Mina's typewriter thus performs multiple functions: it enables the rapid production of printed text, it produces multiple copies at once, and it is portable for added convenience.

FIGURE 1.

An advertisement for the 'Hall' Typewriter in the Illustrated London News, 1886.
(Reprinted in Whalley, Writing Implements)

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16 Fischer, p. 282.

FIGURE 2.

An advertisement for the Hammond Typewriter in Strand Magazine,
1897.
(British Periodicals Database)

More than simply precursors to modern high performance technology, phonographs, stenography, and typewriters themselves functioned as high performance technologies and were marketed as such in the late Victorian periodical press. Late nineteenth-century typewriter advertisements are a case in point. McKenzie defines 'high performance' as the edge of what is technically possible; he describes high performance technologies as 'high-speed' and 'high-capacity'.[17] Late Victorian typewriter advertisements emphasised these same attributes. For instance, advertisements for the Hall and Hammond typewriters pictured in Figures 1 and 2 styled their products as cutting-edge technology by emphasising their portability. Similarly, an 1896 advertisement for the Williams typewriter in *The Review of Reviews* indicates that their typewriter has a 'capability for speed unequalled' in comparison with similar products (it is 'high-speed'), and notes that the machine 'Makes more and clearer carbon copies' than its competitors (it is also 'high-capacity') [FIGURE 3]. As Christopher Keep notes in his article on the typewriter in the late nineteenth century, the typewriter was 'primarily an instrument of speed' – an argument that is supported by the occurrence of typewriting speed trials in the 1880s.[18]

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17 McKenzie, p. 98.
18 Christopher Keep, 'Blinded by the Type: Gender and Information Technology at the Turn of the Century', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 23 (2001), 149-73 (p. 150).

FIGURE 3.

*An advertisement for the Williams Typewriter in Review of Reviews, 1896.
(British Periodicals Database)*

McKenzie also argues that techno-performance is based on 'effectiveness', which is measured 'in terms of executability, the technical "carrying-out" of prescribed tasks, successful or not'.[19] Evaluation of techno-performance is based on performance standards, or 'evaluative criteria agreed upon and recognized by members of a particular community and designed to be applicable across a wide variety of contexts'.[20] In the late nineteenth century, the agreed upon evaluative criteria of typewriter performance included portability (as demonstrated by the Hall and Hammond typewriter advertisements), speed, durability, low cost and the ability to make copies. For example, while the 1896 Blickensderfer typewriter was styled as 'an entirely new departure in Typewriter mechanism', the advertisement nevertheless participates in the standard evaluative criteria by arguing that the Blickensderfer typewriter is 'portable, [...] speedy, durable, and cheap' [FIGURE 4]. As technologies developed and innovations were made, according to McKenzie, there was a feedback process involving the 'ongoing comparison of predictions and performance'.[21] An 1890 advertisement for the Hall typewriter indicates that the machine has been 'remodelled and improved' and is now 'practically perfect' [FIGURE 5]; similarly, an 1896 advertisement for the Densmore typewriter challenges other manufacturers to match its own technological advances by asking potential customers if they 'want an up-to-date typewriter that challenges the world to produce its equal in modern improvements and conveniences' [FIGURE 6]. These examples suggest that late-

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19 McKenzie, p. 97.
20 Ibid, p. 108.
21 McKenzie, p.107.

Victorian typewriter advertisements participated in the ongoing comparison process of techno-performance. Finally, McKenzie repeatedly observes performance must be balanced with other factors including 'cost, safety, and ease of maintenance'.[22] Many late Victorian typewriter advertisements demonstrate that the manufacturers have taken into account all these factors: the 1890 Hall typewriter is described as 'Cheap, Portable, [...] Easiest to learn, and Rapid as any' [FIGURE 5], whereas the 1896 Williams typewriter is considered to be 'compact, portable, [and] durable' [FIGURE 3]. While the word *performance* does not actually appear in these late nineteenth-century typewriter advertisements, it is nevertheless clear that the typewriter was marketed as a *high performance* technology.

