

WALLPAPERING THE NOVEL: ECONOMICS, AESTHETICS, AND THE REALIST HOME

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

Wallpaper suggests simple metaphors. It is veneering at its flimsiest, easily showing dirt and age or else an impudent newness, and its influence on literary characters is usually one of psychological disturbance or else the visual evidence of social rank. Scholars have established the internal contradictions and conflicts of the nineteenth-century conceptual ideal separating the public and private spheres, while material histories of consumer goods have parsed the realist novel's "thick descriptions." I argue, however, that as a quotidian domestic feature of the realist novels' homes, as well as a visual expanse that "backgrounds" the narrative, wallpaper is a unique meeting point between the "minor" details of realism's material ephemera and the social, economic, and narratological implications of spatial theory and visual analysis.

While I address the representation of wallpaper and related forms of interior décor in a variety of nineteenth-century fiction and nonfiction, I focus each chapter on a particular early-, mid-, and late-century text that features a distinctive type of wallpaper: Honoré de Balzac's *Le père Goriot* (1835) and its panoramic décor; Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), whose wallpaper reflects the mass production of ornament and the industrialization of color and design; and Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), as well as his other late writings, in which the author grapples with the ethics of aesthetics and ornament, whether on walls or on the printed page. I place each work's depiction of wallpaper in the national, historical, and literary context of both the text and the décor described therein. Thus I trace the material history of wallpaper alongside and through the generic evolution of the realist novel via these literary touchstones, reordering the apparent superabundance of material details cluttering the realist home according to the metonymic logic of its literal and literary things.

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## Introduction

### Reading Wallpaper

And once more, whatever you have in your  
rooms, think first of the walls, for they are  
that which makes your house and home.

William Morris, “The Lesser Arts of Life”

From its earliest incarnations, wallpaper has been associated with imitation – the mimicry of designs, materials, and the overall domestic life and taste of the upper classes. As it became more widely available and used by members of nearly every social class, its status and meaning were dangerously uncertain: Does wallpaper display or conceal? Is it background or foreground? art or decoration? a minor art or a major one? If the former, is its appearance in literature nonetheless too “common” a domestic feature to warrant the term “ekphrasis”? Are its makers artists or artisans? Is it a luxury good or a cheap alternative to one? Does its impermanence – the perishable nature of its material and its accommodation of shifting trends in décor – undermine the ideal physical and temporal solidity of the home’s structure? In short, does it reinforce the aesthetic and psychological barriers of a room’s (and, by extension, a home’s) walls, or does it obscure and destabilize those divisions? Laura Otis metaphorizes nineteenth-century anxieties about imperialism via cell theory, which “relies on the ability to perceive borders, for to see a structure under a microscope means to visualize a membrane that distinguishes it from its surroundings” (4). I propose that the illusion of a separation between the public and the private could soothe similar anxieties induced by nineteenth-century social and economic change – the intermingling of bodies, pollutants, and capital; the adulteration of familial, national, and class units; the specter of instability and impermanence in social and economic systems of (re)production. Membranous barriers, however, are passive, absorbing or allowing these flows of

influences; I argue that the material decoration that constructs domestic space as such (i.e., as *domestic*) is a metonymic signifier, imbued with cultural meaning from both spheres. Instead of reifying a private-public split through its visual demarcation of the literal and ideological division, wallpaper acts as a membrane that bears the economic and ideological interests of both the public sphere in which it is produced and the private sphere which it delimits.

The foundation of Victorian middle class domestic ideology was the separation of work and home, public and private, into discrete, and discretely gendered, spheres of behavior and space.<sup>1</sup> This principle, however, has been challenged by scholarship that points out its internal contradictions or undermines the essential division itself – from the movements of men and women between and within both spheres to the latter’s domestic labor as a challenge to the basic binary.<sup>2</sup> Sharon Marcus expands upon this criticism by analyzing “how the domestic ideal took architectural form” (90) and goes on to explore the literal and figurative reinforcement and undermining of this ideal via housing developments in London and Paris. If nineteenth-century “domestic architecture defined the house as an impenetrable, self-contained structure with distinct and specialized rooms” (94), then wallpaper served as a visual reinforcement of this multiplicity of interiorizations. But by reflecting changes in public tastes (and, by extension, the shifts in socio-economic and political conditions that shape the market and its consumers’ access to goods), wallpaper constitutes a significant breach in the private sphere’s spatial sanctuary – one that is manifested in large, inescapable visual expanses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See esp. John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lillies* (1865) and Sarah Ellis, *The Women of England* (1839) and *The Wives of England, Their Relative Duties Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations* (1843).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Davidoff and Hall; Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*; Poovey, *Uneven Developments*; Davidoff, *The Best Circles*; and Langland, *Nobody’s Angels*. On the Victorian home, and its internal contradictions, more broadly, see, e.g., Chase and Levenson; Monica Cohen; Dillon; Donald; Dutton; Flanders; Floyd and Bryden; Giroauard; Gloag; Logan.

<sup>3</sup> In this sense, my study also reflects the influence of thing theory, whose style of analysis engages with both Marxist interpretations of the commodity and the nature of the object itself; prominent practitioners of this approach

The most recent, and most obvious, point of reference for this method and structure of analysis is Elaine Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things*, in which she takes "a literal approach to the literary thing" (11) – mahogany furniture in *Jane Eyre*, checked curtains in *Mary Barton*, and Negro head tobacco in *Great Expectations* – in order that a more traditionally interpretive reading be first grounded in what she calls the "strong metonymic reading" of historical, material context. In "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," Roman Jakobson describes the organizing force of metaphor in terms of similarity, simultaneity, and synonym – this principle is thus the defining characteristic of poetry; by contrast, metonym constructs syntactic links, operating via contiguity and contexture, and therefore prevails as the dominant mode in prose – facilitating the chains of events that constitute narrative sequence. I would like, in this thesis, to read metonymically – to trace the contiguities of meaning before settling on their substitutions. Freedgood's archeological mapping of Victorian thing culture illuminates the delicate balance struck by realist fiction between metonym and metaphor, between the Barthesian "referential illusion" of real things and the allegories they provide in constructing a symbolic order. Her analyses, however, are confined to the mid-century British novel and as such tell a particular story about specific and particular national, generic, and material exigencies.<sup>4</sup> By focusing on wallpaper and its history at early-, mid-, and late-century in various national contexts, reading in its material history a metonymic signification of aesthetic,

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include Arjun Appadurai, Bill Brown, and Mihaly Czikszenmihalyi. Much of this Pierre Bourdieu-influenced work has been in anthropology, art history, and American studies, however, whereas Victorian studies in particular has tended to engage in Foucaultian cultural analyses.

<sup>4</sup> Many scholars have treated such related subjects as Victorian commodities (see Briggs, Plotz, Wynne, Deborah Cohen, Lindner); Victorian taste and design, including décor and architecture (see Pevsner, Rifkin, Lubbock, Steegman, Cooper, Teukolsky, Thornton, Calder); and Victorian consumerism (see Nead, Richards) and its colonialist underpinnings (see esp. Daly). Scholarship in French studies has likewise addressed domesticity (see Nash), material culture (see esp. Watson, Dobie, Dupuid), and consumption (see Rosalind Williams, Bowlby). On Russian domestic culture, see Weiss, Greene, Kelly, Randolph). See esp. Kolomiitseva on Russian "women's journals."

economic, and social concerns, my analysis thereby constructs a metaphoric narrative of the novel's generic evolution *across* the nineteenth century and its major cultural capitals.<sup>5</sup>

### **Form and Function**

While the Benthamite-cum-Foucaultian Panopticon is illustrated with distinct, discrete divisions of prisoners' living spaces into individualized chambers and cells, what makes the enclosure's societal authority most potent is the seeming absence of walls, its having "become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (Foucault 207). Victorian advice literature on interior décor, aimed at middle class consumers, segmented the home into particular spaces designated for particular activities and occupants and thus requiring their own particular decorative schemas and features. (The inherent paradox of domestic advice literature – namely, that it opens the home to and makes it a subject for public scrutiny – is just one of many ironies in modern constructions of "private life.") Caroline A. Halsted's 1837 *Investigation; or, Travels in the Boudoir* (1837), written as a didactic conversation between mother and daughter, fairly atomized domestic space and its contents, examining "the origin, history, [and] progress into general use, of the most ordinary articles" (viii). By combining chapters on "Carpets, - Asiatic and European" and "Ornamental Plumes and Feathers" with those on "The Early History of Idolatry" and "The Present System of Heathen Worship, considered," "Rise and Progress of the Art of Writing" and "The History of the Bible" with "Contents of a Writing-desk examined," Halsted attempts to replace the "foreign tour" with

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<sup>5</sup> Some scholarship has been done on wallpaper as a particular cultural signifier in relation to domestic ideology and design. See esp. Jennings and Vickery. Other comparative examinations have mostly focused on décor more generally (see, e.g., Didier, Gere, Grier) and on broader histories of domesticity (Ariés, Brown, Sarti).



an intensely domestic one.<sup>6</sup> The book focuses on the ordinary, often overlooked articles that construct “that peculiar air of comfort and domestic luxury, which renders an Englishman’s fire-side proverbial among foreigners, and *his home* the pride and delight of every true Briton’s heart” (viii, emphasis in the original). Further emphasizing the nationalist dimension of her domestic “travels,” she continues, “THERE IS INDEED, NOTHING ON EARTH LIKE A HAPPY ENGLISH HOME! Many may be wiser for quitting it for a time. Few will feel happier or more contented for exchanging it for one in a foreign land” (ibid.). Thus the intimacy of this entertaining and educational tract – as suggested by its curiously invasive title – secures the walls and borders of home and nation, insulating its resident-citizens within his distinctively British domestic comfort and sparing him the (apparently inevitable) disappointments of foreign travel – indeed, saving him from having to leave the house at all.

Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) is divided into chapters according to the imagined physical entry into the home, beginning with “Street Architecture,” then “The Entrance Hall” and “The Dining-Room,” and becoming more and more particularized, finally devoting the final section to “Plate and Cutlery.” By acting out his – and the reader’s – entrance and increasingly intensive focus on the intimate spaces and personal objects of the residence, Eastlake’s advice on décor and furnishings mimics the social judgment of one’s actual guests – judgment he warns of and which his advice promises to prevent. The comfort and solace offered by a tastefully arranged home is thus predicated upon public spectatorship, both real (from guests) and projected (from commentators such as Eastlake).

The particularization of domestic spaces and the advice literature about them is perhaps best exemplified by Lucy Orrinsmith’s *The Drawing-Room: Its Decorations and Furniture*

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<sup>6</sup> A curious comparison is Xavier de Maistre’s *Voyage autour de ma chambre* (1794), a parody of the Grand Tour narrative recounting his time spent under house arrest, describing the various “sites” encountered within his room.

(1877). In addition to focusing exclusively on this most ambiguous part of the home – a domestic space for social entertaining, and a social space for the provision of private comfort – she divides the room, and the book, into its physical components, each needing individual attention and ornamentation: “Walls and Ceilings,” “Fireplaces and Chimneypieces,” “Windows, Doors, and Curtains,” and so on. Furthermore, she defies the nationalistic model of domestic seclusion propounded by Halsted:

[I]f an Englishman’s house is his castle, he has *no right* to make of it a suite of artistic “chambers of horrors,” nor is the fiction that a man may do as he likes with his own to blind him to the fact that our rooms are decorated and pictures hung, not only for our own pleasure, but for the delectation of our friends and guests. It therefore becomes *a social duty* to strive to attain some guiding principles which may prevent *an exhibition* distressing to a visitor of, perchance, more educated taste than our own. (6, emphasis added)<sup>7</sup>

Orrin Smith invokes the potent, and potentially nationalist, cliché of an “Englishman’s castle” only to subvert its basic invocation of private ownership and authority; instead, she yokes personal property to public duty, insisting that the necessary performance of sociability is just that – a performance – and thus requires all the aesthetic considerations of such “exhibition.”

To take an example from French domestic literature,<sup>8</sup> Madame la Comtesse de Bassanville’s *L’Art de bien tenir une maison* (1878) is divided into three parts – “De l’intérieur, de la famille,” “Des dépendances et des gens de service,” and a final section on proper homemaking and “la vraie mission des femmes” – that are each subdivided into chapters on

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<sup>7</sup> The significance of her use of the terms “a chamber of horrors” and “exhibition” will be illustrated in my second chapter.

<sup>8</sup> On the design and aesthetics of French furnishings, and their political implications, from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth century, see Auslander, *Taste and Power*. On French décor in the long eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Perrot, *Le Luxe*.

particular rooms, from the various bedrooms and the offices to the salon, and their proper arrangement and regulation; thus de Bassanville renders the home legible for and via her recommended decoration.<sup>9</sup> That the advice literature industry would itself constitute a breach of domestic walls, however, is an irony that goes unnoted. The publication and consumption, at home and in translation abroad, of this literature in periodicals, pamphlets, and books was itself an incursion on the part of the public sphere into the private sanctum it sought to construct as such. De Bassanville's book self-consciously enters the home's most private spaces, as in the opening sentence of her chapter on the bedroom:

Nous allons pénétrer maintenant dans votre chambre à coucher et commencer nos arrangements par elle, quoique ce soit la dernière pièce de l'appartement dans laquelle on puisse entrer après avoir visité les autres; et pour faire marcher les choses avec ordre, nous parlerons du papier tout d'abord. (42)

We are now going to enter [*penetrate*] your bedroom and begin our arrangements with it, even though this would be the last room of the apartment into which one would enter after having visited the others; and so as to do things in order, we shall first of all talk about wallpaper.<sup>10</sup>

In the following sentence, she asserts that the wallpaper in this room should be simple and “ne pas chercher à attirer l'oeil”; just as a woman's sleeping quarters are the most removed from public view, the wall décor therein should recede from sight. (Later, she warns against a salon being decorated in green or red, which “ressemble trop aux décorations des cafés” [85], further stressing the important role décor can play in distinguishing – or failing to distinguish – the

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<sup>9</sup> The semiotic implications of the title of Charles Blanc's 1882 *Grammaire des arts décoratifs: Décoration intérieure de la maison* underscore this structural – and structuralist – understanding of the domestic sphere, mapping the popular literary model of the *abécédaire* onto the family home and its adornment.

<sup>10</sup> All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

domestic from the public.) The popular literature on interior décor allowed social commentary and surveillance to enter the home and its most personal rooms, even as it explicitly advises on the colors and textures to use on a specific space's walls in order to best differentiate it from the others and from the outside world.

## Origins

It is necessary to give an historical overview of wallpaper's beginnings, its early uses, and the innovations in its manufacture from early modern Europe to the nineteenth century, the interpretive significance of which will be elaborated upon below. My focus is on the wallpaper industries in France and England, which competed for dominance in aesthetic and technological advancements, and whose papers were the most widely imported and imitated, particularly in Russia, the third national focus of this thesis.<sup>11</sup>

Even as late as the end of the eighteenth century, walls were covered with tapestries, which concealed the rough surface beneath, provided insulation, and could be moved easily.<sup>12</sup> Wealthier homes also decorated walls with stamped, embossed, or gilded leather, which would later be imitated in wallpapers with great precision, creating a comparable look of tactile richness – in the material, aesthetic, and economic sense.<sup>13</sup> Painted cloths, made with water-colors upon closely woven linen, depicted famous stories and battles and were a less expensive alternative in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; in addition to pictorial forms, painted cloth was also patterned with pithy maxims and wise sayings in rhyme – an early version of interior

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<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the technical and historical information has been synthesized from Clouzot and Follot; Entwisle, *A Literary History of wallpaper, Wallpapers of the Victorian Era*, and *French Scenic Wallpapers*; Greysmith; Saunders; Hoskins; Sugden and Entwisle, *The Crace Papers*; Oman and Hamilton; and Jacqué. Kiselev's history of the Russian wallpaper design and manufacture, *Russkie oboi trekh minuvshikh stoletii (XVIII-XX)*, stresses the predominant importation and imitation of foreign industry.

<sup>12</sup> See also Pardailhé-Galabrun 147-50.

<sup>13</sup> The leather was also sometimes simply painted with yellow varnish in order to approximate the look of gold.

decoration's capacity for "improving" the lower and middle class homemaker. Jeffrey Brooks describes a comparable phenomenon in Russia in the social history of the *lubki* (sing. *lubok*), popular prints that came to be hung on walls for decoration; these entertaining illustrations usually had short texts below the pictures, and *lubochnaia literatura*, the chapbook genre, was named after them.<sup>14</sup> The earliest prints appeared at the start of the seventeenth century, soon after printing entered Russia, and quickly fell out of fashion with the higher levels of society as their popular appeal – with scenes of religious and moral instruction, military glory, popular fairy tales, and, later, common people's lives – increased among the lower classes (Brooks 62-94).

In much of sixteenth-century Europe, however, the earliest decorative papers were found in less affluent houses, which used papers painted or printed in imitation of woodcarving to conceal the exposed beams of a room's ceilings, mimicking the elaborate wood paneling in the homes of the wealthy. This early decorative practice established the two-fold role of wallpaper: concealing the architectural features of the home that give evidence to its occupants' poverty, and creating the illusion of domestic comfort at the structural level.<sup>15</sup> These single-sheet papers served other uses as well, lining cupboards, drawers, chests, deed- and charter-boxes, and the insides of book covers, and later closets and other small, private rooms within the family home. One of wallpaper's earliest known innovators, Le François of Rouen, was a paper-maker and *gainier* – a "sheath-maker," the term *gainé* indicating that a box or case has been lined or covered; the more modern word choice is *garni* (as in *chambre garnie*, a pre-furnished room).

The increasing delimitation of domestic space, designing specific rooms within the home for specific activities, each with their own degree of privacy or sociability and decorated

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<sup>14</sup> The term may have originated from "*lub*, the inner bark of the linden tree, which was at one time made into a crude paper, [and] was later used to make the wood blocks for the prints ... The pictures may also have been called *lubki* because they were at one time cut and printed on Lubianka Street in Moscow" (Brooks 62).

<sup>15</sup> Compare as well Gaston Bachelard's formulation of domestic space: "A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (17).

accordingly, is here anticipated in the decorative demarcations of space in miniature (Pardailhé-Galabrun 51-67). Mary Poovey notes that “modern industrial capitalism was characterized by a new organization of space and of bodies in space” (*Making a Social Body*, 25). While her focus is on the factory, my argument is that the “naturalization of these spatial arrangements” (ibid.) is foreshadowed and facilitated by the decorative signification of various domestic interiors. The practice of using lighter, more delicate colors and patterns in the smaller and more intimate spaces, versus larger, bold designs for rooms in which guests would be received and, later, somber coloring for studies, offices, and other “masculine” rooms thus facilitated the gender and class divisions within the private sphere; each area of the home bore a visual cue writ large upon its walls, indicating who should be occupying the space and what they should be doing within it.

The *domino*, a small printed or hand-painted sheet, was one of the earliest versions of papers used specifically to decorate the walls of the home in Western Europe.<sup>16</sup> Jean Michel Papillon, the most renowned of the early French printmakers, provided the 1755 entry in Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* for it:

Sorte de papier dont le trait, les dessins et les personnages sont imprimés avec des planches de bois grossièrement faites, puis les couleurs mises dessus avec le patron .... Il ne peut servir qu'aux paysans qui en garnissent le haut de leurs cheminées. Tous les dominos sont sans goût, sans correction de dessin, encore plus mal enluminés et patronnés de couleurs dures. (qtd. in Clouzot 12-13)

A kind of paper on which the sketch, the designs and the figures are printed with rough woodblocks, then colored in with a stencil.... They cannot be of use to anyone but

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<sup>16</sup> The printers of playing cards and of book end-papers were also grouped as *dominotiers*. The term *domino* referred to marbled Italian papers. Water-powered paper mills were operating throughout Italy from the beginning of the fourteenth century.

peasants, who decorate their over-mantels with it. All dominos are tasteless, badly drawn, illustrated even more poorly and stenciled with harsh colors.