FIGURE 4.

An advertisement for the Blickensderfer Typewriter in Review of Reviews, 1896
(British Periodicals Database)

22 Ibid., p.115.

FIGURE 5.

An advertisement for the Hall Typewriter in Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, 1890.
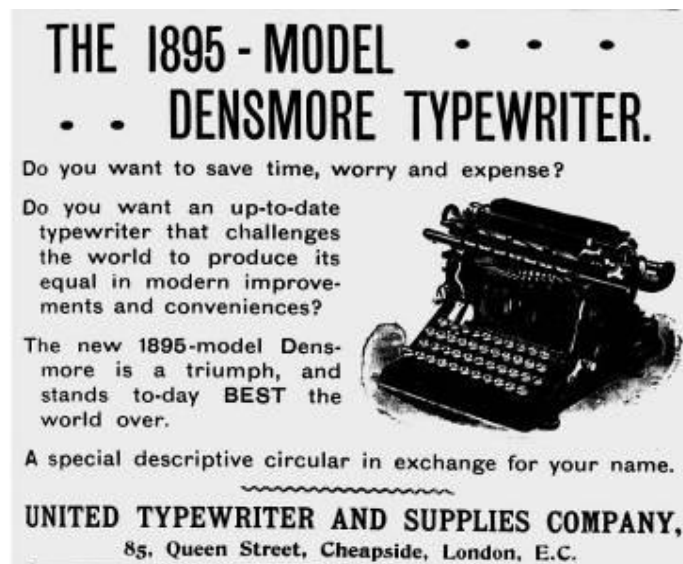*(British Periodicals Database)*

FIGURE 6.

An advertisement for the Densmore Typewriter in Ludgate, 1896.
(British Periodicals Database)

Frayling suggests that 'Late Victorian readers seem to have read [*Dracula*] as an early piece of techno-fiction'.[23] Given the numerous emergent technologies found in the novel, this is hardly surprising, and yet modern scholarly accounts of technology in *Dracula* tend to regard it as a metaphor for something else rather than seeing it as something that serves a function in and of itself. Wicke reads technology in *Dracula* as a representation of mass media, where mass consumption (of texts) parallels vampiric consumption. David Punter's essay on 'Tradition, Technology, [and] Modernity' in *Dracula* only briefly touches on the topic of technology, despite its title.[24] For Punter, technology in *Dracula* represents the scientific rationality of modernity, in contrast with the unknowable and uncanny future.[25] Similarly, Menke and Kittler examine technology only in terms of how it is used to defeat Dracula and the monstrous past he represents.[26] I would argue that technology in *Dracula* represents not one but both sides of Punter's paradox of modernity: technology epitomises the scientific and rational in terms of its capacity for high performance, but it is also disruptive and uncanny, as exemplified by the numerous failed performances of technology in the novel.

Reading technology as merely a symptom of modernity relegates the function of technology in the novel to the status of setting. In contrast, a techno-performative reading of technology recognises the greater role technology plays in the novel. A techno-performative reading allows us to foreground the role of technology in literature, shifting its function from that of background object to central character. In some ways, techno-performance is an anthropomorphisation of technology: as McKenzie argues, 'In studying the effects of technologies, engineers and other applied scientists discuss performance in terms of behaviours [and] sensitivities [...] which the technologies exhibit in a given context'.[27] The anthropomorphisation of technology is not unique to the twenty-first century: as Sussman argues, 'The sense that machines were somehow alive grew through the nineteenth century, strengthened by innovations in automatic machinery, especially the development of feedback mechanisms'.[28] Although the communication technologies I examine in this paper does not fall into Sussman's category of 'nineteenth century [...] machines that could

23 Christopher Frayling, Preface, in *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula: a Facsimile Edition*, annotated and translated by Robert Eighteen-Bisand and Elizabeth Miller (London: McFarland, 2008), pp. vii-xii (p. viii).
24 David Punter, 'Bram Stoker's Dracula: Tradition, Technology, Modernity', *Post/modern Dracula: From Victorian Themes to Postmodern Praxis*, ed. by John S. Bak (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), pp. 31-41.
25 Ibid, p. 35.
26 See Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 10 and Kittler, pp. 86-87.
27 McKenzie, p. 113.
28 Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), p. 39.

act independently, regulate themselves, calculate, and even, it seemed, think' because they had to be operated by humans (typists, dictating voices, or shorthand writers), these technologies nevertheless performed in some uncannily anthropomorphic ways.[29]

A consideration of the challenges posed by the techno-performative paradigm demonstrates the central roles played by technology in late nineteenth-century examples of 'techno-fiction' such as *Dracula*. McKenzie notes two challenges posed by techno-performance: first, the challenge posed by a developer to his/her technological product, 'Perform – or else you're obsolete, liable to be defunded, junk piled, or dumped on foreign markets'; and second, the challenge posed by technology to its user, 'Perform – or else you're outmoded, undereducated, [...] a dummy'.[30] An 1897 advertisement for the Empire Typewriter makes this second challenge clear by stating emphatically, 'If you with to be with the times, use a typewriter. If you wish to lead the times, use an Empire' [FIGURE 7]. Readers of this advertisement who do not use a typewriter are thus styled as behind the times. Stoker's *Dracula* takes up both the techno-performative challenges outlined by McKenzie. Emergent technologies sometimes perform in unexpected and potentially disruptive ways, much like the space shuttle Challenger cited by McKenzie: on 28th January 1986, what was intended to be a display of the triumph of high performance technology with the launch of the Challenger space shuttle became a 'high performance disaster' caused by 'the failure of a "high performance field joint" on the right Solid Rocket Booster'.[31] At the same time, high performance technologies oblige their users to perform in similarly unexpected and disruptive ways. A twenty-first century example of this phenomenon is the way in which Apple computers force former PC users to adjust their computing behaviours (for instance, by resisting the urge to click on the right mouse button, which does not exist on Apple mice). In *Dracula*, characters are often forced to shift from using one technology with which they are comfortable to using another technology that obliges them to alter their performances of research and journal writing.

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29 Sussman, p.49.
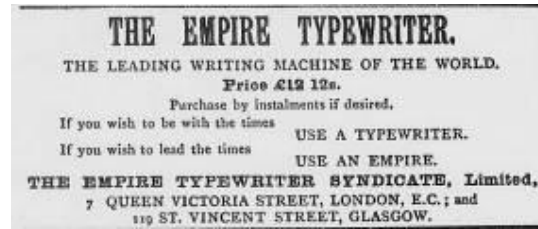30 McKenzie, p. 12.
31 Ibid., p. 141.

THE EMPIRE TYPEWRITER.

FIGURE 7.

An advertisement for the Empire Typewriter in Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art, 1897.
(British Periodicals Database)

The challenge to technology to perform involves the evaluation of that technology according to socially or culturally agreed upon standards. In *Dracula*, techno-performance is evaluated according to four criteria: accuracy, efficiency, preservation and authenticity. I will discuss the first three criteria here, and I will return to the fourth – authenticity – later in this essay. Characters in Stoker's novel exhibit an obsession with accuracy throughout the novel: Harker describes the action of 'entering accurately' his experiences in a diary as soothing, and Mina attempts to record her interview with Dr. Van Helsing '*verbatim*' (p. 44, p. 194)[32] Harker and Mina's association with shorthand techniques in the novel implicitly suggests that emergent nineteenth-century communication technologies allow for greater accuracy. The phonograph is also seen as an instrument that enables precision: in the first entry of his phonographic diary, Dr. Steward notes that if, in the future, he should want to trace his patient's progress '*accurately*,' he should incorporate his medical notes into his phonographic journal (p. 69).[33] In the preface to Chapter One, the reader is informed that 'There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them' (p. 6). In *Dracula*, technology makes the compilation of an infallibly accurate document possible.