By this time, *papiers de tapisserie* were in wide use, marked by superior quality and design, the patterning of which allowed for the single sheets to be joined together in hanging, covering large expanses of the wall with a continuous, ideally seamless, image. Jacques Savary des Bruslons' *Dictionnaire universel du commerce* (1723) describes the design and production process, noting that they are "[c]es sortes de tapisserie qui, quand elles sont de bonne main, peuvent tromper au premier coup d'oeil et passer pour des hautes-lisses" ("[t]he kind of wallpaper that, when made by a skilled hand, can fool the eye at first go and pass for *haute-lisse* [high-warp] tapestry") (qtd in Clouzot 23-26).<sup>17</sup> As shown in the drawings by Papillon that illustrate his 1766 *Traité historique et pratique de la gravure en bois*, once papers were hung, a border was affixed to the edges to hide any minor misalignments; where papers were nailed on, the borders were used to cover the tacks.<sup>18</sup> Papers were also pasted to lengths of canvas or some other fabric lining prior to being tacked up. This protected the paper-hangings from the walls' dampness and allowed for its being easily removed and possibly re-hung in a new space; with poor application or simply the passage of time, however, they would often shrink, ripple, and pull away from the wall.<sup>19</sup> In keeping with Palladian and Baroque tastes, eighteenth-century borders added architectural patterns and drapery effects to the scrolling plant designs. This in effect doubles the visual reinforcement of a room's borders, highlighting the walls' structural breaks and limits while the

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<sup>17</sup> "High-warp" means that during the weaving process the tapestry was stretched vertically across two cross-pieces, called heddles; "low-warp" indicates that it was stretched horizontally.

<sup>18</sup> These border papers would soon become wholly decorative friezes. Such derivative objects and features, which retain originary design elements as wholly ornamental design cues, are termed "skeuomorphs." Early twenty-first-century examples of this inverted obsolescence include the imitation shutter-click sound effect produced by camera phones, which do not use a mechanical shutter, and the floppy disk icon that represents the "save" command in word processing programs.

<sup>19</sup> This effect is described in Emma Bovary's modest home in Tostes: "Un papier jaune-serine, relevé dans le haut par une guirlande de fleurs pâles, tremblait tout entier sur sa toile mal tendue..." ("A canary yellow wallpaper, offset by a pale floral garland at the top, shook all over on its badly hung canvas...") (Flaubert 81).

ornamentation thereon obscures its actual dimensions and qualities. That is to say, though wallpaper added to the visual demarcations of a room's separateness from the other spaces within the home, and, more critically, from the outside world, its decorative illusions and imitations defied the walls' very form and thus, I argue, its function.

## Influences

From wallpaper's inception, its designs closely followed those of textiles. The main motifs of seventeenth-century "stitch-papers," so-called because the woodblock pattern copied that of "blackwork" embroidery, consisted of both stylized and naturalistic flowers and other vegetal imagery. "Damask" was used to refer both to textiles with woven patterns and to papers printed in imitation thereof as early as the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> For wallpaper manufacturers (who also served as retailers and proto-interior decorators, advising on the selection of upholstery and other furnishings), the use of the same design for both wallpaper and printed textiles served an artistic as well as a practical function: it allowed for the reuse of woodblocks, which was economically expedient, and it facilitated a room's stylistic cohesiveness, which was aesthetically desirable. This overlap in wallpaper and textile aesthetics and manufacture, mirroring each other's innovations in fashion and production, would continue into the nineteenth century, and it generates an intriguing ambiguity for the modern subject, whose clothing was made with the same manufacturing technologies and in the same colors and patterns as the upholstery upon which she sits and the papered walls within which she resides.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The *shtofnyi oboi* (silk or brocaded wallpaper) in Onegin's home is described approvingly in A. S. Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1830-31): "Везде высокие покои, / В гостиной штофные обои, / Царей портреты на стенах, / И печи в пёстрых изразцах" ("High ceilings everywhere, / With silk wallpapers in the guestroom, / Emperors' portraits on the walls, / And tiled stoves in the rooms and halls") (ch. 2, II; 30).

<sup>21</sup> Beverly Gordon discusses the conflation of the female body with the domestic setting in the American context. As she notes, this association of woman and residence is unsurprising: "Both bore the name, literally and legally, of the man who 'owned' them, and both were adorned to testify to his success" (285). See also Christopher Dresser's



In *The Women of England* (1839), Sarah Ellis shifts the association of woman and home from metaphor to metonym, asserting that, regardless of a woman's social graces,

if there steal from underneath her graceful drapery, the soiled hem, the tattered frill, or even the coarse garment out of keeping with her external finery, imagination naturally carries the observer to her dressing-room, her private habits, and even to her inner mind, where it is almost impossible to believe that the same want of order and purity does not prevail. (79)

Implicitly conflating decoration of the body (in its “drapery”) with that of the home, Ellis furthers the comparison by granting the social viewer access, via a woman's garments, to her personal living space; that the endpoint of this association would be “her inner mind” underscores the intimacy of the connection between woman and home, as bridged by the textiles that adorn both. What her rhetorical turn does not clarify, however, is the directionality of the association – that is to say, whether a person's ill-kempt appearance is the cause or the result of an ill-kempt home. Given the critical importance placed by Ellis and others on keeping both tidy, pleasing, and presentable, this question of influence and association is critical and, seemingly, irresolvable.

One of the most important wallpapers developed was flock paper, created in the seventeenth century, then popularized by English manufacturers' improvements in production at the start of the eighteenth century; its use would endure well into the Victorian era. Le François of Rouen, which was a major silk manufacturing hub in the early seventeenth century, produced flock papers that imitated the appearance of silk hangings in material and design. To make flock

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contemporaneous writings on fabric and décor design, *Modern Ornamentation, Being a Series of Original Designs: For the Patterns of Textile Fabrics, for the Ornamentation of Manufactures in Wood, Metal, Pottery, &c.: Also for the Decoration of Walls & Ceilings and Other Flat Surfaces* and *Principles of Decorative Design*, as well as Phillips's broader history of fabrics and wallpaper.

hangings, canvas or paper (sheets of which were by this time pasted together prior to painting, allowing for designs to be larger and to conceal the joins) is painted with an all-over background color; the design is then painted on with an adhesive, and flock – the minute silk or wool shavings leftover from cloth manufacture – is scattered over it. The result, which was quite durable, closely resembles cut velvet, and the large, multicolored designs in vertical, symmetrical Baroque bands and ornate rococo florals were often nearly identical to brocaded damasks. Curiously, Robert Dossie, who describes the technique of flocking in his *The Handmaid to the Arts* (1758), notes the existence of counterfeit or “mock-flocks” (II, 423), made with dried pigment in place of flock; these cheap papers imitated a material that was itself already an imitation, an irony that Dossie does not comment upon. Jean-Baptiste Réveillon, one of the most talented and successful wallpaper manufacturers, sold English papers and produced his own versions in the second half of the seventeenth century. (A 1755 French duty of 20 francs per hundredweight on imported flock papers – as compared to an export duty of only 20 sous per hundredweight – greatly limited the market for English flocks in France.) In addition to Réveillon’s superior designs and use of materials, he is notable for having served multiple consumer markets: his ornate luxury papers rivaled tapestries in both beauty and price, while papers printed with seven or eight blocks catered to the bourgeoisie and single-color prints were within reach of the less affluent consumers.<sup>22</sup>

### **Anxieties**

In 1836, one year before Victoria’s coronation, England’s excise duty on paper staining, in place since 1712, and raised in 1714 from 1d per square yard to 1½d was abolished and the duty on

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<sup>22</sup> Réveillon’s factory was destroyed on April 28, 1789, thanks to unfounded rumors that he underpaid his workers, an event recorded in Thomas Carlyle’s *The French Revolution*.

paper as a luxury good was cut in half.<sup>23</sup> (The remaining tax was removed in 1861.) Import tariffs on foreign products, which had risen steadily during the Napoleonic wars, were cut nearly in half in 1846 (from 1s a yard in 1825 to 1¾d), and then allowed to lapse in 1860 following a trade agreement with France.<sup>24</sup> Coinciding with a rise in disposable income among an increasing, and increasingly urbanized populace,<sup>25</sup> wallpaper production in Britain rose from 1.2 million “pieces” a year in 1834 to 5.5 million in 1851, 19 million in 1860, and 32 million in 1874.<sup>26</sup> A yard of wallpaper could be purchased for as little as 1¾d (*The Decorator’s Assistant* [1847], 117).

This massive rise in production was of course also facilitated by the mechanization of industry and, more specifically, the eventual perfecting of a successful roller machine that could print continuous lengths of paper rolls (Banham 135). Among other innovations, a calico roller printing machine was adapted for paperstaining by Potters of Darwen (later C. H. & E. Potter) and patented in 1841.<sup>27</sup> In 1846 Harold Potter took out a patent for printing in stripes from engraved rollers, a technique already in use in calico printing. The Rixheim wallpaper producer Ivan Zuber, grandson of famed designer Jean Zuber (to be discussed in the following chapter), visited England in 1850 and purchased his first steam-driven machine from Manchester, one capable of printing six colors by means of surface rollers; in his diary, Zuber notes that the technology was identical to a textile printing machine (Sugden 139-40). For surface rollers, the pattern was not engraved on the metal but left “raised,” just like with wood-cut blocks, and

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<sup>23</sup> See also H. Dagnall, *The Tax on Wallpaper – An Account of the Excise Duty on Stained Paper 1712-1836*.

<sup>24</sup> A ban on the importation of foreign painted papers from the time of Richard III was repealed in 1773, but a 1½d customs duty was imposed instead to off-set the excise duty on domestic papers. (The French, meanwhile, imposed their own heavy customs duty on imports of paper hangings following the Seven Years’ War.)

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Fraser.

<sup>26</sup> A “piece” was approximately 11½ yards long, allowing for some loss during the joining. They were composed of thirteen “elephant” sheets (each 22½ in. wide by 32 in. long) or twelve “double demy” sheets (each 22½ in. wide by 35 in. long).

<sup>27</sup> See Sugden and Entwisle, *Potters of Darwen*.

pigment was distributed via sieves in order to achieve a solid, uniform body of color. The results of this rotary printing were not exceptional, but nonetheless contributed to the massive increases in rates of production. Both block- and roller-cutters were themselves usually responsible for the pattern design, and this conjoining of design with production added to the (perceived) lack of aesthetic sophistication in the decorative arts. The textile industry was, by mid-century, the most extensively mechanized in British manufacture, and thus the most subject to public anxieties about the implications – artistic and otherwise – of industrialization.<sup>28</sup> Early shortcomings in the quality of cotton prints, for instance, due to the various experimentations and innovations in shifting from block printing to roller printing machines were visual testimony to the superiority of handicraft and the tragedy of its apparent demise.<sup>29</sup>

In truth, however, such anxieties over quality and taste were grounded in the concerns of the nation and the national market. While England could produce textiles and wallpapers in massive quantities and sell them at affordable prices, the foreign products made with more individualized precision and care continued to hold tremendous consumer appeal, despite their higher cost (and garner public praise, arguably because of it).<sup>30</sup> In his “Supplementary Report on

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<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Beard; Turnbull; Quimby and Earl; and Chapman. See also Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy, 1815-1848*, and Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine; the Literary Response to Technology*.

<sup>29</sup> Adrien Forty argues persuasively that blaming machines themselves for poor design, rather than the design’s manufacturers (or the public tastes driving the market), was and is misguided on the part of both contemporaneous commentators and modern historians. See especially 42-51 for discussion of the calico industry.

<sup>30</sup> There was some debate over whether to display the prices of the items on display at the Great Exhibition, the argument essentially hinging upon whether such items were *goods* (i.e., products for sale) or *works* (the products of ingenuity and innovation, being displayed as such). Ultimately, the prices were banned, and in their place, “relational categories of gender, nationality, labor, and taste implicitly articulately objects into new practical and conceptual orders” (Andrew H. Miller 64). Charles Babbage, at least, acknowledged that “exchange” was “the great and ultimate object of the Exposition” (10:49), arguing in vain for the prices to be displayed and the goods presented as such. The beauty of industrial manufacture was in that the products “realize identity by the unbounded use of the principle of copying” (10:29). See Bizup 78-79. See also Romano and Simon Simon Schaffer. On Babbage and design vis-à-vis computation, see G. L. Miller; on Babbage more generally, see Hyman. Curiously, Babbage’s collaborator Ada Lovelace would describe their Difference Engine with an analogy quite fitting for the textile-driven age: “We may say most aptly that the Analytical Engine weaves algebraical patterns just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves” (Note A, 696).

Design” for the Great Exhibition of 1851, Richard Redgrave, taking the opportunity to lobby for national schools of design education, stated that, “notwithstanding our skillful workmanship and our excellent manufacture of most fabrics, we are sadly behind in the design applied to them, and greatly indebted to foreign artists even for what little is good” (711). By this time, wallpaper was produced via a combination of woodblock printing, mechanized rollers, and stenciling and hand-painting when necessary; nonetheless, Redgrave insists that “[w]herever ornament is wholly effected by machinery, it is certainly degraded in style and execution” (710). While the French designs on display likewise “appear to be unregulated by any perception of rules for their ornamentation,” and their style “most objectionable,” the detailing is well executed (an effect that cylinder printing could not yet create) and they are “*blocked* with great skill and knowledge” (718, emphasis in the original). The over-production of mechanized industry is manifested in the over-loading of color and ornament in design, whose boldness and novelty appeals to “an untaught multitude” (711), but it is to that massive consumer market that manufacturers owe a superior quality, rather than sheer quantity, of product.

For commentators like Friedrich Engels, Thomas Carlyle, and A. W. N. Pugin, and later John Ruskin and William Morris, mechanization constituted a divorce of art from labor, degrading both. Despite these concerns, mid-century design imbued an aesthetic and social value into objects and ornamentation that was just as important as its use value.<sup>31</sup> The Jury Report on Decorative Furniture and Upholstery, Including Paper-Hangings, Papier Maché, and Japanned Goods for the 1851 Great Exhibition directly addresses the economic and social benefits of “paper-hangings,” “because they may be made the means of extensively diffusing taste for art; and from the low price of the cheaper kinds, enabling the humblest mechanic to give his home an

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<sup>31</sup> See Schmiechen, “Reconsidering the Factory, Art-Labor, and the Schools of Design in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” especially 59-60.

air of elegance and comfort” (Class XXVI, 546). Wallpaper, which had begun as cheap ornamental feature of the lower class home and was disdained as such, had developed into a luxury good that was then, via the processes of industrial capitalism, offered back to the working classes as an aesthetic palliative for the shortcomings of their living conditions.

### **Amenities and Approximations**

Wall décor not only obscured or belied the surface’s inherent flatness with materials and designs that created – or created the illusion of – depth and tactility, it also broke up the wall’s vertical expanse.<sup>32</sup> Redgrave warned of wallpaper functioning as “a pseudo-decoration, the wall becoming divided into compartments often irrespective of architectural construction, and pilasters, friezes, and mouldings imitated in false relief on its surface”; no matter how skillfully rendered, “it is, however, a sham decoration amenable to no laws, necessarily false in light and shade, often constructively inapplicable, and always impertinent and obtrusive.” Most damningly, such decoration “is not quite out of place in the saloon of a theatre, in cafés, or taverns, but ought to be confined to such localities, and only used there until the general taste is so far instructed that the public will no longer tolerate gaudy shams and false magnificence” (717).

Nonetheless, Charles Eastlake, in his hugely popular *Hints on Household Taste*, remarked that “[t]he most dreary method of decorating the wall of a sitting-room is to cover it all over with an unrelieved pattern of monotonous design” (123). The decorative paper borders at the top of the wall had evolved in ornamenting the “frieze”; the papers for this space, which were by the nineteenth century produced in roll form to be trimmed and pasted in place as desired, bore

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<sup>32</sup> On the exigencies of flatness vis-à-vis design, see Masheck.

arabesque patterns, highly ornate designs imitating marble, and other elaborate *trompe l'oeil* imagery to give the effect of actual cornicing. The “dado” was the lower space, rising three to four feet from the floor, traditionally done in wood paneling (or, again, imitation thereof). As architect Robert Edis states in his Society of Arts lectures, published in 1880 as *Decoration & Furniture of Town Houses*, in addition to breaking up the visual surface of the walls, dados and friezes are used “either for useful or decorative purposes, or both,” the latter demarcated by wood rails for hanging pictures and the wainscoting of the former protecting the wall from chair backs that would rub or scrape off the paper or fabric wall-hangings (138-40).

Both Eastlake and Edis, in advising on the use of wallpapers that simulate the wood and plaster architectural features of wealthy homes without providing any of the functional purpose of these features, tacitly endorse the middle and lower classes’ simulation of wealthy homemakers. These wallpapers facilitate an acting-out of domestic gentility while inadvertently indicating the emptiness of the gesture – they are performance without purpose, and thus a perfect consumer product for the modern capitalist age.

## **Materials and Methods**

Rather than putting the novels under discussion here in direct dialogue with each other via a weak metaphoric reading of the wallpapers described in them, my analysis reveals how these pieces of material culture are themselves already in dialogue, before their textualization in the nineteenth-century European novel, and how their representations express some of the most pressing social and artistic concerns of their respective eras. (This is not to say that metaphor, or its analysis, is inherently “weak,” but rather that it is mutually dependant upon and more richly and understood through metonymy.) My analysis is organized in textually and materially

chronological order – that is to say, in order of both the novels under discussion, the trends in design and manufacture of wallpaper described in them, and the contemporaneous influences and anxieties that surrounded both the literary works and the décor production and trends.

The first portion of my project analyzes the panoramic wallpaper in Honoré de Balzac's *Le père Goriot* (1835) and the relationship between the panoramic style, in its design origins and phenomenological import, and the panorama exhibits as well as the panoramic literature from which the novel emerged. The domestic interiors of nineteenth-century French literature abound in material detail. Within Balzac's own œuvre, the descriptions of domestic aesthetics span the city and its classes, individual *objets d'art* and the decorative schemas of salons and bedrooms. Gustave Flaubert depicts material culture in all its realist grime in *Madame Bovary* (1856), in the aesthetic decadence of *Salammbô* (1862), and as the interchangeable backdrop of *L'Education sentimentale* (1869), while tawdry bourgeois taste is evident on every floor of the Haussmannian interiors depicted by Émile Zola (see, e.g., Nelson), I focus on *Le père Goriot*, however, as an entry-point into Balzac's œuvre and into nineteenth-century realism, as the starting point from which the generic exigencies of the realist novel – its descriptive modes, narrative scope, and psychological valences – take shape.

Chapter two, on Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), uses the gauche wallpaper – whose over-bright coloring and vulgar pattern so offends its heroine – as a metonymic entry-point for the novel's attempts to reconcile the social problems of pollution, disease, class conflict, and the larger anxieties over art's irreconcilability with industry. The heavy metaphors of Dickensian property, from the physical filth of his settings to the evocative (if not over-determined) names of his characters, provide an obvious backdrop for any discussion of material



culture in the Victorian novel.<sup>33</sup> Haunting faces emerge from the paneled walls of both Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor* (1857) and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876); the luxuries of homes are enjoyed on credit in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) and are subject to (and the object of) tension in Henry James' *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896); and there is no financial stability in the personal properties of Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875). Gaskell's own *Mary Barton* (1848) describes the particular goods that "domestic" the working class home, but *North and South* provides the most apt vehicle for my analysis of the mid-century tensions between art and industry, particularly as it was published in the aftermath of the 1851 Great Exhibition, where the triumphs of industrial manufacture and free-market capitalism were in abundant, anxious display. The novel marries the Jane Austen-like romance plot to the social conflicts of labor unrest, rewarding its main characters with economic security and romantic satisfaction, and resolving its internal divisions via the domestication of industry and of modern subjects.

In chapter three, on Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873-77), I use the novel's fleeting but evocative allusions to wallpaper, especially floral paper, to discuss the era's debates in both the design industry and in literary criticism over the uses and limits of realism versus naturalism and the dangers of influence – aesthetic, cultural, moral, and spiritual.<sup>34</sup> I trace the depiction of domestic interiors from *Anna Karenina* to "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886) and "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1890) and analyze its resonance with the literary precepts of *What Is Art?* (1898) as a response to and interpretation of John Ruskin as well as the economic and cultural tensions in Russian manufacture between industrial production and the nationalistic aspirations of domestic

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<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Armstrong, *Dickens and the Concept of Home*.