The efficiency of transcription and preservation of transcribed materials is also a key evaluative criterion for the technologies that appear in *Dracula*. Both shorthand and phonography are presented as efficient methods of recording information: shorthand is compared favourably to cursive writing, which is described as 'cumbrous' and 'old,' and Mina suggests that Dr. Steward's phonograph 'beats even shorthand', assumedly because it is an even more efficient and accurate method of recording one's thoughts (p. 386, p. 235). In addition to recording information quickly and efficiently, shorthand prevents the unsanctioned transmission of information because it limits access, given that most characters in the novel cannot read

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32 Italics in original.
33 Italics in original.

shorthand; however, it does not prevent the destruction of the information that has been transcribed. Early in the novel, Harker realizes that his diary 'would have been a mystery to [Dracula] that he would not have brooked. He would have taken or destroyed it' (p. 48). When Dracula sees the 'strange symbols' of stenography in a letter Harker had intended for Mina, he confirms Harker's earlier prediction and burns the letter immediately (p. 50). Dr. Steward's phonograph is also intended to preserve information: in this case, his observations concerning his patient Mr. Renfield, and later his more wide ranging journal entries; however, Dracula burns the phonographic cylinders, leaving only a copy of the typed manuscript behind. It is only the proliferation of copies, enabled by the manifold function of Mina's typewriter, that saves information from total erasure.

To answer the second challenge of techno-performance, the call to performance posed by technology to its users, *Dracula*'s characters must work to keep pace with the continual technological advancement of the late Victorian period. New technology requires practice, as Mina demonstrates: in addition to developing her typewriting skills, Mina practices shorthand 'very assiduously' (p. 62). She and Harker write letters to each other in shorthand, and Harker keeps a travel journal in shorthand to share with Mina when he returns home. Characters that do not practise appear 'outmoded', as McKenzie's model of techno-performance suggests. Senf notes that both Van Helsing and Dracula are 'handicapped' by their unfamiliarity with technology, despite the fact that the former is a prominent scientist and the latter has attempted to familiarise himself with English social life and customs.[34] Dr. Van Helsing is not able to perform in the way the phonograph asks, and dictates a letter as if he were writing it on paper rather than speaking into a phonograph: he begins with a salutation 'This is to Jonathan Harker,' proceeds with only grammatically complete and correct sentences, and ends by verbally signing his name 'Van Helsing' (pp. 335-6).When Harker later relays this message to Mina, he 'reads' it rather than *playing* it for her (p. 336). This odd word choice could simply be an error on Stoker's part, suggesting that he was conditioned by the communication technology he used to write the novel to perform in a certain way; or, it could be an acknowledgement that the characters in the novel have difficulty keeping up with the advance of technology.

Even when characters appear to be familiar with technological innovations, emergent technologies often demand that their users perform in a manner different from what would otherwise be customary. Dr. Steward's phonograph diary often contains sentence fragments and ellipses: for example, when describing Mr. Renfield's condition he states, 'Sanguine temperament; great physical strength; morbidly excitable; periods of gloom ending in some fixed idea which I cannot make out' (p. 69). Because the phonograph records spoken rather than written language, it inevitably asks its users to perform the act of recording a journal or diary differently from how one would compose a written record. A similar linguistic shift is evident in

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34   Carol A.Senf, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* (New York: Twayne, 1998), p. 91.

the use of telegrams. Like our twenty-first century text messaging technology, the telegraph puts the price of single words at a premium, so users are asked to transmit their messages in as few words as possible. In the case of twenty-first century text messaging, the user would be required to reword a simple statement such as 'I have to go to the store to pick up some groceries, but I will be right back' into something much more concise such as 'Have 2 go 2 store. BRB'. Similarly, in *Dracula*, characters reformulate their telegraphed messages in the interest of brevity: for instance, in a telegraph to Dr. Steward, Arthur Holmwood writes 'Am summoned to see my father, who is worse. Am writing. Write me fully by tonight's post to Ring. Wire me if necessary' (p. 120). Emergent technologies, whether they are the products of the nineteenth century or the twenty-first century, ask their users to perform language differently.