<sup>34</sup> I use the Library of Congress system for Russian transliteration, without diacritical marks; well-known writers' names and titles, however, are given in their more common English forms (thus Tolstoy, not Tolstoy; and "Ivan Ilych," not "Ivan Il'ich.")

industry. The heavily Europeanized interiors of early Tolstoy certainly complement the Europeanized social codes of behavior and interaction found in Aleksandr Griboedov, Aleksandr Pushkin, and Mikhail Lermontov. Meanwhile, the absurdly overstuffed, heavily synecdochic settings of Nikolai Gogol render the Russian domestic interior a highly legible, though metaphorically dependent, extension of character. Similarly, the filth and almost tangible decrepitude of Fedor Dostoevsky's rented garrets and crowded rooms evoke a clear sense of the material squalor from which his characters must find metaphysical salvation. Even the shared rooms of Chernyshevsky serve an ideologically didactic purpose. I use *Anna Karenina* as my starting point in order to analyze its engagement with a realism of material detail and, by extension, its early indications of an aesthetic ideology – both of décor and artistic technique – that Tolstoy would invoke more rigorously in his late fiction and in *What Is Art?*

I use these three particular novels as touchstones from which to trace the history of wallpaper within the larger socio-economic and cultural context of manufacture and domestic ideology, illuminating the ways in which material culture intersects with codes of class and gender and thus using this particular piece of material culture as a metonymic link to the development of realist narrative across the nineteenth century. If the realist novel is unique in its “technical capacity to represent consciousness in the form of unspoken thoughts, subjective responses, and sensations” (Bender 253n2),<sup>35</sup> then wallpaper's ability to affect consciousness, to invoke and even represent subjective sensation as an “unspoken” visual backdrop for narrative action, makes it a unique ambassador into the material world and personal consciousness of the nineteenth-century novel.

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<sup>35</sup> See also Cohn 7-8.

## Chapter One

### *Le père Goriot* in Panoramic

Every object and product acquires a dual existence, perceptible and make-believe.

Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*

For the private individual the private environment represents the universe. In it he gathers remote places and the past. His drawing room is a box in the world theater.

Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century"

Reading the well-known – and well-analyzed – introductory description of Mme Vauquer at the start of Honoré de Balzac's *Le père Goriot* (1835), Erich Auerbach asserts that, "[t]here seems to be no deliberate order for the various repetitions of the harmony-motif, nor does Balzac appear to have followed a systematic plan in describing Madame Vauquer's appearance," and that the passage is "directed to the mimetic imagination of the reader" (471). Thus the mass of details, their apparently unorganized presentation and "purely suggestive" rather than explicitly stated moral significance, are indicative of the novel's generic aims – that is to say, its realism.

However, this extended description does not open the novel, and, when it is placed in the context of the preceding text, a definite valence – visual and narrative – emerges. The opening sentence sets the pattern for conflating the homeowner with the house: "Madame Vauquer, née de Conflans, est une vieille femme qui, depuis quarante ans, tient à Paris une pension bourgeoise établie rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, entre le quartier latin et le faubourg Saint-Marceau" ("Madame Vauquer, née de Conflans, is an old woman who, for forty years, has let a boarding-house on the rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint-

Marceau”) (2:217). Subsequent paragraphs comment upon its geographical location, the street itself, the building façade and its small garden, meandering through the house’s various entryways, then its ground-floor, noting the salon, its ugly décor, and the general filth, before reintroducing Mme Vauquer to the narrative and to narrative action.

Amid the descriptions of her appearance, these opening pages nonetheless construct a “unidirectional vector” that moves from the physical exterior of the setting “to the innermost layer of its landlady’s clothing, then to the core of her subjective thoughts” (Marcus 51-52). Despite this omniscient narration and movement, however, critics have read the *Maison Vauquer*, and, indeed, the social intrigues and class struggles of the novel as a whole, in terms of verticality. This is unsurprising, as the various residents of the *pension* are subsequently introduced via the floors on which they live, thereby indicating their financial means:

As one climbs from floor to floor, the rent falls, the squalor rises; near the top, one reaches the questionable beatitude of Goriot or the dubious innocence of Rastignac, and still higher there is the brute simplicity of Christophe and “la grosse Sylvie.” Both on the scale of matter and spirit one rises and falls simultaneously. (Fischler 842)<sup>36</sup>

The physical layout is a reversal of the larger social ranking, which Rastignac will conquer, though losing whatever innocence he may have had in so doing, while Goriot’s moves to higher and higher floors obviously mirror his financial and personal downfall. Peter Brooks emphasizes the vertical and horizontal structural polarities of the novel, but reads its movements – via the travels of Rastignac from the *Maison Vauquer* to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, across the ethical and literal muck of the cityscape, and from the bottom rungs of society to its uppermost heights – in strictly metaphorical and moral terms (*The Melodramatic Imagination*, 135). The visual cross-section of the building suggested to the reader in this presentation mimics an architectural

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<sup>36</sup> See also Michaud (148-49) and Mozet (68-88).

tableau, indicating not only that “*All is true*” (2:217) but “All is seen.”<sup>37</sup> However, the text’s opening landscape, laying out the urban location before moving into the building and narrowing its descriptive focus to the interior setting of its rooms (and residents), suggests a horizontal valence of social and narrative movement that bears critical attention.

If “ce drame n’est ni une fiction, ni un roman” (“this drama is neither a fiction nor a novel”), its suggestion that the reader will be able to recognize “les éléments chez soi, dans son cœur peut-être” (“[its] elements within himself, in his own heart, perhaps”) is especially evocative (*ibid.*). The double meaning of “chez soi,” indicating the reader’s personal life generally as well as his own home, rejects simplistic metaphorical readings in favor of concrete metonyms. As Gérard Genette affirms in his fittingly titled “Métonymie chez Proust,” “Sans métonymie, pas d’enchaînement de souvenirs, pas d’*histoire*, pas de roman” (“Without metonymy, there is no chain of memories, no *history*, no novel”) (63, emphasis in the original). Indeed, the novel’s opening pages begin the reader’s education in reading metonymically. The distinctive “*odeur de pension*” would suggest, of course, the morally and socially fetid atmosphere of the house, its owner, occupants, and general environs, but the smell created by the boarders is immediately made aggressively real in its particulars (or, rather, particulates): “Peut-être pourrait-elle se décrire si l’on inventait un procédé pour évaluer les quantités élémentaires et nauséabondes qu’y jettent les atmosphères catarrhales...” (“Perhaps it could be described if one invented a process for analyzing the tiny, nauseating particles thrown into the air...” (2:218). This stench cannot be metaphorized, it could only be scientifically examined on an elemental level. Like young Rastignac, whose “observations curieuses” not only facilitate his entry and rise in society but allow the present story to be “coloré des tons vrais” (“colored in true shades”)

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<sup>37</sup> See Mount for a cataloging of the *Comédie humaine*’s architectural settings and their symbolic determinism; also Frølich, “Lieux balzaciens,” and Guichardet on the signification of urban locales.

(2:219), the reader must observe and decipher the actual and the visual – in short, we must read the text’s details for what they are.

This warning against easy allegorical readings is, quite literally, built into the Maison Vauquer and is presented early in the text. At the front of the house is an arched passageway, albeit a painted one: “Sous le renforcement que simule cette peinture, s’élève une statue représentant l’Amour” (“Beneath the recess simulated by this painting, there stands a statue of Cupid” (2:218). Of this, “les amateurs de symboles” may read “un mythe de l’amour parisien,” but that, the narrator assures, can be cured nearby. By not simply literalizing a symbol of love but also extending it to its basest, and most basic, implications – i.e. venereal disease – the narrative soundly rejects the naivety of abstract metaphor in favor of concrete metonym; the visual illusion of the painted archway, no matter how convincing, is still a simulacrum, while the representation of “love,” in its resolutely physical rather than idealized sense, is geographically located mere blocks away from the hospital at which it may be eliminated.<sup>38</sup>

I use the introductory physical details of the Maison Vauquer as a metonymic entryway into the novel’s larger concerns. Beginning with the section of panoramic wallpaper in the *pension*’s salon, I read the material context of the décor – its history of design and manufacture – as well as its subject matter and visual effects in terms of the characters’ “vision” and the novel’s narrative scope. Next, I discuss the panorama itself, a “contemporary” and material “relative” of scenic wallpaper, whose linguistic presence in the novel builds upon the wallpaper’s early implications. Finally, in this chapter I address the novel’s textual panoramism, its relation to the “panoramic” literature of the era and its incorporation of that commercial genre’s attributes and

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<sup>38</sup> Cupid was of course commonly used as a symbol with which to realize romantic metaphors and even represent medical ones; my point here, however, is that the statue’s physical here is spatially metonymic.

effects into its development of literary realism and the project of the *Comédie humaine* as a whole.

### ***Le Papier peint panoramique***

At the midpoint between the introductory descriptions of the Maison Vauquer's location and Mme Vauquer herself, the salon is presented, in all its bad taste and worse housekeeping, and attributed with a very distinctive wallpaper:

Cette pièce, assez mal planchée, est lambrissée à hauteur d'appui. Le surplus des parois est tendu d'un papier verni représentant les principales scènes de *Télémaque*, et dont les classiques personnages sont coloriés. Le panneau d'entre les croisées grillagées offre aux pensionnaires le tableau du festin donné au fils d'Ulysse par Calypso. Depuis quarante ans cette peinture excite les plaisanteries des jeunes pensionnaires, qui se croient supérieurs à leur position en se moquant du dîner auquel la misère les condamne. (2:218)

This room, its floor rather uneven, is paneled at elbow-level. The rest of the wall space is decorated with a varnished paper depicting the principle scenes from *Télémaque*, and its classical personages are colored in. The panel between the windows offers the boarders the scene of the feast given Ulysses' son by Calypso. For forty years this picture has provided amusement for the young boarders who assert their superiority to their position by mocking the dinner to which poverty has condemned them.

This type of décor, known as scenic or panoramic wallpaper, was a distinctly French manufacture.<sup>39</sup> It was an outgrowth of fresco wall painting and the papering of decorative folding

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<sup>39</sup> See Entwisle, *French Scenic Wallpapers*, Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, *Papiers peints panoramiques*, Kosuda-Warner, and Ellen Kennedy Johnson.

screens of the late eighteenth century.<sup>40</sup> It was also a response to the highly popular, but prohibitively expensive, hand-painted Chinese wallpapers that were imported – and then imitated in domestic manufacture – in the eighteenth century. Scenic wallpaper defied the very nature of the décor in form and function. Wallpaper patterns were traditionally subordinate to the medium, using a single design, repeating in vertical strips, to unify a room visually. By contrast, scenic papers used vast individual images as visual components within a coherent and cohesive construction, each vertical piece being fitted together in order to construct a massive horizontal design. Moreover, rather than forming a visual backdrop for a room, its furnishings, and its occupants, scenic papers were themselves the central visual spectacle. No longer a singular, legible pattern repeating across the wall, wallpaper constructed a narrative sequence, designed (and demanding) to be “read.”

After a scale drawing was approved by the factory, a full-scale enlargement was made and the woodblocks were engraved, a meticulous process requiring a high degree of technical and artistic skill. Before the invention of “continuous” paper, small individual sheets (18x20”, on average) were pasted together to form a single length. Once dried, it was grounded with color, which was typically blue; roughly two-thirds of the length was usually the “sky,” which placed the paper’s “horizon” at eye level and allowed plenty of “sky” which could be trimmed to accommodate various room heights. As many as 2,000 to 3,000 woodblocks were cut and engraved in order to create the design, and up to eighty different colors or more were used on a single piece. An average length was 8-10’ long and 20” wide; the number of lengths (*lés*) for a “set,” i.e. the assembled paper panels making up the larger design, varied from five to ten and up

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<sup>40</sup> As Nouvel-Kammerer notes, “[t]he artistic expression specific to folding screens merits further study insofar as such screens constitute a mobile wall, halfway between an easel painting and a real wall, whose function was to provide a literal framework for privacy” (“Introduction: Reasons for Silence,” in *French Scenic Wallpapers: 1795-1865*, 326n24).



to thirty or even more. Each piece was numbered so as to indicate the sequence in which they were to be hung, and each set was titled; individual pieces, if their distinct scenes (*tableaux*) were to be displayed independently, were sometimes named as well. At regular intervals, large trees, rocks, or similarly tall, dark elements provided a *séparation*, concealing the lengths' joins and creating a visual "pause" in the scene's pictorial layout, acting as a sort of "chapter break" in the design. While the wallpaper was being made, reduced-scale promotional lithographs were printed, along with advertising brochures that explained the set's imagery and consumer appeal. Scenic papers suggested both the major art of painting and the minor art of tapestry. The jury of the 1806 Expositions des Produits de l'Industrie Française in Paris referred to the new product as both *papiers peints-paysage* ("landscape wallpapers") and *tableaux-tentures* ("wall-hangings") (*Notices sur les objets envoyés à l'Exposition des produits de l'industrie française rédigées et imprimées par ordres de S.E.M. de Champigny* 91, 256). At the 1819 exposition, the use of painting terminology to describe wallpapers continued, referring to *tableaux en grisaille* as well as *paysages coloriés* (*Rapport du jury central sur les Produits de l'industrie française rédigé par M. L. Costaz* 152-53). By 1834, scenic wallpaper was still being described in terms of painting on paper, rather than as a derivation of tapestry work or an (d)evolution of fresco painting (*Rapport du jury central sur les Produits de l'industrie française en 1834, par le baron Charles Dupin* vol. I: 134).

One of the first well-known scenic papers was manufactured in 1804 by Jean Zuber, a draper's son from Alsace-Lorraine. *Les Vues de Suisse* was 16 lengths and inaugurated a popular theme for scenic wallpapers: panoramic, national topographies. Mimicking the experience of the Grand Tour, scenic wallpapers presented European pastorals, as in Zuber et Cie's sublime Alpine set, and tourist sites, such as *Les Vues d'Italie* (1819, 23 lengths), manufactured by Joseph

Dufour, who trained in the textile hub of Lyon before establishing his own wallpaper firm in Mâcon. Exoticized landscapes featured paradisiacal images of nature and peaceful “savages,” as in Zuber’s 1829 *Les Vues du Brésil* (30 lengths) and Dufour’s famed *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (c. 1804, 20 lengths), which depicted the voyages of Captain Cook and was shown at the 1806 Exposition, and his 1826 *Les Incas* (25 lengths). Bringing these scenes of foreign adventure safely within the home, panoramic papers complemented the “armchair travel” of popular literature, allowing residents an idealized projection of life – one that was larger than their own in experiential scope, but confined as scopic spectacle to an appreciable scale. Jean-Julien Deltil’s 1818 *La Bataille d’Héliopolis, ou les Français en Egypte* (1818, 30 lengths), manufactured by the Velay firm, combined popular trends in historical discovery with nationalist exploits, while his 1826-28 *Vues de la Grèce moderne, ou combats des Grecs* (30 lengths) called upon classical associations while dramatizing military action. Maurice Samuels describes how popular forms of historical representation in this period “surrounded” Romantic historians and novels, using the term “in part literally” because of this style of wallpaper; he cites it, along with the panorama, the diorama, phantasmagoria shows, wax displays, and Boulevard theater, as “modes of spectacular historical representation” that “recur as topoi in Realist fiction” while generating actual profit as popular visual entertainments (5-9; on theater in Balzac, see Dickinson).

In addition to naturalizing the imperial project by turning colonial subjects into artistic ones, panoramic papers grafted order onto geopolitical landscapes. Dufour’s 1814 *Les Monuments de Paris* (30 lengths) depicted the Palais de Tuileries, Palais Mazarin, Notre Dame, Place et Colonne Vendôme, Les Invalides, Palais du Luxembourg, and other famous sites, but rearranged their visual position in the cityscape so as to accommodate the panorama’s

composition; even more interestingly, Napoleon, who had abdicated just that year, was removed from the top of the Arc du Carrousel, and the soldiers on guard are represented wearing white Bourbon cockades, rather than Imperial uniform dress. Like *Vues de Lyon* (1821, 32 lengths) and *Rives du Bosphore* (c. 1812, 25 lengths), *Monuments de Paris* used water as a structuring element in the visual landscape, turning the urban milieu into a Romantic idyll: the shore in the foreground is peacefully pastoral, while the Seine flows in an uninterrupted horizontal line, separating the city and its buildings from the near bank – an illusionistic “island” on which the room’s occupants are visually located, safely isolated without even a single bridge crossing the waterway to threaten their bucolic haven. Even when depicting the local and contemporaneous setting, décor subordinated the historical and geographical present to the domestic prescript. By bringing the spectacle of a geo-political landscape *inside* the home, scenic wallpaper created an image safely *outside* the vagaries of time, space, and political change.

Classical literature provided another popular theme for scenic wallpapers, transforming the written into the visual and the didactic into the decorative. One of the earliest examples of panoramic wallpaper is the *Métamorphoses d’Ovide*, of unknown manufacture (c. 1790-1800, 30 lengths). Zuber’s 1811 *L’Arcadie* (20 lengths) was inspired by Salomon Gessner’s 1756 poem “Idyllen,” and his *Décor à Fables* of the same year depicted scenes from La Fontaine’s stories; Dufour created a set depicting the story of *Paul et Virginie* in 8 parts in 1823-24 and a 32-length set of *Renaud et Armide* in 1828-31. His *Voyages d’Anthénor* (c. 1825-30, 25 lengths) was based on Etienne François de Lantier’s 1798 *Les Voyages d’Anténor en Grèce et en Asie* and individual *lés* were sometimes used in the *Télémaque* set, in place of other panels or to expand it as needed. Classical Greek imagery was similarly popular, and Dufour produced a 24-length set of *Les Galeries Mythologique* in 1814; his masterpiece is arguably his 26-length *Les Amours de Psyché*,

made in 1816. In all thematic genres, panoramic wallpaper carefully edited its subject matter to suite the domestic setting. Virginie is seen struggling in the waves, but the viewer is spared a *tableau* of her corpse upon the beach; likewise, Captain Cook's murder is placed in the background, at a safe distance from the eye, and the deaths in battle scenes such as the *Bataille d'Austerlitz* (1829-30, 30 lengths) are depicted as bloodless and suitably noble.

Like the landscapes described above, and historical scenes of battle and exploration, the literary and classical scenes offered not just diversion for its viewers but also instruction. In the "Livre explicatif sur *Les Sauvages de la mer Pacifique*," Dufour outlined the practical, pedagogical uses of the wallpaper, in addition to its depiction of grand adventure and exotic peoples:

Une mère de famille donnera sans s'apercevoir d'un peu d'application, des leçons d'histoire et de géographie à une petite fille vive, spirituelle et questionneuse dont les remarques amèneront plus d'une fois ces sortes d'embarras qui obligent de couvrir d'un baiser sa bouche innocente, afin d'en contenir les naïvetés ou de lui faire une réponse utile à son éducation. Les végétaux mêmes pourront servir d'introduction à l'histoire des plantes, en offrant l'aspect inconnu des arbres favorisés par la nature de l'avantage de procurer aux hommes plusieurs utilités à la fois. La comparaison qu'on en fera avec ceux qui nous sont familiers, fournira des descriptions aussi amusantes qu'utiles aux progrès des premiers essais de l'entendement, en élevant l'âme à la hauteur des vérités qui semblent mettre l'homme dans le secret de la Providence.

A mother will, without noticing the small effort needed, give lessons in history and geography to a lively, witty, and curious little girl, whose remarks will more than once occasion the sort of embarrassment that obliges a kiss to cover her innocent mouth so as

to silence its naiveties or make a response useful to her education. The very vegetation may serve as an introduction to the history of plants, offering an unknown aspect of the trees blessed by nature with the advantage of providing men with several uses at once. The comparisons that one could make to those with which we are familiar will furnish descriptions as diverting as [they are] useful to the progress of the first forays into education, lifting the soul to the heights of those verities that seem to advise man in the secret of Providence.

Decades before English commentators debated the value and influence of abstract versus naturalistic wallpaper designs upon the viewer, scenic wallpaper's resolutely mimetic imagery was marketed for the accuracy of its pictorials. Dufour instructed his customers on the *instructional* value of the wallpaper's literalism. By striking a balance between entertainment and education, the décor earned its place in the home not as a backdrop to the performance of familial affections and the shaping of young civic minds, but as a tool thereof.

The wallpaper set in the Maison Vauquer, *Les Paysages de Télémaque dans l'Île de Calypso*, is literally and figuratively "out-of-date." The set was designed between 1815 and 1820 by Xavier Mader for the Dufour firm.<sup>41</sup> It consists of 25 lengths, each 7' high by 21" wide, and it was created using 2,027 blocks and eighty-five colors.<sup>42</sup> The scene described in the novel is lengths 9-11 of the set, in which Telemachus and Mentor recount their adventures to Calypso and her nymphs in front of a classical, verdant setting. The in-text chronological error that depicts the paper as forty years old in the approximate year of its manufacture presents an intriguing

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<sup>41</sup> Entwisle and Clouzot give 1823 as the date of its issue, but Nouvel-Kammerer cites a publicity lithograph c. 1818 (in Hoskins 101).

<sup>42</sup> French scenic wallpaper was quite popular in America, reflecting the political allegiances of the era. President Andrew Jackson ordered a copy of the *Télémaque* set for his Tennessee estate, the Hermitage, and it is still on display there as of this writing, having undergone an extensive *in situ* preservation effort in 1978-79 (see Hamburg). Zuber et Cie answered this trans-Atlantic market in 1833-34 with his 32-length *Vues d'Amérique du Nord, ou Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique*.

sociopolitical timeframe for the *pension*, its owner, and the Paris-chronotope of the novel. Dating the paper back forty years from the point of the novel's composition (1834), it becomes a consumer product of 1794, marking the end of the Great Terror and beginnings of Napoleon's military campaigns in the Mediterranean, which would figure so prominently in scenic wallpaper imagery.<sup>43</sup> (Dating it back from 1819 would, of course, place it in a pre-Revolutionary context of *ancien régime* sociopolitical stagnation.) Thus Balzac's *Télémaque* paper is outdated not merely due to its association with the decrepitude of the Maison Vauquer, but rather is dated back even further in order to link it with the tentative end of the Revolution's upheavals and the rise of the coming Empire; for readers in the early July Monarchy, the wallpaper is rendered outmoded in form and content, as an artifact of an increasingly distant historical era and as a representation of antiquated literary (and moral) models.

Georg Lukács argues that Balzac "passes from the portrayal of *past history* to the portrayal of the *present as history*" (*The Historical Novel*, 83, emphasis in the original). Samuels supplements the claim by pointing out how the past is problematized in early realist fiction; Marxist criticism, like Lukács's, seeks to "expose the ideological effects of human change...on individual consciousness," but what I aim to stress is how, in Balzac as well as in panoramic forms of entertainment and décor, the past is made present – in both the temporal and the visual sense (10-11).<sup>44</sup>

The fact that Balzac's wallpaper is described as being forty years old in 1819, the year of the novel's action, presents just one of the ironies of its depiction. The most immediate, intra-textual irony, namely the disconnect between the mythical feast depicted on the walls and the

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<sup>43</sup> Pauly makes this same calculation (318), but stresses that the use of this decorative element "comme d'un opérateur symbolique et non comme d'un document historique ou référentiel sur un milieu, une époque, accentue l'importance de l'univers fictionnel dans l'œuvre" (320).

<sup>44</sup> See also Terdiman, *Past Present*, for a discussion of the dual nature of memory and the problem of the past within the present in later nineteenth-century French literature.

modest meals served within them, is of course part of the boarders' amusement at the décor's expense. Typically hung in the larger, semi-public rooms of the home, namely the salon and dining-room, scenic wallpaper often depicted meals and festive social gatherings; the visual echoing of the occupants' activities is, of course, made bitterly ironic for Balzac's impoverished diners. And yet, in laughing at the wallpaper, they are in part relating to it as the medium intended, namely using the paper as entertainment. In a larger reading, however, the wallpaper's narrative of filial piety, epic adventure, and moral education is fully inverted by the novel: Rastignac is an anti-Telemachus, having no intention of returning home to his ineffectual father, and surrounded in Paris by caricatures of the classical source: Goriot is yet another failed paterfamilias, and Vautrin, while "immortal" in his ability to be reincarnated in various disguises, social roles, and future novels within the *Comédie humaine*, is a perverse Minerva, mentoring young men only for his own gain and sadistic pleasure. While this glimpse of Telemachus, mid-adventure, foreshadows Rastignac's own *Bildungsroman*, it is instantaneously ironized by the squalor in which it is presented and, soon, the decidedly non-heroic machinations of Balzac's characters.

Furthering the distance between the classical, heroic scale of the image's narrative and the novel's, the source material for the paper itself was not Homer but rather *Les aventures de Télémaque*, Fénelon's 1699 *roman d'éducation*. Alexander Fischler suggests that this literary background (no pun intended, on his part) helps anchor the novel all the more firmly in the present (842-45); the multiple layers of its antiquity – from the classical source material to the early modern retelling and then in the (supposedly) outdated wallpaper – serve as an extension from and contrast with the narrative present of 1819. By representing a scene that does not in fact take place in the Homeric tale – Telemachus meeting Calypso – the wallpaper's narrative

underscores how differently Balzac's anti-hero can and will enact his own Telemachia. (Moreover, by invoking Fénélon's retelling of the Homeric epic – one written for the edification of children – rather than just the Homeric original, the décor underscores that this novel will, title notwithstanding, be about *Rastignac's* education.) However, wallpaper is itself a material anchor for and within the realist text's present tense: it is a legible, tangible piece of material reality which readers recognize as part of their own lived world.

Moreover, the figures in scenic wallpaper's *tableaux* are fixed in motion, perpetually dramatizing a narrative in miniature, and thus, in their active inaction (so to speak) they are occupying a perpetual present (not unlike the immortality offered by Calypso). The boarders themselves occupy (or rather embody) a similar *tableau vivant*:

Ces pensionnaires faisaient pressentir des drames accomplis ou en action; non pas de ces drames joués à lueux des rampes, entre des toiles peintes, mais des drames vivants et muets, des drames glacés qui remuaient chaudement le cœur, des drames continus. (2: 220)

These boarders give the sense of those dramas that are finished or still playing out; not the dramas played before the footlights, before a painted backdrop, but dramas living and mute, those frozen dramas that warmly stir the heart, those continuous dramas.

Rather than performing in front of an artistic display, they – in their grotesque physiognomies and impoverished surroundings – are part of and, perforce, participants in the display itself. Distinct from both theatrical performance and traditional two-dimensional imagery, the artistry of their personal dramas is fraught with contradictions: at once muted and alive, frozen yet “warming,” they are never ending even when they’ve finished.



According to Søren Pold in his discussion of Balzac's Parisian and literary panoramism, "[e]ducation is not a stable formula but is constituted by an ability to perceive and navigate tactically in the new, emerging mass media reality" (54). In this way Rastignac's engagement with the social milieu of Balzac's Paris via a rejection of the Telemachian model – embracing the seductress and her material offerings, refusing to return home – is a success for both the character and the décor: he achieves his goals, and is the wiser (though far more cynical) for his follies; meanwhile, the wallpaper's visual narrative, suggesting the larger framework of moral education but frozen in that single *tableau*'s moment of indulgence, provides a chiasmic complement to the *Bildungsroman*. The *trompe l'œil* effects of scenic wallpaper create a "figurative, three-dimensional world," but there is also a "quatrième dimension, le temps de la lecture du papier, qui se lit autour de la salle et qui finit au point où l'histoire recommence" ("forth dimension, the time of the reading of the paper, which is read around the room and which is finished at the point at which the story begins [again]") (Pauly 321). The paper invites a multi-directional temporal reading, however, wherein the reader reads "backwards," filling in the narrative sequence of the *lès* from their own familiarity with the Homeric tale and its retelling by Fénelon, and then "forwards," anticipating the novel's narrative arc and Rastignac's *Bildung* based on the metaphoric implications of this *mise-en-abyme*. These inferences are underlined by the fact that only this section of the *Télémaque* wallpaper is mentioned: the contemporaneous reader would be aware of its place within a larger decorative set, seeing in the mind's eye the paper's extension around the whole of the room and thus reading by inference the larger narrative of *Les Paysages de Télémaque*. In describing this singular portion of the wallpaper, the novel continues to teach us how to read metonymically (and intertextually), to make the necessary associations of physical detail with material actualities and narrative extensions.

It is critical to note, in any discussion of wallpaper in the novel, that the domestic walls of *Le père Goriot* are utterly porous. The Maison Vauquer's boarders spy on each other through keyholes and from stairwells. Mesdames de Restaud and de Beauséant watch their lovers – men who violate the legal, ideological, and physical boundaries of domestic sanctity – arrive and leave through large windows. Goriot had once lived in a room with wallpaper “que refuseraient les cabarets de la banlieue” (“even suburban saloons would refuse”) (2:222), but now, deprived as well of curtains on the windows, his wallpaper “collé sur les murailles s'en détachait en plusieurs endroits par l'effet de l'humidité, et se recroquevillait en laissant apercevoir le plâtre jauni par la fumée” (“was peeling off the walls, coming unglued in several places due to the humidity, and curling away to reveal the plaster, yellowed by smoke”) (2:258).<sup>45</sup> Even among the relatively *nouveau riche*, the aesthetic boundaries of the home are similarly compromised: the walls of Mme de Nucingen's salon are “à peintures italiennes, dont le décor ressemblait à celui des cafés” (“[decorated with] Italianate paintings, whose style resembles that of cafes”) (2:262). This reference accomplishes two things: first, it uses the “peintures italiennes” to place the fresco-style décor in the metonymic sequence of material “genealogies” that connect it to the panoramic wallpaper of the Maison Vauquer; and second, it underlines the failures of the novel's various homes – even its wealthiest – to establish truly interiorized domestic sanctums. If, as Marx's definition of commodity fetishism suggests, the consumer good in a capitalist society is both a material object and a representation of the material process it conceals, then the home's décor's all too suggestive resemblance to the public spaces of *cabarets* and *cafés* is simply a

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<sup>45</sup> Wallpaper paste was at this time a simple mixture of flour and water (“a preparation of wheaten flour, boiled up and incorporated with water,” according to Thomas Sheraton's 1803 *The Cabinet Dictionary* [II, 281]). Its failure to adhere heaps further insult on Goriot, the retired vermicelli merchant who still becomes fixated on the quality of the flour used to bake his bread.

descriptive metonym that reinforces its failure to reinforce the divisions between public and private, exterior and interior, society and family.

### **The Panorama**

While some critical attention has been paid to the panoramic wallpaper in *Le père Goriot*, and much more scholarship done on the references to the panorama in the novel and to literary panoramism more generally (in Balzac and elsewhere in nineteenth-century French literature), little has been said of the connection between the two. The *papier peint panoramique* was just one manifestation of the larger artistic and architectural vogue for the panorama itself.

In a promotional leaflet for the *Vues d'Italie* (c. 1810-15, 30 lengths), Zuber refers to the paper's having the "effect of a panorama," but the terms *tenture panoramique* and *papier panoramique* were first used in print by Henri Clouzot (*Tableau tentures de Dufour et Leroy* 2); the multiple and overlapping sources in material and design for both panoramic wallpaper and the panorama, however, make it difficult to assert that one is antecedent to the other and impossible to deny the conjoined histories of both. Both straddled the line between art and industry, painting and tapestry, and blurred the phenomenological distinction of exterior and interior. Both can also claim the influence of Louis Carrogis, better known as Carmontelle, the creator of extravagant gardens. In 1785 he invented what he called *transparentes* (transparencies), pictures painted on strips of rice paper or vellum roughly 15" high by 180' long, bordered at the top and bottom with black ribbon to prevent tearing, and mounted upon two vertical rollers on each side of an enclosed box that was placed before a window; a small door at the back of the box opened, allowing light through, while the viewer looked through a small door in front as a

crank turned one of the rollers, slowly unfurling the image.<sup>46</sup> The confluence of pictorial illusion and movement anticipates the dioramas of the next century, as does its use of light to create visual dynamism, but its domestication, so to speak, of an expansive, seemingly endless horizon for private enjoyment within the home locates it as a predecessor of landscape wallpapers.

English painter Robert Barker filed a patent for the panorama in London in 1787, but it was Robert Fulton, an American engineer, who imported it to France. The neologism “panorama” was only coined in 1792, in an announcement in *The Times*. Like contemporary wallpapers, the panorama was both a technological innovation and a new form of art. After they “walked along a corridor and up a staircase darkened to make them forget the landmarks of their city, visitors reached a platform surrounded by a ramp to stop them from going too near the canvas,” whose standard dimensions were just under 50x400’, though early versions were smaller; natural lighting came in through windows in the roof, but the apertures were hidden within the roof or by draping over the ceiling which prevented notice of the canvas’ upper edge, while the platform rail prevented viewers from advancing too close and various “scenery” objects obscured the lower edge, leaving the spectator’s view wholly unencumbered (see Comment 7-17). Quatremère de Quincy aptly noted its convergence of architecture and artifice, observing that “panorama” referred to both the painting as well as the building in which it is displayed (“Panorama,” *Dictionnaire historique d’architecture*). As an urban, commercial structure, the panorama is, according to Stephan Oettermann, the mass medium via which the bourgeois perspective is both formed and validated (9). Standing on the center platform within the rotunda, the spectator is totally surrounded by the painted image, unable to see beyond the framing screens or *trompe l’œil* effects, and thus mastering and mastered by a wholly self-

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<sup>46</sup> The device is described by Carmontelle in his 1794-95 *Mémoire sur les tableaux transparents du citoyen Carmontelle, l’an IIIe de la Liberté* (qtd. by Mosser, in Nouvel-Kammerer, 203-04).

contained mass perspective: “En inaugurant un nouveau mode de communication où l’essentiel du message réside dans son mode de transmission, le panorama préfigure l’ère des mass media” (“In inaugurating a new mode of communication in which the essence of the message resides within its mode of transmission, the panorama prefigures the era of mass media”) (Robichon 79). By eliding the difference between the image’s reality and reality itself, panoramic space is constructed around the spectator and his means of perception (Thompson 53-59), stressing what Crary calls the era’s “new valuation of visual experience” (14).

Paris’ first panorama, a view of the city from the Tuileries painted by Pierre Prévost, opened in 1799, with four more constructed in the next five years – the first arcade, “le Passage des Panoramas,” opened between two of them on the Boulevard de Montmartre. Like panoramic wallpaper, the panorama’s themes were both pictorial and historical. The earliest panoramas showed the burgeoning metropolises of the day – London and Paris – offering viewers a massive yet contained version of the cityscape just outside the rotunda. Foreign city- and landscapes, especially those from the Grand Tour, were also popular, stretching from the European centers of Rome, Athens, Constantinople, and the Alps, to more exotic sites like Jerusalem, Calcutta, the Mississippi Valley, and Rio de Janeiro. Battle scenes, sometimes representing military action that had taken place only months earlier, provided the major third theme of the panoramas, allowing the viewer a total visual immersion within the scene of conflict.<sup>47</sup> For his 1831 panorama depicting the naval battle at Navarino, Charles Langlois “replaced the traditional

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<sup>47</sup> In a neat circling of this trend, the historical Battle of Borodino is encountered – and, at first, mediated – via the language of panoramic technology in Lev Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. Pierre ascends a small platform to observe the battlefield on which the sun shines brightly «сквозь чистый, редкий воздух, огромную амфитеатром по поднимающейся местности открывшуюся перед ним панораму» (“through the clean, rarefied air, on the vast amphitheater of the panorama opening before him over the rising terrain,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 11:193). The same battle, known to the French as *La bataille de la Moskowa*, was the subject of a panorama designed by Charles Langlois and displayed in Paris from 1835 to 1839; Langlois himself visited the site of the battle and recorded his observations in order to represent the battlefield with the greatest possible accuracy. (His next canvas, shown from 1839 to 1842, depicted the subsequent burning of Moscow.)

platform with the poop deck of a frigate that had actually taken part in the battle,” bringing the visual and experiential verisimilitude to dizzying new heights (Comment 47).<sup>48</sup> Visitors were given informational literature with which to (literally and figuratively) orient themselves, indicating the main sites and action on display and thus guiding the viewer through the experience, not unlike the promotional literature that accompanied panoramic wallpaper.

This “new mode of perception caused by an oscillation between seeing the panorama as painting and as architecture, or as representation and simulation respectively” (Pold 55) is complemented on the smaller domestic scale by the experience of decorating with panoramic wallpaper, though the latter’s ambiguities are arguably more fraught. Like the panorama, panoramic wallpaper suggests both art and architecture, but it is a visual reinforcement of the structure’s walls, emphasizing their presence; however, it undermines the walls with its very artistry by obscuring the solidity of the home’s walls with illusionistic images of the outside world. The panorama’s visual continuum – its borders obscured, with no doors or windows, and an unbroken horizon line – conveyed representational unity, a singularity of place and time with its viewer at the center of a total, and totalizing, exteriorized present. Panoramic wallpaper, by contrast, establishes its figurative space as a narrative continuity, each *tableau* representing a spatio-temporal singularity, but part of the larger story being read, left to right, and continually renewed as the viewer’s eye circles the room. It is an eternal and continuous present.

This anchoring of the viewer in the present is complemented on the textual level in Balzac, with the introductory portion of the novel systematically written in the present tense (see Plessen 1-10). *Le père Goriot* gives the precise date and location of its opening setting no less than three times in its early pages, each instance conflating space, time, and narrative action: The first page notes that it is unusual for a young woman to be staying at the Maison Vauquer “en

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<sup>48</sup> Contemporary reports of visitors suffering from seasickness attest to its success (Comment 102-3).

1819, époque à laquelle ce drame commence” (2:217); the boarders’ disparaging opinions about Goriot are firmly fixed “vers la fin du mois de novembre 1819, époque à laquelle éclata ce drame” (2:226); and finally, having introduced Rastignac and his initial forays into social climbing, the narrator states, “Telle était la situation générale de la pension bourgeoise à la fin du mois de novembre 1819” (2:227). In giving his definition of the chronotope, Bakhtin asserts that it works “almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely)”; it functions, rather, “as the primary means for materializing time in space,... as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel” (*Dialogic Imagination*, 250). Linking the action to a specific time and place, the novel makes these narrative elements’ interdependence a foundation for the text as a whole. Furthermore, the above instances are set or associated with the *pension*’s salon, in which the boarders gather and gossip, and the room through which they (and initially the reader) enter the building (and narrative). It is in the nineteenth-century French novel, according to Bakhtin, that the salon comes into its own as an essential chronotope, “achieve[ing] its full significance as the place where the major spatial and temporal sequences of the novel intersect” (246).

Part of what made the panorama such a novel form of entertainment was its totalizing visual experience. The inability to see the canvas’ edgings – the physical demarcations of where the art(ifice) ended and reality began – was a fundamental shift from the traditional visual experience of easel painting; it thrust the viewer into a wholly self-contained spatiotemporal reality with no way to orient himself to the world outside the rotunda. Like a reader of *Le père Goriot*, a “Parisien égaré” in the neighborhood setting that opens the novel “ne verrait là que des pensions bourgeoises ou des Institutions, de la misère ou de l’ennui, de la vieillesse que meurt, de la joyeuse jeunesse contrainte à travailler” (“a Parisian lost... there would see only bourgeois

boarding houses or hospitals, misery or boredom, the elderly dying, the happy youth forced into labor”) (2:217). In short, one would see public institutions, emotional conditions, and urban “types,” not as a sociological cross-section but rather an inescapable horizon. “La rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève surtout est comme un cadre de bronze, le seul qui convienne à ce récit” (“The rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève is above all like a bronze frame, the only one that could suit this story”) (ibid.), but the viewer-reader is already immersed, and this urban frame is instead already part of the presentation – comparable to the artificial landscaping of the panorama’s visual edges and the paneling and dado décor that frames wallpaper. Its function has been subsumed into the form.

The “democratization of perspective” (Pold 55) created by the panorama’s stereoscopic horizon was matched by its democratization of culture and entertainment, making artistic renderings of history, geography, and travel available to a mass consumer audience (Oettermann 26). But by bringing this medium into the home, scenic wallpaper suggests a public viewership – a capitalist experience – within the private enclave of domestic life. If the arcades and dioramas were “interiors par excellence, but, of course, public interiors” (Vidler 81), the panoramic wallpaper positions its viewers as an interiorized public.<sup>49</sup>

The presence of *papier peint panoramique* in the Maison Vauquer underscores this problem of mass entertainment within a supposedly personal space: the boardinghouse compartmentalizes domestic existence into various floors and individual rooms for rent, with residents moving up and down, in and out, depending on their solvency, and denies any semblance of the stability, privacy, and security of a home. Mme Vauquer, who will be more preoccupied with her sheets than with the man dying upon them, conflates her lost boarders with the furnishings themselves (“ma maison démeublée de ses hommes” [5:1028]), the financial

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<sup>49</sup> See also Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*.



value of the former equal to the physical comfort of the latter. (This syncretizing of bodies with furnishings is made at the very start of the novel, when the initial description of the *pension*'s "meubles indestructibles" notes, paradoxically, that they are "placés là comme le sont les débris de la civilisation aux Incurables" [5:851].) By paying for room and board – the latter eaten with the others who don't even live in the house – the residents of the *pension* lose even the illusion of personal property and private residence offered by apartment rentals; domesticity is merely another monetized dimension of modern life. Generations of previous lodgers have been laughing at the *Télémaque* paper these forty years, the interchangeability of their bodies and identities emphasizing their status as customers, using the house's décor as entertainment and amenities as services and thus speaking to the cheap, consumable quality of both.