As technologies condition their users to perform in a certain manner, the users become dependent on these new technologies. When Dr. Steward is treating Lucy Westenra at her home, he uses her phonograph to record his journal entry, rather than simply writing it down. Interestingly, he speaks of his phonographic diary as if it were a written document. Part way through the novel, he ends his diary, stating, 'If I ever open this again, it will be to deal with different people and different themes' (p. 188). The verb 'opening' suggests the opening of a book rather than a phonograph. At the end of this entry, he states, 'I say sadly and without hope, FINIS' (p. 188).This 'finis' is as much a visual marker as it is a linguistic marker, so it is interesting that Stoker has Dr. Steward insert it at the end of his phonographic journal, which is recorded in a non-visual medium. Once characters are conditioned to perform in the manner demanded by a particular technology, they have difficulty reverting to an older form of communication. When travelling, Dr. Stewart is unable to bring his phonograph with him, and must use pen and paper instead: he complains, 'How I miss my phonograph! To write diary with a pen is irksome to me' (p. 357). When he does use the older technology of pen and paper, traces of the oral style of communication demanded by the phonograph (marked by ellipses and incomplete sentences) remain in Dr. Steward's written diary: several of his written diary entries begin with sentence fragments.

In addition to outlining the challenges posed to technology and its users by the techno-performance paradigm, McKenzie identifies certain high performance technologies as *metatechnologies*. He provides a twofold definition of metatechnology: first, it is 'a technology used to design, manufacture, and evaluate other technologies'; and second, it is a technology that 'not only performs [but also] helps produce performances of other products and materials and thereby greatly extends the domain of technological performance'. [35] McKenzie's example of a metatechnology is the modern computer: in addition to performing its own tasks, it is used to 'design, manufacture, and evaluate other technologies'; computer technology

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[35] McKenzie, p. 11.

has also been incorporated into a plethora of other technologies, from telephones to automobiles. I would argue that earlier technologies functioned in ways similar to twenty-first century metatechnologies. While the typewriter is not used to design or manufacture other emergent communication technologies in *Dracula*, it certainly assists in the production of the performances of other technologies. The typewriter functions as what McKenzie describes as a 'hypermediating media': the typewriter is the technology through which all other technologies in the novel (stenography, phonographic records, and telegraphed messages) are produced and made accessible to the characters and to the reader.[36] As only two of the novel's characters are able to read shorthand, all the shorthand documents mentioned in the novel must be processed by the typewriter to make them accessible to a broader audience. This transcription process supposedly saves time: as Mina notes, 'I am so glad I have type-written out my own journal, so that in case [Dr. Van Helsing] asks about Lucy, I can hand it to him; it will save much questioning' (p. 193). Surely it would take as much time to speak with Dr. Van Helsing as it would to type out her journal; however, Mina sees emergent technology as inherently efficient, even when it might not be. The typewriter is also used to process Dr. Steward's phonographic recordings. A failing of the phonograph is identified when Dr. Steward realizes he does not know how to locate any particular entry in his diary, despite the fact that he has been recording on it for several months. Like stenographic records, phonographic records must be transcribed by typewriter to make them readily accessible in the most efficient manner. Another failing of the phonograph is noted after Mina listens to Dr. Steward's recordings: as Mina informs him,

> That is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. [...] No one must ever hear them spoken again! See, I have [...] copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did. (p. 237)

Here, the typewriter performs the act of removing the speaker's 'soul' from the recorded information, a process that prepares the text for wider dissemination.