There are, of course, distinct differences between the panorama and the panoramic wallpaper that complicate my analogizing of the two and my use of the latter as a metonym not simply for the novel but for the novel's own panoramism. The panorama was defined by its circular horizon, the absence of vertical breaks in its visual landscape or narrative, and the concealment of horizontal edges. By contrast, scenic wallpaper was "interrupted" at the room's various edges and openings, from doors and windows to corners, and the walls are of course flat planes meeting at right angles rather a smoothly circular expanse. While every element of the panorama's physical edifice was constructed for the image's intended display, indeed for the visual effect that was its *raison d'être*, panoramic wallpaper was subordinate to the structure of its space, designed and deployed to conceal the reality but never under the illusion of a totalizing effect.

The panorama's capacity for mass entertainment, however, was necessarily temporary: in addition to the larger temporal constraints of fickle public tastes, which could extend any given

exhibit, inspire a change in display, or cause its closure all-together, the actual consumer experience of the panorama (or the diorama, the georama, the cosmorama, the neorama, the navalorama, etc.) was confined to the set time allotted each paying viewer, varying on average from 10 to 30 minutes. Conversely, the panoramic wallpaper hung in the home was privately on display for as long as the homemaker wanted it; the implicit catch, of course, is that the image was inescapable. Once installed, in the home and in the realist narrative, it is a constant backdrop to the action before it, regardless of whether it is actively noted by the residents or by the narrator thereafter.

The current lodgers, dining together, comment upon the present vogue for the diorama, the latest extension of the panorama's popularity. Their jocularity absorbs even language into panoramism, as they attempt witticisms about one another's *santérama* ("healthirama") and *froitorama* ("chillirama"). The meager meal itself becomes a dimension of the medium in their word-games ("souporama,"), a *cornue* ("retort") is turned into a *cor-norama* ("cornorama"), and the titular character himself cannot escape ("Goriorama") (2:233).<sup>50</sup> This linguistic play is callously resumed near the novel's end by the resident painter, who notes, "il paraît que nous allons avoir un petit mortorama là-haut?" ("it seems we're to have a little death-o-rama up there?") (2:306). Even Goriot's death is made a semi-public spectacle within the *pension*, spoken of as a visual(-ized) spectator event; but the comment, bookending the novel, emphasizes the panoramism of the realist narrative as a whole. And yet the boarders' talking "en *rama*" is both inaccurate and suggestive: in the term "panorama," it is the Greek prefix "pan-" (πᾶν, meaning *all*) that indicates totality, that which would absorb the linguistic fragments of conversation into itself; the "-rama" suffix (ὄραμα, meaning *sight*) signifies visuality. Thus it is fitting that the

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<sup>50</sup> After Mlle. Michonneau has turned in Vautrin – the master manipulator of people and of words – to the authorities, her fellow boarders deride her as a "Fameux sexorama!" who must be shown "À la portorama!" (2:282).

resident painter is the one who has introduced this wordplay, subsuming various conversational elements into a discourse of sight and spectacle.

While the panorama offered a seemingly endless, inescapable line of vision, from which the spectator was nonetheless held at a fixed distance, the diorama's illusion was based in movement. It was first launched in 1822 (another historical inaccuracy in the novel). Created by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (future inventor of the daguerreotype) and Charles-Marie Bouton, former collaborators with master panoramist Pierre Prévost, the diorama was both more painterly and phantasmagorical. Consisting of a flat or slightly curved transparent canvas, usually made of calico, the diorama was illuminated from the front or the back so as to simulate physical movement, the passage of time from day to night or from season to season, or changes in weather.<sup>51</sup> While the frame, as with the panorama, was concealed and its aim was mimetic representation, the diorama's effects were dependent upon the viewer's engagement in a visual narrative far more unstable than the panorama's more static chronotope. Like the dioramas that have inspired their banter, the boarders' *-ramic* talk invokes the movement through space and time – the invisible physical conditions of health and hunger, and ultimately the metaphysical transition into death are put on the same linguistic plane as the meal before them and the old man whom they mock; the dioramic model is a subgenre of the (physically, financially, commercially, and conceptually) larger panorama, just as the dynamism of this scene's interactions is a microcosm of the panoramic expanse of the novel and its social *tableau*.

When Rastignac has begun his social ascent, Vautrin takes up the *-rama* wordplay once more, applying it to the young man and then to the lodging house itself as a signifier of his

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<sup>51</sup> On proto-cinematic entertainments such as the diorama and magic lantern shows, see especially Tom Gunning, "The Long and Short of it: Centuries of Projecting Shadows from Natural Magic to the Avant-Garde," "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films and Photography's Uncanny," and "Cinéma des attractions et modernité," among others.

status. Vautrin derides the young “monsieur le marquis de Rastignacorama” while they stand at the intersection of various “openings” in the house’s architecture: “au bas de l’escalier, dans le carré qui séparait la salle à manger de la cuisine, où se trouvait une porte pleine donnant sur le jardin, et surmontée d’un long carreau garni de barreaux en fer” (“at the bottom of the stairs, in the space that separated the dining room from the kitchen, where there was a plain door opening onto the garden, beneath a long window with iron bars”) (2:249). The initial exchange in this intermediary space is indeed a spectacle for the other residents, who anticipate a physical altercation, but Vautrin is more interested in reading Rastignac – the semi-disguised criminal, whose powers of perception allow him to see and fully comprehend all around him, will shortly lay out his plot to enrich himself and the young Eugène, making his nefarious nature at least partly visible.

Later, continuing to act as an infernal, advisory presence, Vautrin comments upon Rastignac’s residence at the boarding house. A *pension* is, he insists, perfectly respectable, but absolutely unfashionable, “fière d’être le manoir momentané d’un Rastignac; mais, enfin, elle est rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, et ignore le luxe, parce qu’elle est purement *patriarchalorama*” (“proud to be the temporary abode of a Rastignac; but, after all, it is in the rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and devoid of luxury, because it is fundamentally *patriarchalorama*”) (2:265, emphasis in the original). Vautrin’s characterization of the Maison Vauquer does two things: it fixes the *pension*’s social shortcomings in its physical location, aligning class signification with the layout of the cityscape, coding both as mutually determined and equally inescapable; and it casts the lodging’s patriarchalism, and the inelegance inherent therein, as *-ramic*, that is to say, as visually discursive and discursively visual. His remarks, made “d’un air paternellement railleur,” subsume even conversational ironizing into the pseudo-paternalism of advice and

condescension; both his mockery and his instructions, however, are in the concrete terms of money's outward display, established first and foremost in where one lives, which is decidedly not the rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, the Maison Vauquer, or the "virtuous garret" (*vertueuse mansarde*) that Vautrin presents as the sole alternative to unscrupulous social-climbing. In the panoramic vision of Parisian society, position is legitimated not by patriarchal authority – on the contrary, father figures are to be thrown off with great haste – but by its visual performance, best evidenced by residence in the right kind of home, in the right area of the city. Goriot, abandoned by his daughters, occupies and indeed embodies this *patriarchalorama*, fully and unflinchingly visible to its occupants (and, as père Goriot the character and *père Goriot* the text, legible to its readers).

### **The Failures of Framing**

The start of Rastignac's social odyssey (or, rather, Telemachiad) is marked by the shortcomings of his perspective. Returning to the squalor of the *pension* from the glamour of Mesdames de Restaud's and de Beauséant's, the contrast is all too sharp: the latter's elegant imagery of youthful figures "encadrées par les merveilles de l'art et du luxe" ("framed by the marvels of art and luxury") jars with the "sinistres tableaux bordés de fange" ("ominous scenes surrounded by filth") (2:914). While he vows to pursue "deux tranchées parallèles pour arriver à la fortune," it is the narrator who remarks upon the physical impossibility of this plan: "Ces deux lignes sont des asymptotes qui ne peuvent jamais se rejoindre" (2:243). Conceiving of the two social milieus in terms of their synecdochic framings, Rastignac mistakenly believes himself capable of constructing and navigating dual (and dueling) lines of action. Like the unidirectional visual experience of a framed image, Rastignac's single-point visual perspective has a distinct, unitary

vanishing point. These lines, however, are asymptotic – they cannot meet each other. Panoramic vision, likewise, has multiple vanishing points, the continuum of its horizon demanding a polyscopic perspective that obliterates any visual framing and insists upon the infinitude of its viewpoints.

Just before his famous charge to Paris, Rastignac takes in a panoramic view of the city from atop the cemetery hill: “vit Paris tortueusement couché le long des deux rives de la Seine” (“[he] saw Paris tortuously winding along the two banks of the Seine”). He sees the public monuments not for themselves but for the extra-topographical scene: “Ses yeux s’attachèrent presque avidement *entre* la colonne de la place Vendôme et le dome des Invalides, *là* où vivait ce beau monde dans lequel il avait voulu pénétrer” (“His eyes turned almost eagerly *between* the column of the Place Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides, *there* where that *beau monde* lived which he wanted to invade”) (2:308, emphasis added). His eyes fall not upon the concrete visual points of geographical orientation, but rather *between* them, to the abstracted vanishing point of social ascension. Unlike Dufour’s *papier peint panoramique* of *Les Monuments de Paris*, Balzac’s panorama is geographically accurate, in keeping with the novel’s self-proclaimed verisimilitude; but the textual panorama is laid out for its young hero’s visual consumption and social conquest. Setting off into the Parisian cityscape to dine with Mme de Nucingen, however, Rastignac is following the truncated narrative model of the *Télémaque* paper described in the text, suggesting that the irony of its lesson is not in its antiquated irrelevance or démodé appearance, but, in fact, in its accuracy.

I would like to return one last time to the *pension* boarders’ talk “en *rama*” and, more specifically, to how their wordplay is framed. The narrator notes that they speak “de ces riens qui constituent, chez certaines classes parisiennes, un esprit drôlatique dans lequel la bêtise entre

comme élément principal, et dont le mérite consiste particulièrement dans le geste ou la prononciation” (“in those empty phrases that constitute, among certain classes of Parisians, a spirit of drollery in which stupidity is the principle element and whose worth consists particularly in the gesture or the pronounciation”) (2:232). Dismissing the self-satisfaction of cleverness, the text in fact indicates that the meaninglessness of the wordplay is its meaning – reduced to gesture and sound, the “élément principal” is the absence of any actual signification. Sign is divorced from referent, meaning from metaphor, and image from frame. Thus Goriot can be called “père” by everyone and anyone and yet the weight of paternal signification is nonetheless wrenched away from him; meanwhile Mme de Langeais can carelessly refer to him as Loriot, Foriot, Doriot, Moriot, etc. (2:241; see also Petrey 83-90).

Rastignac’s first foray into high society is marked by entire conversations conducted in gestures and looks: when Maxime de Traille shrugs and looks at his lover, it has “l’air de lui dire” (“as if to say); “Anastasie comprit le regard,” and answers in turn with “un signe” (2:236). Rastignac’s fatal error, of course, is when he refers to Goriot as he is accustomed to: it is “[à] ce nom enjolivé du mot *père*” (“at [hearing] that name embellished with the word *père*”) that Monsieur de Restaud is enraged (ibid., emphasis in the original). This application of a certain signifier to a known referent suggests the typical reading of this exchange, namely that the use of *père* is disrespectful to Goriot and, by extension, de Restaud, that the reminder of their relation is distasteful to the latter, and that the moment exposes Rastignac’s lack of social experience and acumen; I would argue, however, that the framing of “Goriot” under the sign of “*père*” creates the social rupture on the level of language – having established a sign system of looks and gestures that parallels and even supersedes the spoken word, the excessive accuracy of “*père*,” its over-determination as a frame of signification, is what is so jarring. That Rastignac fails to

understand what precisely he did wrong is indicative of his residual naïveté. He learns quickly, however, and in his subsequent visit with Mme de Beauséant is able to read in “cette phrase, le geste, le regard, l’inflexion de voix” not just her meaning but “l’histoire du caractère et des habitudes de la caste” (2:255). Rastignac is able to properly classify and catalog various social types not according to the stable sign system of language or symbols of material wealth that frame them, but rather via total immersion within the referential freedom of imagistic gestures.

### **The Panoramic in Form and Genre**

The literary genre that Benjamin termed *panoramic* developed out of the post-revolutionary Parisian guidebooks that made the “re-written” city, its monuments and public institutions now under new names as well as new, and unstable, sources of political authority, “readable” (see Ferguson 37). They consisted, according to Benjamin, “of isolated sketches, the anecdotal form of which corresponds to the plastic foreground of the panorama, and their informational base to its painted background” (*Reflections* 149). One of the most significant early iterations is Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s *Tableau de Paris*, published in 1781 and revised several times in subsequent years. Not simply a guide to the city’s geography, Mercier’s *Tableau* includes the slums and prisons along with the poor and the vermin – in short, it is a social topography. The 1831 *Paris, ou le livre des cent-et-uns* inaugurated the July Monarchy’s panoramic genre, with its multivolume collections of sketches, essays, episodic stories, jokes, anecdotes, and social portraits. The same technological advances in printing and paper manufacturing that facilitated the expansion of the wallpaper industry made possible the mass production, consumption, and proliferation of print media during the 1830s (Sieburth, “Same Difference,” 166; see also de la Motte). While the *physiologies*, pamphlets describing the various social “types” and institutions



of contemporary life, were made to be bought and read on the street, the more expensive illustrated *tableaux* of panoramic albums were produced for the bourgeois household, luxury goods to be displayed within the home (Margaret Cohen 229). The juxtaposition of descriptive sketches of the everyday details of Parisian life with lithographic illustrations combined rhetorical performance with visual representation in rendering the modern cityscape and its inhabitants “real” (in the Barthesian sense) and legible.

Balzac’s own *Physiologie du mariage* (1829) prefigures the craze for the *physiologies* a decade later. In it, explicit reference is made to Johann Caspar Lavater, whose *L’Art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie* was published in annotated and illustrated form in France in 1806-09 and reissued in 1820; his work was a codification of a physical and moral correspondence, by which social types could be assessed and classified according to determinative appearance (Wechsler 20-26).<sup>52</sup> The emerging repertory of social types, aligned to their social roles (bureaucrat, parvenu, banker, spinster, poet, petit-bourgeois, etc.), complemented Balzac’s physiological metaphorization of the city itself, not simply anthropomorphizing Paris, but anatomizing it and the typological groupings of bodies therein. While the visual correspondence of animal characteristics or phrenological traits to personalities was a large part of this classification and categorization of social types, these roles were described and thus defined “primarily by social behaviour and interactions rather than by visual characteristics of the individual” (34). Such “scientific” pathologizing is of course evident throughout *Le père Goriot*, from the heavy use of animal metaphors and similes to describe characters (e.g., Mme Vauquer’s “parrot” nose, Goriot’s “canine” paternal love, etc.)<sup>53</sup> to its

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<sup>52</sup> See also Percival and Tytler, *Physiognomy in Profile*, and Tytler’s *Physiognomy in the European Novel*.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., Hoffmann.

overt, if mocking, references to phrenology – but it is the deployment and interpretation of gesture and behavioral interaction which more potently determine meaning.

The broad typologies of panoramic literature correspond to the visual effects necessitated by panoramic wallpaper's technical production. Block printing precluded any sort of blending of paints; its sharp juxtaposition of flat wash colors meant that only hatching effects could create the impression of a figure's volume, and the subtler details of gradations in flesh tone and bodily shape – in short, the *trompe-l'œil* effects of truly mimetic illusion – were impossible. While the use of bold colors in the design's foreground could shift into lighter shades in the background in order to give the impression of spatial depth, for human faces “the major traits were evoked by a few visual signs limited to simple, immediate, almost childish graphics. In order to read and decipher the tricks of block printing, the eye was obliged to do some transcribing” (Nouvel-Kammerer 118-19). To construct its episodic narratives, panoramic wallpapers depicted its main characters in distinct costumes so that their appearance in sequential *tableaux* differentiated one scene from the next; in the *Télémaque* set, Telemachus' bright red cloak allows the viewer to identify and follow him, visually and in narrative sequence. The “types” of *Le père Goriot* are made instantly recognizable through the thick descriptions of their dress – as “également délabrés” (“equally dilapidated”) as their lodgings (2:220) – or the faces upon which their personal dramas have been clearly stamped. The Balzacian physiology is thus not a metaphor or figure for social allegory, but a metonymic referent within the broader textual panorama.

The apartment house was a frequent “descriptive object and narrative device” for the *tableaux* (Marcus 33), which, like their illustrations and visual presentation, combined the “static object” of edifice and demographic portraiture with exciting anecdotes and narratives, presenting both structure and story to the reader as wholly visible, legible, and thus intelligible (Sieburth,

“Une idéologie du lisible,” 41). The façade of the Maison Vauquer is described at length to the reader before being effectively peeled back to give the *tableau* of its inhabitants, their “types” and placement within the architectural strata;<sup>54</sup> this introductory “street-view” accords with the visual media of the *physiologie*, itself “street-level” in terms of commercial exchange and narrative scope or viewpoint. By contrast, the *papier peint panoramique*, like panoramic books, is consumed domestically, intended to present a narrative within the bourgeois interior of the home, the Maison Vauquer, and the novel itself.

Walter Benjamin characterizes panoramic literature as “moral dioramas,” noting its “unscrupulous multiplicity” (Q2, 6:531). Similarly, Richard Sieburth compares its repetitiveness to Barthes’ concept of the *doxa* (“Same Difference,” 173). The genre’s self-evident observations are merely self-imitating manifestations of popular thought. I would argue that wallpaper itself, as a “self-evident” decorative element of the bourgeois home, is comparable in its internalized expression of the dominant structures of cultural and social thought – internalized in terms of its display within the home as well as its expressing, complementing, or highlighting the personal tastes of its purchaser and/or viewer. My analogizing of panoramic wallpaper to panoramic literature, however, extends beyond their material connections and theoretical functions. As stated above, unlike traditional wallpaper designs, and in defiance of the shape and assembly of its individual lengths, panoramic wallpapers’ imagery does not repeat in vertical patterns. Scenic papers construct a legible topography, narrativizing a land- or cityscape; panoramic papers depict literary or historical events, the *tableaux* each telling a distinct, discrete visual story, but the reappearance of characters in various scenes indicates the progression of an overall narrative to

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<sup>54</sup> Following the popularity of the French *physiologies*, Russia saw the publication of its own physiology with Aleksandr Bashchutskii’s two-volume *Panorama Sanktpeterburga* in 1834, focusing, fittingly, on its decidedly European capital; thereafter the horizontal dissection of apartment buildings was used the fictional physiological treatments of the city, Yakov Butkov’s *Petersburg Heights* (1845-46) and Fedor Dostoevsky’s *The Insulted and the Injured* (1861). See Martin 278-84, as well as Marullo’s Editor’s Introduction to Nekrasov’s *Fiziologiiia Peterburga*.

read across the panels. Cohen terms the variety of topics and forms in the panoramic genre its “heterogenicity,” which, she argues, “accentuates the hermeneutic complexities introduced by its lack of authorizing point of view” (234). This referential instability, whereby the reader, in fortuitously visual terms, must choose where and how to look underscores the necessity of concrete images with which to orient oneself in the midst of this panoramic – and panoptic – project. John Bender asserts that the early modern novel, philosophy, and the penitentiary “share an impetus toward realism, that is, toward a fine, observationally ordered, materially exhaustive grid of representation that accounts for behavior, in fact constructs it, in terms of sensory experience” (11). In my account of panoramic wallpaper, this décor contributes to the construction of a realist narrative not through its delimiting of space but rather its highlighting the porosity thereof.

The narrative is (self-)conscious of its own construction, noting, for example, the growing friendship between Rastignac and Goriot early in the novel, “sans laquelle il eût été sans doute impossible de connaître le dénouement de cette histoire” (“without which it would without a doubt be impossible to know the conclusion of this story”) (2:260). Fittingly, it is Vautrin whose “œil semblait aller au fond de toutes les questions, de toutes les consciences, de tous les sentiments” (“eye seemed to sound the depths of all issues, all consciences, all emotions”) (2:221). The character who best understands the panoptic force of the modern prison state, who traverses social spheres (and escapes punitive institutions) as easily as he transforms himself with the superficial signifiers of disguise, reads his fellow characters instantly and accurately. While the conclusion of his own plot in “Trompe-la-Mort” would seem to make Goriot’s death anticlimactic, he has already perceptively predicted the master narrative’s ending, amidst all the gossiping of the other boarders and their misreadings of the old man: “C’est un imbécile assez

bête pour se ruiner à aimer les filles qui...” (“He’s such a fool he’ll ruin himself for his daughters, who...” (2:230). From within the *pension*, whose squalor, location, and barred windows all contribute to its being likened to a prison and other punitive social institutions – in short, from within the panoptic microcosm of the larger cityscape’s and narrative’s social panorama – Vautrin’s observational ordering neatly anticipates his own arrest and (attempted) reincarceration. While the exposure of his “TF” shoulder brand and his reaction to hearing the name “Trompe-la-Mort” indicate the truth of his criminality, it is when his shoddy wig has been knocked loose, revealing his natural hair, that “[c]hacun comprit tout Vautrin” (2:280) and the terrifying transfiguration into Jacques Collin is complete. Despite his occasional slips of the tongue and the fleeting glimpses of “l’épouvantable profondeur de son caractère” (2:221), it is the revelation of this non-linguistic, *visually* legible truth of his person that finally confirms the truth of his identity.<sup>55</sup> The ability to “see all,” to talk “en rama” and narrate panoramically, thus entails inevitably being fully seen and placed within the panoptic vision of social control and narrative cohesion. Correspondingly, to see the whole of panoramic wallpaper’s visual narrative, the spectator-resident is placed at the room’s center, accorded a mastering vision even as he is mastered by the space itself; while literary narrative moves the reader through space and time, the visual narrative of panoramism locates its viewer at the chronotopic center, subject of and to the Benjaminian “phantasmagorias of the interior” (*Reflections*, 154).

The elision of panoramic wallpaper’s grid work – the concealment of joins and thus the construction of a visually cohesive narrative – corresponds to the history of the readerly experience of Balzac’s novel: initially published in four parts in the *Revue de Paris*, on December 14 and 28 of 1834 and January 25 and February 11 of 1835, with seven internal

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<sup>55</sup> One might return here to Auerbach, whose analysis of another Homeric scar and its dramatic reveal – this time, Odysseus’s – constitutes the introductory chapter of his *Mimesis* (3-23).

chapter breaks, subsequent publications eliminated the chapter titles that signposted the narrative's progression (and broke up the reader's visual experience of the pages' vertical lengths), presenting instead an uninterrupted, solid block of print along which the eye moves ever onward horizontally.

*Le père Goriot* marks one of the main entry-points into Balzac's sprawling *Comédie humaine*. The novel inaugurates his use and reuse of characters who will reappear prominently (and in background) through the *oeuvre*, with Rastignac as the first of the intertextual figures.<sup>56</sup> Each piece of a *papier peint panoramique* set is a singular element – its *tableaux* can be “read” individually, just as the single panel of the *Télémaque* paper described in the Maison Vauquer stands alone as a mini-vignette and behavioral model; the *pension* represents as an individual (though emblematic) architectural/-ized *tableau*; and *Le père Goriot* is legible and intelligible as a discrete text. However, each piece of the *papier peint* is also an element within a coherent and cohesive ensemble. The individual piece of the *Telemachia* shown here is, in the collective consciousness of its viewer-readers, within the novel and without, part of an episodic structure reaching backwards and forwards to construct a narrative whole. And finally, each “piece” of the *Comédie humaine* fits together – its characters reappearing within and across recognizable social and physical settings – to form a single vast pattern, the landscape of Balzac's panorama. The panoramic view will be taken up as well by Émile Zola and the “aestheticizing perspective” of the Naturalists, who “are intent on making wholes out of parts, stitching fragments, ‘slices’ and ‘tableaux’ into coherent patterns” (Prendergast 71).

For the nineteenth-century literary interior, as for the early realist project of narrating that space, the “objet singulier, en tant que catégorie indépendante, est le seul constituant de l'intérieur” (“singular object, *qua* independent category, is the sole constituent of the interior”)

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<sup>56</sup> See Pugh for an extensive treatment of Balzac's use of recurring characters.

(Maleuvre 433). Thus dependant upon “un lien synecdotique avec le tout, le détail chez Balzac cesse d’en être un. Il représente, à chaque point de la visite, le paysage entier de l’intérieur” (“a synecdochic link to the whole, the detail in Balzac ceases to be one. It represents, at each point along the way, the whole landscape of the interior”) (ibid.). Whereas the panorama rotundas placed the viewer within an enclosed chronotope of visual experience, and the panoramic literature of the popular press presented static scenes of the cityscape’s vistas and inhabitants, panoramic wallpaper links the visual to the narrative, the spatial to the experientially chronological. As a metonymic entry-point into *Le père Goriot* – and, indeed, into Balzac’s œuvre – the panoramic wallpaper glimpsed in the crumbling Maison Vauquer suggests the generic valences of the realist novel in the first half of the century.

In its massive accumulation and dispersal of material details, the novel’s metonyms are so plentiful as to overwhelm the reader, to suggest, in fact, that the pursuit of any one *thing* amidst its riches of metaphors and allegories would be beside the point, if not entirely pointless. My analysis of this *objet singulier* – as well-known and easily overlooked (and under-read) as wallpaper generally – has resituated it not simply within its own historical context, but within the larger project of realist representation, not as an overdetermined metaphor girding the novel’s symbolic structure, but rather a metonymic element with which that structure is written, seen, and read. In the next chapter, I address how the metonymic connections of economy and aesthetics undergird the syntactic structure of the mid-century British novel, papering together the central concerns of industry and romance.

## Chapter Two

### The Culture of Industry and Industrial Culture; or, Reconciling *North and South*

“The various works of art, my dearest child, are so interwoven with each other, that like a vast chain each link serves but to connect the extremes of such ingenious productions as form the boundaries of one department, and yet unite it, as it were, insensibly, to define the commencement of another. The whole forms a wonderful and fascinating labyrinth.”

Caroline A. Halsted, *Investigations; or, Travels in the Boudoir*

All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame.

John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*

On December 4, 1852, two years before it began its serial publication of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*, Charles Dickens’s *Household Words* featured a short story entitled “A House Full of Horrors.” In it, Mr. Crumpet relates how he used to come home from the City and with his family “shut out the twilight”; having lit the camphine lamp,<sup>57</sup> he “seemed to shut out cares, to lighten up my heart as well as my small parlour” (No. 141, 266). However, since visiting the Department of Practical Art’s “Chamber of Horrors” at Marlborough House, he has “acquired some Correct Principles of Taste”; the Catalogue of the Museum of Ornament instructs visitors as to why the pieces of interior décor and textiles on display broke with the accepted laws of design and ornament, and “when I returned home I found that I had been living among horrors up to that hour” (265). He has since “been haunted by the most horrid shapes,”

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<sup>57</sup> These lamps burned a turpentine distillation and gave off an especially “brilliant light” (*The Magazine of Science, and School of Arts*, VI [1845], 98), making a room’s decorative shortcomings all the more distressingly visible.



like a narrator out of an Edgar Allan Poe tale:<sup>58</sup> “My snug parlour maddens me; the walls and floors are densely covered with the most frightful objects [...] When I shut my curtains and shut in my room, I shut myself in with all these terrible companions, whose hideousness is visible alone to me.” (“The Tell-Tale Heart,” indeed.) Directing his new-found judgment to wallpaper, in particular, Crumpet declares that its ornamentation “ought to be subdued in character, presenting no strong contrasts in colour,” while “the greatest pains must be taken to assure the nice adjustment of the proportions, and to prevent anything from staring out to catch the eye” (269). Of his friend Mr. Frippy’s boldly floral and striped wallpaper, he can only state that, unfortunately, “[t]here is no fitness in the paper as a background to a parlour, or as a background to anything; the direct imitation of flowers is also impertinent.”<sup>59</sup>

While the crimes against good taste committed in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* are not quite so egregious, the novel’s depiction of interior décor and its characters’ responses to it provide a rich and evocative starting-point from which to analyze the text’s web of linkages – metaphoric and metonymic – and thereby illustrate its engagement with the questions of factory production, design theory, social responsibility, and romantic desire in the age of industrial capitalism. Whereas my previous discussion focused on the optical technologies at work in *Le père Goriot* and their relationship to the technologies of language, this current chapter will engage with the technologies of industrial production, the production of industrial culture, and how these material circumstances intersect with the affective concerns of the romance plot. In her chapter “Coziness and Its Vicissitudes: Checked Curtains and Global Cotton Markets in

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<sup>58</sup> In his 1840 “The Philosophy of Furniture,” Poe actually described his ideal décor: “The walls are prepared with a glossy-paper of a silver gray tint, spotted with small Arabesque devices of a fainter hue of the prevalent crimson,” asserting the superiority of the arabesque’s “vivid circular or cycloid features, *of no meaning*” over the “abomination of flowers, or representations of well-known objects of any kind” (*Complete Works* 101-09, emphasis in the original).

<sup>59</sup> Contributors to *Household Words* often emulated Dickens’s style, consciously or otherwise, even in more traditionally journalistic and social commentary pieces, utilizing “fantasy, vision, fable, imaginary travels, . . . and the use of fictitious characters to serve as mouthpieces of information and opinion” (Lohrli 9).

*Mary Barton*,” Elaine Freedgood notes that “metonymy is largely ignored *until* it becomes metaphor: only then does it form what seem to be unitary or necessary meanings. As a result of this neglect, a thing in the novel can enclose and encode far-flung peoples, practices, and places in loose, nonsymbolic grip because we typically don’t ‘read’ such things” (56).<sup>60</sup> Once placed preemptively within the formulaic equivalencies of metaphor, things – and their metonymic significance – become mere accessories to meaning, rather than essential, constituent components. Similarly, a weak metonymic interpretation of wallpaper in this Gaskell novel suggests an easy, and easily dichotomous reading of the novel’s central drama: Margaret Hale’s “good taste” in décor (and society) is class-based and initially prejudices her against the manufacturer John Thornton, while Thornton’s class mobility depends on producing the very materials, namely textiles, which signify such taste. Pursuing a strongly metonymic reading of the economic underpinnings of their respective interests, however, becomes a way to connect the hero and heroine and their respective social, gender, and ideological spheres.

As Freedgood asserts, “hidden relations accumulate and abide in the words that name things, whether or not we know them fully, consciously, avowedly, or at all” (69). Similarly, my excavation in this chapter of the technological and ideological relationships of meanings buried within the novel’s descriptive details will follow these various lines of connection in order to reconstruct a fuller and ultimately more unified understanding of the text’s larger symbolic whole. I begin with a discussion of the domestic settings described early in the novel, placing them within the affective and architectural contexts of the characters and the manufacturing town of Milton, respectively; then I address the Factory Question and how contemporaneous issues of

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<sup>60</sup> See also Genette, “Métonymie chez Proust,” in *Figure III*, which delineates the differences between metaphor and metonymy; the former, he asserts is temporal, while the latter is spatial, a point that accords with my inter- and intraspacial analyses here and in the dissertation as a whole. The “presence of what is there” in Barthes’ reality effect is, he argues elsewhere, what directs narrative, rather than the narrator’s authorial powers of governance (*Narrative Discourse*, 165).

political-economy are dramatized in the novel's personal relationships; I then discuss how industrial manufacture affected design, the developments of the synthetic dye industry and its relationship to light, lighting, and the science of optics, and what these innovations mean for the novel's depiction of décor, color, and how the visible is perceived; finally, I examine the ecological dimension of industrialization as represented in the novel, through the goods manufactured via polluting technologies and the effects of such pollution – environmental and aesthetic – upon the characters. My strategic approach to this chapter's arguments is, by necessity, twofold: By tracing these histories of industrial production and design theory in mid-century Britain alongside an analysis of how they are illustrated by and relate back to the wallpaper and other decorative details in the novel, I demonstrate how *North and South* is both constructed by its series of cultural conflicts and, ultimately, how those very oppositions facilitate its social and romantic reconciliations. Throughout my discussions of these intersecting concerns, I will continually refer by turns to the narrative drama of the novel and to the material context in which it is (re)situated. It is this very act of balancing, of negotiating the private, readerly space of narrative with the public world of things and ideas within which it is in constant conversation, which demonstrates the intertwining that embodies the industrial romance of *North and South* – the inability to extricate industry from romance or romance from industry, and, thus, the ultimate reconciliation of the two at the novel's close.

### **Settings and Sensibilities**

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall read the separate spheres ideology as embodied in and by middle-class gender divisions. The tensions between the public and private, especially as spatio-ideological extensions of class divisions, are, according to Catherine Gallagher, particularly

evident in *North and South*, because the novel “emphasize[s] thematically the very thing [it] cannot achieve structurally: the integration of public and private life” (149). In his analyses of John Ruskin’s “Of Queen’s Gardens,” however, Seth Koven emphasizes how women’s private social roles enabled and endorsed their taking on public roles, specifically in philanthropic visits to the homes of the poor (*Slumming*, 186).<sup>61</sup> Rather than reading domestic space as an idyllic enclave, divided from the public sphere, I argue that Gaskell’s novel is illustrative of the piece-by-piece construction of the domestic sphere – and the signification of those pieces as porous, as membranes through which cultural and economic meanings are exchanged. Instead of reifying a private-public split through its visual demarcation of ideological division, the wallpaper in this novel, as a piece of material culture, acts as a membrane that bears the economic and ideological interests of both the public sphere in which it is produced and the private sphere which it delimits. In its visual qualities as a large, surrounding visual expanse within the home generally, and in its unique depiction within this novel, wallpaper is a richly metonymic signifier of the relations between aesthetic judgment and social power as they play out within this text. It is not simply a screen upon which to project interpretive conclusion, but rather a membrane through which we may gather meaning and within which we locate the myriad of referential allusions that construct a realist narrative.

Early in *North and South*, the narrative describes the various, contrasting settings through which the characters’ aesthetic and moral sensibilities are expressed – from the geographic scale of a bucolic South versus the industrial North, to the intimately domestic details of the Hales’ new home. In the opening chapters of the novel, Margaret learns of her father’s crisis of faith, his decision to leave the Church of England, and thus the necessity of the family’s move from their

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<sup>61</sup> See also Koven, “How the Victorians Read *Sesame and Lilies*,” in Deborah Nord, ed., *John Ruskin’s Sesame and Lilies*. I will return to this phenomenon of middle-class women entering the ill-kempt homes of their lower-class “sisters,” as dramatized by Margaret’s visits to the Higgins home, later in this chapter.

pastoral southern home in Helstone to the industrial town of Milton, Gaskell's stand-in for Manchester, in the provocatively named "Darkshire." In steeling herself for their change of social and economic position, Margaret throws herself into the task of arranging the inevitably disappointing new residence according to her higher standards of aesthetic and genteel refinement. Having settled on the place they will rent, which had been recommended by Mr. Thornton, Margaret tells her father, "we settled mamma is to have as cheerful a sitting-room as we can get; and that front room up-stairs, with the atrocious blue and pink paper and heavy cornice, had really a pretty view" (61). Mr. Hale reluctantly agrees: "But the papers. What taste! and the overloading such house with colour and such heavy cornices!" The papers are especially objectionable to Margaret, who, the narrator observes, "had never come fairly in contact with the taste that loves ornament, however bad, more than the plainness and simplicity which are of themselves the framework of elegance" (62). Though Margaret suggests that her father "can charm the landlord into repapering one or two of the rooms – the drawing-room and your bedroom – for mamma will come most in contact with them" (62), the landlord refuses, and she must warn her mother, "speaking of vulgarity and commonness, you must prepare yourself for our drawing-room paper. Pink and blue roses, with yellow leaves! And such a heavy cornice round the room!" (66).

Mr. Hale objects to his new student, Mr. Thornton, being described by her as "not quite a gentleman," and she agrees that he is certainly not "vulgar or common." It is her misuse of the term "tradesmen," however, in reference to the local manufacturers, which prompts her transition to the "vulgarity and commonness" of the wallpaper. Thus, Margaret (and the text) makes the rhetorical link between the décor, its aesthetic failings, and the industrial economics of Milton. It is Thornton's social capital, however, which saves them:

But when they removed to their new house in Milton, the obnoxious papers were gone. The landlord received their thanks very composedly; and let them think, if they like, that he had relented from his expressed determination not to repaper. There was no particular need to tell them, that what he did not care to do for a Reverend Mr Hale, unknown in Milton, he was only too glad to do at one short sharp remonstrance of Mr Thornton, the wealthy manufacturer. (66)

The wallpaper thus becomes a site of oppositions between two categories of social power: between Margaret's aesthetic authority, informed by her superior, middle-class taste, and Thornton's economic authority, exercised in his ability to have the paper changed. His power, however, is based on his social and economic standing in Milton, rather than on gentility and education – the standards that Margaret recognizes. This privileging of one's "native" setting corresponds to the earlier descriptions of Margaret's deeply personal attachment to her house at Helstone, which had been termed "the quiet harbour of home" (51), underscoring the novel's favoring of one's "own" domestic seat.<sup>62</sup> (Margaret, dismissed as ignorant of industrial labor relations, will be termed "'a stranger and a *foreigner*'" by Higgins [316, emphasis added].) That Thornton's authority within his own community town is no doubt due at least in part to his wealth and standing as a major employer in the town merely confirms the standards by which an industrial community assesses its residents' ties to this "home" through the quantifiable means of social production.

At the risk of being at once too literal and too metaphoric, I would like to note that the power dynamic at play between Margaret and Thornton in this exchange of scenery and aesthetic

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<sup>62</sup> Margaret's unease in London at the beginning of the novel can be read at least in part as due to her still considering Helstone to be her true home (13-14), while by the novel's close she has, according to her cousin Edith, acquired "such rambling habits in Milton" (416) that her eventual return to the manufacturing town – and to Thornton – are fairly assured. This combination of personal attachment and financial anchoring (via her inheritance of the mill's land) is yet another example of the novel's intertwining of the affective with the economic.

sensibilities can be addressed in multiple ways: First of all, the very fact that Thornton's exercising of his authority as a local industrialist to have the wallpaper changed initially would appear to be an early romantic advance on his part by using his power literally to (re)create Margaret's visual space. However, in doing so he acquiesces to and reaffirms her aesthetic sensibilities and decorative opinions. He has shown his power in submitting to and fulfilling her will. Moreover, his education in domestic aesthetics is inextricably linked with his appreciation of Margaret's whole person:

Mr. Thornton had thought that the house in Crampton was really just the thing; but now that he saw Margaret, with her superb way of moving and looking, he began to feel ashamed of having imagined that it would do well for the Hales, in spite of a certain vulgarity in it which had struck him at the time of his looking it over. (63)

Her simple, honest, and inherently feminine taste has triumphed over the lower-class, masculine decorative offence that had covered Margaret's walls, while Thornton's instinctual initial aversion attests to a basic solidity of moral character that justifies the reader's hope for and anticipation of their eventual romance. Gallagher asserts that, according to Victorian domestic ideology, "the moral influence women indirectly exert on men is said to be the force connecting public and private life" (168). Thus the aesthetic and moral influence of Margaret upon Thornton is not simply a connection between the genteel and rising middle class, but between the feminine, domestic, Southern aristocracy and the masculine, public, Northern industry.