As these passages suggest, *Dracula* contains many examples of techno-performative failures, in which communication technologies fail to perform as asked by their users. Considering that the performances of emergent technology are continually evaluated and fed back into the production process, McKenzie's observation that technology can only be perfect on paper or in one's imagination rings true for technology in the nineteenth century as well as technology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[37] The high performance technologies of the Victorian period emerged from a larger context of widespread technological invention and

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36 McKenzie, p. 22.
37 Ibid., p. 122.

innovation. As Sussman points out, Victorian technology 'did not exist in a fixed form, but evolved rapidly within a culture that supported innovation'.[38] Because *Dracula* emerges within a cultural milieu in which new technologies were not only expected to advance but also to fail occasionally in that advancement, techno-performative failures, both partial and total, inevitably occur. In the case of the phonograph, the technology available in the late nineteenth century could only 'recor[d] indiscriminately what was within the range of microphones [...] thereby shift[ing] the boundaries that distinguished noise from meaningful sounds'.[39] As we see in *Dracula*, the phonograph recorded sounds and meanings that were never intended to be recorded, such as the sounds of Dr. Stewart's anguished heart. In 'Memory and Phonograph' (1880), Jean-Marie Guyau argued that 'the phonograph is incapable of reproducing the human voice in all its strength and warmth. The voice of the apparatus will remain shrill and cold; it has something perfect and abstract that sets it apart'.[40] In this example, the phonograph's performance fails because the sound it produces is not as 'human' as desired; in *Dracula*, however, the phonograph fails because it performs a voice that is all too human.

Other techno-performative failures occur when, as McKenzie suggests, certain evaluative criteria have to be sacrificed in favour of others. In *Dracula*, the kinds of accessibility and legibility made possible by the typewriter exist at the expense of authenticity. On the last page of the novel, Harker observes that 'in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of type-writing' (p. 402). Punter argues that the narrative is 'validated by typewriter,' but the opposite is true: because the typewriter is unable to perform the bodily traces of older technologies, it cannot assert its own authenticity or authority.[41] Kittler argues that 'For mechanized writing to be optimized, one can no longer dream of writing as the expression of individuals or the trace of bodies. The very forms, differences, and frequencies of its letters have to be reduced to formulas'.[42] If we apply Kittler's notion of bodily traces to the novel, we see that handwriting, shorthand, and phonography retain traces of the author's body, but these traces are either illegible or, in the case of the phonograph, too legible. While the typewriter's performance is 'high' in terms of legibility, efficiency, and preservation, it is incapable of performing authenticity.

In some ways then, *Dracula* is story of failed techno-performances: stenography fails

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38 Sussman, p. 5.

39 Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, and Michal Wutz, 'Translator's Introduction: Friedrich Kittler and Media Discourse Analysis', in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), pp. xi-xxxviii (p. xxvi).

40 Jean-Marie Guyau, 'Memory and Phonograph', in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 30-33 (first publ.in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 5 (1880), 319-22) (p. 32).

41 Punter, p. 40.

42 Kittler, p. 16.

because it is inaccessible to readers (although this is also a positive attribute because it keeps information safe from Dracula); the phonograph fails because it reproduces not only the words of the speaker but also his undisguised emotions; and the typewriter fails because it cannot reproduce the bodily traces which certify the authenticity of the documents produced. In performing according to creator's specifications and users' demands, emergent technologies also fail to perform because they are still participating in the feedback loop of invention and innovation. At the same time, emergent technologies invite performative failures from users who are unaccustomed to the newness of technological machines and procedures. Using McKenzie's concept of techno-performance to examine the roles and functions of technology in Victorian literature enables us to move away from seeing technology as merely background objects or symptoms of modernity. Techno-performance allows us to see that the emergent technologies of the Victorian era were caught in the same performative bind as our modern digital technologies, and were posed with the same performative challenge, to 'perform – or else'.

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