The gendering of the domestic setting adds to the sharp comparisons between the Hales' home and the Thorntons'. Mr. Thornton's mother is introduced in conjunction with a description of their home: a "large-boned lady," sitting with "a grim handsomely-furnished dining room," Mrs. Thornton is dressed in appropriately "*stout* black silk," establishing a conflation of setting,

physiognomy, and personal aesthetics (77, emphasis added). Similarly, but in stark contrast, Thornton perceives the cozy details of the Hales' drawing-room as at once "habitual to the family; and especially of a piece with Margaret," who wears "a light-coloured muslin gown" (80). The comparison of these two settings rendered in striking and yet passive narrative terms: "Somehow, that room contrasted itself with the one he had just left; handsome, ponderous, with no sign of feminine habitation... It was twice – twenty times as fine; not one quarter as comfortable" (79). While the comparison is still made to the reader through Thornton's internal observations, with the narrative taking up a commercial-minded rhetoric of calculation that would suit his occupation, it is still a passive construction that bequeaths affective power to the aesthetics themselves. The drawing-room "contrasted *itself*" with Mrs. Thornton's dining-room, prioritizing the settings and the sensibilities they embody and display, and thus lending them greater rhetorical power in impressing upon Thornton, and the reader, the appeal of feminine "comfort" over grim and ponderous "fineness." This consistent rhetoric of contrast between industrial vulgarity and simple elegance is not simply typified in the comparison of their homes – the homes themselves *embody* these qualities, the implications of which are worn on the residents' own bodies. As we will see, the movements, interactions, and afflictions of those bodies serve to complicate such an easy dichotomy.

Compromising a strictly binary reading of the novel, and placing additional symbolic pressure on domestic wallpaper as a symbolic barrier between the public and private spheres, is the literal and figurative porosity of the Hales' domestic walls in Milton. Not long after the Hales arrival their new drawing-room is described via Thornton's approving gaze, noting "the dusky room, from which, with country habits, they did not exclude the night-skies, and the outer darkness of air" (79). The family will learn soon enough that the polluted atmosphere of Milton



necessitates closing one's windows – and that even then the soot of industrial manufacture will stain window curtains (see Mosley). Prior to the move to Milton, however, the physical and emotional security provided by the Hales' Helstone home were firmly established: Coming back from a walk, Margaret frightens herself in the garden – “she knew not why” – and rushes back inside, her heart “fluttering still till she was safe in the drawing-room, with the windows fastened and bolted, and the familiar walls hemming her round, and shutting her in” (55).

The domestic walls of Milton, however, are not so solid, nor can they protect and maintain the sanctity of their inhabitants' emotional lives. When Frederick, visiting in secret, weeps after their mother's death, Margaret must “warn him to be quiet; for the house partitions were but thin, and the next-door neighbours might easily hear his youthful passionate sobs...” (246). The simple fact that this contrast is also due to the basic difference in housing types – an unattached parsonage house versus contiguous urban dwellings – merely reinforces my point: the physical living conditions that defined and were defined by urban manufacturing economies precluded the essential “privacy” of private life. Sharon Marcus discusses London-based haunted house stories of the type written by Dickens and Gaskell and published in popular monthlies like *Household Words* (and parodied in part by “A House Full of Horrors,” discussed at the beginning of this chapter); these, she argues, “broadcast the urban deformation of the domestic ideal” by depicting supernatural forces' attacks upon “the middle-class home's status as an insular, individuating single-family structure” (122). By manifesting themselves to residents first as noises, these ghosts dramatized the modern compromise of domestic insularity by neighbors, whether within subdivided or semidetached housing.<sup>63</sup> The emotional dimension of this compromise here in *North and South* is underscored by the fact that the walls' thinness is only

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<sup>63</sup> These spectral presences resonate as well with Newton and his theory of optics, which I discuss below; his inaugural use of the term *spectrum* to describe the striated colors compounded and otherwise hidden within white light indicates the psychological dimension of his experiments, undermining the empirical truth of visual testimony.

mentioned explicitly in this moment, when the free expression of personal grief would prove their porosity and thus subject the family to public (and perhaps ultimately state) intervention and punishment.<sup>64</sup>

I use these examples to close this section of the chapter in order to demonstrate my larger point regarding the essential breach in the domestic sanctuary that is represented by garish wall décor.<sup>65</sup> Not only is it, in design, color, and manufacture, emblematic of and a visual testimony to the public sphere of industry and economy, writ large on the walls of the home, but even its superficial illusion of a physical barrier protecting that home's interior(ity) is ultimately undone.

### **Industry and Influence**

In Chap. II of Dickens's *Hard Times*, a government bureaucrat who hopes for "a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact," addresses the students at Mr. Gradgrind's school and is forced to berate the children for their absurd willingness to hang up wallpaper with pictures of horses or lay down carpet depicting flowers:

'You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact.... You never meet with quadrupeds going up and down walls; you must not have quadrupeds represented upon walls. You must see,' said the gentleman, 'for all these

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<sup>64</sup> The other moment in which the structure's thin construction is explicitly described comes via a similarly emotional scene: Margaret, having been chastised by Mrs. Thornton for being seen out in the evening with a man (the unknown Frederick), "began to walk backwards and forwards, in her old habitual way of showing agitation; but, then, remembering that in that slightly-built house every step was heard from one room to another, she sate down until she heard Mrs. Thornton go safely out of the house" (314). Here, free expression of personal feeling must be constrained even from residents within the same household, a restriction that takes on architectural form in the internal weaknesses of the home's construction.

<sup>65</sup> Even the very patterning of bad design can contribute to this compromising of the walls' solidity, at least in the residents' visual perception: Owen Jones criticizes striped carpets, which risk "'carrying the eye right through the walls of the apartment'" (*Grammar of Ornament*, 68), while curtains need designed with a border, which "prevents the eye from running out at the sides" (*True and False*, 89).

purposes, combinations and modifications (in primary colours) of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is fact. This is taste.’ (15-17)<sup>66</sup>

This “third gentleman” is a parody of Henry Cole, general superintendant of the newly formed Department of Practical Art (formerly the government Schools of Design).<sup>67</sup> For those engaged in the theory and practice of art and manufacture, the aesthetic deformations of the home, parodied in “Chamber of Horrors,” and of taste more generally, mocked here in *Hard Times*, were a central concern. The “False Principles in Design” exhibit in the Museum of Ornamental Art at Marlborough House in 1852 was prepared by Owen Jones at the behest of Cole; Richard Redgrave, whom I discussed in the Introduction, wrote the catalogue, which emphasized the illogic and distastefulness of highly realistic imagery in decorative art. While controversial, the exhibit brought public attention to Jones’ theory of art, as outlined in his thirty-one propositions, which he had presented in the inaugural lecture series at the Museum of Ornamental Art and which would comprise his magnum opus, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856) (see Jespersen).

Jones’s reputation was established in part by his *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra*, sections of which were sold beginning in 1836 before being published in two bound volumes in 1842-43; a record of his six months of study, the *Alhambra*’s extensive and vibrant illustrations were created with chromolithography, a still-new technique which, while initially costly and laborious, dramatically increased the speed, volume, and ease of production,

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<sup>66</sup> This is a rare moment for readerly (and no doubt authorial) amusement in *Hard Times*, which is an otherwise distinctly grim novel. Its general *lack of play*,” in plot or even in language, is discussed in chap. 3 of Gallagher’s *The Body Economic*, focusing on what she terms “somaeconomics”: “the theorization of economic behavior in terms of emotional and sensual feelings that are both causes and consequences of economic exertions” (3). The intersection of bodily pain with economic production will be discussed below, though Gaskell’s narrative concludes with a happy ending that promises middle class tranquility, even within a town akin to Coketown, that Dickens refuses.

<sup>67</sup> Dickens’ notes for this chapter consist simply of “Mr. Gradgrind,” “Marlborough House Doctrine,” “Cole,” and the names of Sissy and Bitzer (see K. J. Fielding 270-77, and, for the full notes, “Dickens’ Working Plans” in Ford and Monod 231-49; underlining in the original).

compared with hand-printing.<sup>68</sup> The Alhambra's popularity in the 1830s and 1840s is indicated indirectly in *North and South* when Fanny Thornton declares she has longed to visit it ever since reading Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* (97, sic).<sup>69</sup> Jones's first significant and public contribution to British architecture, however, was his 1835 talk "On the Influence of Religion upon Art," delivered at the Architectural Association, in which he reviewed several historical styles of art and architecture, such as the ancient Egyptians' and the Classical traditions, and argued that there is a clear correspondence between a society's religious tradition and dogma and its art. His criticism of contemporary British architecture for its expressionlessness, and of the Reformation for fracturing the unity of Christianity and thus its social and architectural expression, would be taken up later by Ruskin and A. W. N. Pugin in particular. Mr. Hale's public lectures at the local Lyceum on "Ecclesiastical Architecture" (140) also indicates the influence of Jones's theories and the bold, compelling subject matter of his early work.

The concerns of Victorian design theorists about the popular taste for elaborate ornamentation in décor and their own goal of unifying form with function "reflects a crisis in what might be called the labor theory of aesthetic value, brought on by the advent of mechanical production" (Bizup 120). Now that "intricate decoration could no longer, in and of itself, reliably indicate economic or aesthetic value, 'exquisite simplicity' (*Art-Journal* 8:209) began to be prized (at least in principle) over gratuitous ornamentation..." (ibid.). Thus the "framework of elegance" typified by Margaret's preference for simplicity in decoration – whether of her person

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<sup>68</sup> See Ferry, "Printing the Alhambra: Owen Jones and Chromolithography."

<sup>69</sup> Irving's revised 1865 edition of *The Alhambra: A Series of Tales and Sketches of the Moors and Spaniards* (originally published in 1832) included an added section called "Note on Morisco Architecture," whose observations about the brilliant "primitive" colors used (60) clearly indicates Jones's influence (see Flores 30). In Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812), however, Lady Cloubrony's social aspirations are quashed when the Duchess of Torcaster derides her Alhambra wallpaper for its "want of proportion" (34-35).

or of her walls – is an assertion of economically-inflected cultural superiority, albeit one that is in reaction to the social, technical, and commercial successes of mechanized industry.

In 1835, the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee on Arts and Principles of Design “to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the ARTS and of the PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN among the People (especially the Manufacturing Population) of the Country” (*Reports and Minutes of Evidence*, 586). Formed and headed by the Philosophic Radicals, many of whom were influenced, in ideology if not via direct professional interaction, by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill,<sup>70</sup> the committee focused especially on the manufacture of those goods “commonly called the fancy trade” – i.e., luxury items in interior décor such as silks, china, fine furniture, and wallpaper; they connected their anxieties about the quality of these highly visual consumer products to the more general state of the national economy, especially in its artistic and industrial rivalry with France. The Committee heard testimony from workers in all branches of design, manufacture, and sales, such as James Nasmyth, an inventor and engineer from Manchester and the son of the painter Alexander Nasmyth, who suggested that an “exhibition of works of proportion and of beauty in rooms connected with factories would have a beneficial effect on minds already familiar with geometrical proportions”; speaking to “the reconciaeability [sic] of good taste with the purposes of objects” in both the machines themselves, the factory buildings that house them, and the objects they produce (1836 *Minutes*, 292-4), Nasmyth asserts “the abstract elements of beauty in the structure of efficient modern machinery” (qtd. in Rhodes 145n25).<sup>71</sup>

In *North and South*, Mr. Thornton tries to impress upon Mr. Hale “the magnificent power, yet delicate adjustment of the steam-hammer,” crafting the rhetoric of industry in the

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<sup>70</sup> See esp. Bell, *The Schools of Design*, Chap. 4, and Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics*, Chap. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Such testimonies and committee reports contributed to Charles Wing’s 1837 condemnation of mechanization, *Evils of the Factory System Demonstrated by Parliamentary Evidence*.

terms of skillful design (81).<sup>72</sup> The success of the power loom and then steam power in printing cloth with engraved metal rollers, rather than the copper plates that printed “calicoes” in small workshops, had dramatically expanded the cotton textile industry by mid-century.<sup>73</sup> The mechanization of art-labor, such as wallpaper production, is a compelling case study for the dual narratives of industry and culture, and their uneasy reconciliation following the fractious debates over the factory system in the 1830s and 1840s:<sup>74</sup> by conjoining the social and aesthetic influence of industrial production and the social and aesthetic power of design – with both emerging from and contributing to commercial trade and national prosperity – manufacture becomes an agent for cultural change within the public and private spheres. However, this also placed the onus of moral, social, economic, and aesthetic responsibility for the working classes upon industry as well as the state.

In his 1835 defense of the factory system, *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, Andrew Ure asserts that national commercial prosperity depends upon Britain’s efforts to “diligently promote moral and professional culture among all ranks of her productive population” (vii). This population included those responsible for the design of decorative goods, as traditional skills and the means of acquiring them in the workshop system were transformed by the mechanization of art-labor within the factory. The *Art-Journal*, founded in 1839 and called the *Art-Union* for its first ten years of publication, was a highly prominent periodical “devoted to the interests of Artists and the Arts” (*AJ* 1:iii), with its later attention to ornament and design remaining wholly secondary. Following his report to the Board of Trade in 1849-49, in which he recommended the

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<sup>72</sup> Margaret, however, will note that in his admiration of “the mechanical powers, he evidently looked upon them only as new ways of extending trade and making money” (88), dismissing his valuation of technology as a *tool* of production rather than an object of innovation and thus worthy of admiration in its own right.

<sup>73</sup> For an early study, Edward Baines’s *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (1835), as well as Turnbull, *A History of the Calico Printing Industry of Great Britain*.

<sup>74</sup> For an overview of the Factory Question, see J. T. Ward.

reform and reorganization of the Schools of Design, Cole founded a rival publication, the *Journal of Design and Manufacture*, in March, 1849, in order to advocate this cause, as well as comment upon aesthetic theory, the design and manufacture of various products, and industrial exhibitions, and in addition to illustrative engravings it included textile and wallpaper swatches so as to “test” its critiques against the actual “object criticised” (*JDM* 1:3); with the Schools system’s reorganization, the *Journal* ceased publication in February 1852. Both Jones and the architect Matthew Digby Wyatt, with whom Cole served on the Executive Committee of the Great Exhibition, contributed to the *Journal*, though no article gave author attribution, conveying instead a uniform editorial pronouncement.<sup>75</sup> In contrast to the *Art-Journal*, moreover, Cole’s publication “aimed to establish design as a distinct intellectual and aesthetic discipline” (Bizup 131); thus the *Journal* helped to validate industrial manufacture and commercial capitalism by linking them to the aesthetic prerogatives of good taste as manifested in good design. Thus, to improve the quality of Margaret’s wallpaper, the social conditions – indeed, the social relations – in which it was designed and manufactured must be bettered.

Like Ure’s representation of the factory as a potential site of utopian social order, William Cooke Taylor’s Whiggish pro-free trade *Factories and the Factory System* (1844) depicts “the social economy of a cotton-factory” (109), in which manufacturer and worker are equally invested in the success of production, an ideal that accords with Thornton’s own (evolving) philosophies. The provision of equitable wages as well as good machinery thus aid the employer, in whose “interest” it is “that his operatives should not only be good workmen, but

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<sup>75</sup> For a contemporary perspective on design, manufacture, and the Great Exhibition, see, e.g., James Ward’s 1851 *The World in Its Workshops*. The historiography on the Great Exhibition, and its central players, is vast and beyond the scope of the present discussion. For a basic introduction, see Hermione Hobhouse, *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition*, chap. 1: “The Founding of the Royal Commission” and chap. 2: “The Great Exhibition of 1851.” See also Purbrick’s edited collection and, on the Exhibition and the world expositions that followed, Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*.

good men” (113). This rhetoric of socio-economic responsibility reappropriates the Tory paternalism of anti-factory advocates, for whom industrialization harms the physical and spiritual health of the working class and thus the “body politic,” as invoked by Robert Southey, more generally; Southey’s analogy extends to the overseer as well, “who, at the beginning of his career, uses his fellow-creatures as bodily machines for producing wealth, [and] ends not infrequently in becoming an intellectual one himself” (1:170-71). Thus, Thornton’s position and responsibility within the socioeconomic order – the authority by which he was able to have the Hale’s wallpaper replaced – should in fact affect the very conditions under which such wallpaper is produced in the first place. In order to affirm this more holistic conception of societal order and duty, however, he must reconsider the role of the workers for whom he is responsible – indeed, he must reconsider how he is responsible for their persons, and consider them in terms of their personhood rather than as mere components within the larger machine of industry.

Newly arrived in the north, Mr. Hale is sufficiently awed by “the power of the machinery of Milton, the power of the men of Milton”; however, “among the machinery and men,” Margaret “saw less of power in its public effects...” (70). While both father and daughter are situated as witnesses to industrialization’s conflation of laboring bodies with the technology of mass production, Margaret’s concern, in keeping with her humanistic empathies, is for the personal suffering that occurs outside its operations – those who are victims of and expelled from the teleological “triumph of the crowded procession.” Mr. Thornton, unsurprisingly, uses the metaphoric language of industrial production to describe the manufactures economy: The Town Improvement Act of 1847, which regulated smoke output, is derided for its reliance on “informers and fines,” which renders the law “inert from the odiousness of the machinery,” namely the bureaucratic functioning of its enforcement (83). Furthermore, “[t]he whole



machinery – I don’t mean the wood and iron machinery now – of the cotton trade is so new,” he tells the Hales, and the “[raw], crude materials” that developed into the hierarchies of employment and business were initially “men of the same level, as regarded education and station” (83).<sup>76</sup> It is for this reason that he cannot abide what Margaret regards as “his duty to try to make [the lower classes] different” (87). Though she adopts the language of textile manufacture to assert that “your lives and your welfare are so constantly and intimately interwoven” (122), he sees his connection to his laborers as wholly confined to “the hours that they labour for me. But those hours past, our relation ceases” (124). What his assertion fails to take into consideration, of course, is that the wages earned, the injuries sustained, and spirits deadened during those hours are then carried home, no longer in direct relation with the “master” but still very much bearing the effects of his influence. Where Thornton only sees the overt, visibly functioning machinery of political economy in his workers’ bodies and laboring hours, Margaret is conscious of the unseen ties that bind the lives of everyone operating within the social structures erected by capital. These inextricable, and inescapable, connections between the personal and the political become dramatized in Margaret and Thornton’s romance, in the explicitly political conversations through which they give voice to the competing philosophies surrounding the Factory Question while influencing one another’s personal opinions and laying the foundation for their eventual union.

It is indirect personal influence, though, which wields the most power in the romance plot of the novel. Thornton’s unseen intervention in having the gaudy wallpaper removed is, as discussed above, an opening gesture of affection, hinting at his feelings to the reader but leaving the act of kindness itself unknown to Margaret and his motivations unexamined by the narrator

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<sup>76</sup> Following Margaret’s initial rejection of his proposal, Thornton “mocked at himself for having valued the *mechanical* way in which she had protected him from the fury of the mob...” (303, emphasis added).

(and, perhaps, even himself). When she eventually rejects his proposal of marriage, he nonetheless insists upon his love, regardless of whether it is received:

‘One word more. You look as if you thought it tainted you to be loved by me. You cannot avoid it. Nay, I, if I would, cannot cleanse you from it. But I would not, if I could. I have never loved any woman before... Now I love, and will love. But do not be afraid of too much expression on my part.’ (194)

Whereas he (wrongly) presumes that his relationship to his workers does not extend outside the hours of their labor, he insists that his personal feelings for Margaret will apply to her, even “taint” her, in her estimation, regardless of her desire to sever the connection. He reads her reaction and extends it into his own language, adopting the terminology of this “taint” to then reject the possibility of its being “cleansed”; by describing the effect of his love in terms of a bodily mark, Thornton inadvertently affirms the inextricability of personal ties, even beyond the limits of designated and proscribed social roles. (The consequences of “staining” upon the industrial body will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.) It is not his love’s expression that bothers Margaret, but rather the fact of its existence and thus inexorable effect upon her: “How dared he say that he would love her still, even though she shook him off with contempt? ... And so she shuddered away from the threat of his enduring love” (196). Indeed, he is comforted “in feeling, as he had indeed said to her, that though she might despise him, condemn him, treat him with her proud sovereign indifference, he did not change one whit. She could not make him change. He loved her, and would love her; and defy her, and this miserable bodily pain” (204). And yet she will experience the unexpected comfort of (seemingly) unreciprocated emotion when, believing she has lost his esteem completely, it is still “a pleasure to feel how thoroughly she respected his. He could not prevent her doing that; it was the one

comfort in all this misery” (282). The emotional investment each has made in the other may seem for now to be unshared, but the extension of that care to another is nevertheless a means of maintaining the relation when no other direct connection can be made. The bodily effects of industrial production upon the laboring body apply outside and far beyond the simple confines of the factory walls and the work day’s hours, affecting even the personal relations of “hand” and “master.” Likewise, romantic attachment, even when thwarted or rejected, still inscribes its taint, instills “miserable bodily pain,” and inspires emotions that can still comfort. The lingering power of these connections – indeed, their power *to* linger – speaks to the larger network of linkages within which industrial aesthetic operate.

This question of influence and of social connection returns to the domain of the factory’s own internal “social economy” toward the end of the novel. Margaret’s early insistence that Thornton ought to be concerned for the physical and spiritual well-being of his workers was dismissed as naivety and ignorance. Later, however, he does set up a dining service for his workers and their families. Although he insists that he does not want to “be interfering with the independence of [his] men,” and is “careful ... to leave them free, and not to intrude [his] own ideas upon them,” it is in this provision of care for his employees that Thornton is able to literally and figuratively break bread with them, which is of direct and indirect benefit to both himself and his laborers (353-54). He confirms Cooke Taylor’s characterization of the Lancashire population as “open, candid, and manly” (82), while affirming the basic decency and rational stewardship of the manufacturer over his laborers and, by extension, the validity of entrepreneurial liberalism. In this pseudo-utopian order, the socio-economic hierarchy is both maintained and used for the good of the lower classes. Such care for hands outside the spaces

and hours of production benefits the bodies to which they are attached and thus, by extension, improves the quality of the goods they produce.

In *Moral Taste*, Marjorie Garson notes that Thornton, his plan initially dismissed by Higgins only to have him suggest a near-identical one, “coolly took the part assigned” (Gaskell 353) in what she calls an “elaborate, paternalistic, and condescending game” that “is supposed to express his respect for the men’s autonomy” but “certainly does not signal the transcendence of class divisions” (Garson 327). Her assertion, however, that his refusal of Mr. Bell’s ten pounds to provide a feast on the grounds of its “spoiling the simplicity of the whole thing” (Gaskell 354) is ultimately a defense of the “clarity of the line that separates” employer and employee (Garson 327) ignores Thornton’s preceding statement, ““*I don’t want it to fall into charity. I don’t want donations*” (Gaskell 354, emphasis added). His use of the singular personal pronoun, adopting responsibility not only for the space and equipment rented to the men but also the right to refuse a less-than-simple meal without their input, nonetheless includes him in the scheme’s operation and outcome. It is, after all, a meal that he would eat as well. This is not, of course, to deny the paternal metaphor being played out here, despite Thornton’s insistence to the contrary, but rather to examine how it subsequently takes on affective weight. Thomas Carlyle’s numerous iterations of the metaphor of family in discussing industrial class relations includes a reference to the working class and the class that employs them as a married couple (*Past and Present*, 277) is taken up by, of all people, Higgins: ““Meddling ‘twixt master and man is liker meddling ‘twixt husband and wife than aught else”” (301). I cite this in relation to Thornton’s rented dining service, and his esteem for the (non-philanthropic) “simplicity” of it, and to the novel’s resolution: When Margaret, threatened with losing Thornton “as a tenant” (423), offers to invest in his operation at Marlborough Mill he instantly comprehends the significance of the business

proposition – both he and the text can only declare “‘Margaret!’” (424). The implied marriage proposal and acceptance go unsaid as utterly unnecessary; indeed, when she attempts to take the dried roses, which he had sentimentally collected at Helstone, he insists that she must “pay” for them. The exchange occurs during “some time of delicious silence,” confirming the erotic reciprocity of their “business” dealings (425). These narrative gaps, in which both the text and its characters are deprived of fuller descriptive powers, “speak,” in their silences, to the metonymies of social relations that I am mapping out here: by refusing to fill in such dramatic moments, the narrative demands that the reader construct the imaginative linkages with which the scene and the central plot find closure, using logical but nonetheless associational ties to reconcile the characters’ romantic interests. We are denied a explicit depiction of Margaret and Thornton’s betrothal, just as we have been denied an clear statement of what the “payment” given within that “delicious silence” may have entailed, but we have been given the metonymic cues with which to imagine it ourselves; literary romance invites the reader to envisage the subsequent scenes of domestic happiness that will ensue off (or, rather, after) the page. Similarly, the social, economic, and emotional ties that enable productive industry, good design, and the persistence of affection even after rejection are dependent upon the strength of metonymies – the parts must be read within and extended to the whole.

Returning, then, to the question of aesthetics, my argument here is that a reading of the novel through design theory, rather than simply political economy, can combine more comprehensively its seeming oppositions of economics and aesthetics, and public and private. The ideological model of political economy enacted in the novel comes to encompass both free trade and a paternalistic model of factory order and discipline. Similarly, design theorists could embrace “the expressive possibilities opened up by technical innovation while simultaneously

endeavoring to enforce a strict code of design principles” in order to correct the ugliness of new manufactures as well as the consuming public’s taste for them (Bizup 120). The “moral power” of taste lies not only in its “elevating the intellectual condition of humanity” (*AJ* 4:14), but in the *indirect* influence it has via the most quotidian and minor of objects and their perpetual, passive presence within the home, whose décor “insensibly mould[s] and form[s]” one’s taste (*AJ* 7:93). It is with this dynamic in mind that I read the garish wallpaper in *North and South* in terms of emotional influence, both for its threatened impression upon Mrs. Hale and for its absence from the rest of the novel. While it has been removed within these early chapters, the replacement papers are never mentioned or described. Moreover, when Mrs. Hale, upon her deathbed in her room, asks Mrs. Thornton to act as a mother to Margaret, it is the trace memory prompted by the domestic aesthetics that earn Mrs. Thornton’s acquiescence – “no thought of her son, or of her living daughter Fanny, that stirred her heart at last; but a sudden remembrance, suggested by something in the arrangement of the room, – of a little daughter – dead in infancy – long years ago – that, like a sudden sunbeam, melted the icy crust, behind which there was a real tender woman” (237). The setting’s “something” is not described – rather, it is its absence that is significant, allowing for the projection upon it of Mrs. Thornton’s own imagined image and the emotional weight of its meaning.

### **Ornament and Affect**

The dearth of descriptive detail beyond Margaret and Mr. Hale’s judgments prompts the question as to what makes this wallpaper so objectionable. Wallpaper posed a particular problem to design theorists in that in its expansive, inviting scope, designers and manufacturers were all the more likely to overload the “canvas” with illusionistic effects and illogical imagery. These

ornamental effects defy Jones's very first Proposition in his *Grammar of Ornament*: "The Decorative Arts arise from, and should be properly attendant upon, Architecture." While this applies especially to the dictum that wallpaper should not conceal or belie the intrinsic flatness of the wall upon which it hangs, it also entails the visual content of the design. In Jones's *On the True and False in the Decorative Art* (1863, referred to hereafter as *True and False*), first given as a lecture in June 1852 at the Marlborough House to the Department of Practical Art, he decries popular patterns such as "strawberries and cherries, or other equally impossible combinations, growing on the same stalk; and although great pains are taken to make the fruits and flowers as much like nature as the paper-stainer's art can make them, this imitative skill only increases the inconsistency" (78).

A significant part of the wallpaper's vulgarity, then, would be attributable to its illogical and unnatural depiction of blue roses,<sup>77</sup> a garish display of artistry at the expense of well-informed taste. The display of blue roses with yellow leaves – like flowers on a carpet or horses on a wall – is inconsistent with nature and thus with the utility and function of the ornamental itself. This *display-for-display's-sake* reflects the troubling effects of mechanical production on modern manufacture and, by extension, on class hierarchies: whereas intricacies of ornamentation had, when consumer goods were largely handmade, been a reliable and immediately recognizable sign of the object's value (as in, its labor value and its commercial value), mechanized production allowed for such decorative touches to be imitated at little

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<sup>77</sup> On October 20, 2009, Suntory Flowers Limited, part of the Japanese brewing and distillation company group, announced the availability of the "Suntory Applause blue rose" for sale in Japan. A joint biotechnology research project begun in 1990 between Suntory Holdings and their Australian subsidiary, Florigene, genetically engineered the first blue rose in 2004 by introducing a blue pigment *dephinidin* gene from pansies into roses. See [www.suntory.com/news/2009/10592.html](http://www.suntory.com/news/2009/10592.html) (last accessed November 1, 2013).

The "Applause" was made available in North America beginning in November 2011 and retails for roughly US\$40.00 a stem. (The blooms' coloring, however, is, in truth, closer to lavender.) See [www.suntorybluerose.com](http://www.suntorybluerose.com) (last accessed November 1, 2013).

expense.<sup>78</sup> Thus the aesthetic failings of mid-century design are, according to Redgrave, due to “the facilities which machinery gives to the manufacturer, enabling him to produce the florid and overloaded as cheaply as the simple forms, and thus to satisfy the larger market for the multitude, who desire quantity rather than quality, and value a thing the more, the more it is ornamented” (711). Margaret’s preference for “plainness and simplicity” is, therefore, all the more clearly indicative of her superior taste – and the class-based nature thereof.<sup>79</sup>

Among Margaret’s myriad regrets, having left Milton, is the objection she had expressed to trade “because it too often led to the deceit of passing off inferior for superior goods, in the one branch; of assuming credit for wealth and resources not possessed, in the other” (296). While Thornton had in turn criticized such dishonesty “in the great scheme of commerce” for its ill effects in the long-term, Margaret’s macro-level reading of “buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market” – in short, the workings of commerce itself – disdains it as lacking “truth.” The ideal of “fitness” in design applies to its dealers as well as to the wares themselves, the former’s entrepreneurial motives apparently tainting the quality of the latter. In her review of the *Grammar of Ornament* in *Fortnightly Review* (May 15, 1865), George Eliot praises Jones as “the architect who zealously vindicated the claim of internal ornamentation to be a part of the architect’s function, and has laboured to rescue that form of art which is most closely connected with the sanctities and pleasures of our hearths from the hands of uncultured tradesmen.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> No less an authority than Mrs. Beeton commented on the difficulties in maintaining class distinctions created by the textile industry, noting that “the introduction of cheap silks and cottons ... have removed the landmarks between the mistress and her maid, between the master and his man” (#2153). The Hales face no such instability in the social hierarchy from within their home, at least, given that Dixon “liked to feel herself ruled by a powerful and decided nature” (49).

<sup>79</sup> Her judgment is likely shaped as well by her mother, who disdainfully mentions a Helstone neighbor “seen with artificial flowers in her bonnet, thereby giving evidence of a vain and giddy character” (34).

<sup>80</sup> Jones was a close friend of Eliot and George Henry Lewes, whose home at the Priory he decorated in the fall of 1863. Unfortunately, Ben, their pet terrier, “was sick over our elegant drawing room paper which Owen Jones had decorated, and over the carpet! This obliges us to have fresh paper made, as there are no remnants of the old, and it was originally made for us” (*Journals and Diaries*, November 13, 1863).



Interior décor, as both ornament and as art, must not only suit its setting and purpose, it must be handled by those who understand that setting and purpose in the most fundamental ways – the architect who builds houses is invested in their use as *homes*, whereas the “uncultured tradesman” is invested in the production and sale of material goods simply for (his own) profit.

In the age of industrial manufacture, the use – and misuse – of hands becomes a critical point of intersection between the narratives of socio-economic and romantic conflict, not least of all because *handicraft*, the skilled hand-labor of (literal) laboring hands, so to speak, was being overtaken by industrialized manufacture produced by (metonymic) “hands.” Thornton, asserting that his “interests are identical” to his employees’, acknowledges Margaret’s dislike of the term “hands” in reference to his workers, ““though it comes most readily to [his] lips as the technical term, whose origin, whatever it was, dates before [his] time”” (120). This deferral, of course, manages to use the term “hands” while stating that it won’t be used, and glosses over the most obvious implications of its “origin,” namely the abstraction of the laboring classes into their component, laboring parts.<sup>81</sup> He will indirectly acknowledge this metonymic connection, when faced with a possible strike, with the thought that “he had head as well as hands, while they had only hands” (145). Deepening the referential ambiguity of the term, the narrative notes the seemingly inevitable “invention of some machine which would diminish the need of hands at all” (157); the immediate referent is Thornton’s initial usage, namely the workers themselves, but the technological innovations of such machines increasingly render the literal hands that operate such machinery unskilled and purely functionary, alienate the “hands” performing this labor from their work and from the employing classes to whom they are merely those hands, and drive the handicraft that produces finely made goods into obsolescence.

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<sup>81</sup> It also uses yet another metonym of the body – i.e., “lips” – within the explanation. My thanks to Patrick Bray for this clever observation.

Hands also become the cynosure of romantic attraction and misunderstanding. Unprepared for the “frank familiar custom of the place,” Margaret inadvertently refuses Thornton’s handshake early in their acquaintance; her misreading of the gesture is compounded by his ignorance of her regret (86). When they do finally shake hands, he is acutely aware that “it was the first time their hands had met, though she was perfectly unconscious of the fact” (160), indicating the significance to which he attaches this physical contact while continuing the pattern of their missing each others’ meanings. Their roles are once again reversed when, after her refusal, he leaves, “rejecting her offered hand, and making as if he did not see her grave look of regret” (194). While the eroticized appreciation of Margaret’s “round ivory hands” (80) and “round taper fingers” (328) on the part of both Thornton and the narrative litter the text, I would like to focus on a moment in which her hands’ performance of an utterly superfluous task is imbued with particular significance: watching Margaret serve Mr. Hale tea, Thornton “almost longed to ask her to do for him what he saw her compelled to do for her father, who took her little finger and thumb in his masculine hand, and made them serve as sugar-tongs” (80). Henry Cole would, presumably, be horrified by a set of sugar-tongs designed to resemble a lady’s hand, but Thornton is charmed – envious, no doubt, of the physical contact as well as the presumptive right to “compel” her and her hands to serve him. More suggestively, however, this pantomime invites the playful, intentional misuse of one’s hands, an irreverent disregard for the functional purpose of design and fitness of its application; the affective – indeed, the affectionate – supersedes the material, rendering the question of aesthetic “inconsistency” moot. Thornton’s admiration of industry as an abstract system, valuing its workings as technical processes rather than as aestheticized entities or for their products; in his observation of the wholly inefficient

performance in the Hales' drawing-room, however, the intimacy and appeal of "hand-labor" (at least within the context of cozy domesticity) is made strikingly obvious.

### **Color and Light**

After Mr. Thornton announces to his mother his intention of proposing to Margaret, Mrs. Thornton grimly "force[s] her thoughts into the accustomed household grooves," and in so doing enacts a metonymic parable for both the unfolding romantic drama and for the industrialization of color at mid-century. In keeping the tradition of handing down the family linens, she inspects the embroidered initials of herself and her late husband and, with brows knit and lips pinched, "carefully unpicked the GH. She went so far as to search for the Turkey-red marking thread to put the new initials; but it was all used, – and she had no heart to send for any more just yet. So she looked fixedly at vacancy..." (206). This newly vacant space of course is felt to be her own central position in her son's life and in his affections, soon to be occupied by Margaret. The pause in the overwrought metaphor of substitution caused by the lack of thread parallels the narrative's own pause in its romance plot, namely Margaret's refusal and threat of an insuperable break between her and Thornton.

This metaphoric reading of Turkey-red thread, and its absence, is bolstered by the fact that the issues of labor, manufacture, and political-economy that constitute the "industrial" half of the novel's industrial romance are set within the cloth industry: the failure to procure more thread, and thus render Margaret and Thornton's union visibly and legibly real, would seem to hark back to the mill riots that halted production and (physically) thrust them together and to foreshadow the crises that will again threaten Thornton's business but ultimately reconcile and recombine Margaret's romantic and financial interests with his own. And Mrs. Thornton

conceives of her usurpation in her son's home and heart in typically material, and color-saturated, terms, Margaret's triumph anticipated as being "all household plenty and comfort, all purple and fine linen..." (207).<sup>82</sup> Such a reading, however, strikes me as overly simplistic, too quickly constraining, and one that neglects the significance of color throughout the novel and in its larger historical context. The centrality of the textile industry in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Great Britain's economy, and in the political-economy of Gaskell's novel, necessitated innovations in the dyestuffs industry to make fabrics visually appealing to consumers; moreover, contemporaneous debates in the arts and sciences addressed not only how colors were perceived but why and to what physiological and psychological effect. By discussing the technological and ideological meaning of Turkey-red thread, yellow damask, pink and blue wallpaper, and the relationship of the dyestuffs industry to the science of lighting that made such gradations in color and shade perceptible and thus subject to degrees of valuation, I aim to follow the novel's threads of connection and thus construct a fuller and more comprehensive vision of its intersecting and inextricable interests.

Any discussion of color, however, risks critical imprecision. Remarking on the malleability of color terminology, John Grant Rhodes states: "Hardly anything, I suspect, can be said in description of color, at least outside the laboratory, that does not immediately depend upon synaesthetic [sic] or other analogy or association. To speak of color is to speak of something else as well. Color has virtually no language of its own" (58). Before approaching color via the laboratory, so to speak, I want to address its associational nature, both in descriptive language and visual perception. This understanding of colors and shades in terms of their

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<sup>82</sup> Bessy Higgins, the fatally-ill former mill worker, resides on the opposite socio-economic side of Milton manufacturing, but, perhaps typical of their shared reliance on the textile industry, deploys the same cliché. She comments upon the bitter social injustices of class to Margaret, "'Some's pre-elected to sumptuous feasts, and purple and fine linen, - may be yo're one on 'em'" (149).

relationship to one another plays a significant role in the history of optics and in how *North and South* allows its characters to see and be seen.

In 1840, Charles Lock Eastlake, a painter, future Director of the National Gallery, and member of the governing Council of the first School of Design in London, published *Goethe's Theory of Colours*, his translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1810 *Zur Farbenlehre*.<sup>83</sup> In it, Goethe had attempted to repudiate the current science of the optical spectrum and, in particular, its basis in Isaac Newton's *Opticks* (1704). While Eastlake alludes to the disdain with which the work had been met in England as well as Germany, due to both the fervency with which Goethe condemned Newton and his shortcomings in understanding the mathematics and physics under which Newton's theory of optics was based,<sup>84</sup> in his "Translator's Preface" he still insists upon its value to painters (viii-x). Noting the "defects which make the Newtonian theory so little available for aesthetic application," Eastlake praises Goethe's attention to "the phenomena of contrast and gradation, two principles which may be said to make up the artist's world, and to constitute the chief elements of beauty" (xii-xiii). Given the centrality of the textile and dyeing industries to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century global economies, and to the Industrial Revolution more generally, the use of Newton's theories in manufacturing innovation and technology "was one of the earliest instances in which applied science contributed to industrial practice" (Shapiro 259).<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the post-Kantian elevation of subjective vision in

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<sup>83</sup> Not to be confused with his nephew, the architect and furniture designer Charles Locke Eastlake, whose *Hints on Household* was cited in my introductory chapter. For more on the elder Eastlake currently under discussion, see Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*.

<sup>84</sup> See especially Burwick, Chap. 1: "Goethe's *Farbenlehre*: The Newtonian Controversy," *The Damnation of Newton*, and Sepper, *Goethe contra Newton: Polemics and the Project for a New Science of Color*.

<sup>85</sup> The eighteenth century's leading French chemists, such as Charles-François de Cisternay Dufay, Jean Hellot, Macquer, and Claude-Louis Berthollet, were engaged in state-organized industry; Berthollet, for example, became director of dyeing and administrator of the renowned Gobelins tapestry works. While the British government did not sponsor industry in the same way, scientists still worked on the practical as well as philosophical issues of color: Edward Bancroft's *Experimental Researches Concerning the Philosophy of Permanent Colours; and the Best Means of Producing Them, by Dyeing, Callico Printing, &c.* went through two editions by the early nineteenth century, and

Goethe's color theory combined two models that, says Jonathan Crary, were previously "distinct and irreconcilable": the "physiological observer," based in the empirical sciences of the nineteenth century, and the "romantic" observer as "active, autonomous producer of his or her own visual experience" (69).

This focus on visual harmony and color complementarity – the psychological phenomena of color perception, rather than the mathematical and mechanistic physics of optics which Goethe had attempted to counter – had enormous practical implications at mid-century. In *True and False*, Owen Jones applies the ideal of balance to décor generally: "When the walls are rich and elaborate in pattern, the curtains should be more simple; when the walls are quiet and retiring, the curtains may be more rich... harmony is not a repetition of the same note, but an orderly combination of three" (88-89).<sup>86</sup> The scientific dimension of this tri-partite "orderly combination" would be demonstrated when Jones, in the face of great skepticism and scorn from colleagues and the public, painted the iron girders of the Crystal Palace with a prismatic scheme of the primary colors, blue, yellow, and red, thus allowing the structure's massive frame and columns to be discernible to the visitors within while achieving visual "neutrality, or white light, [and] creat[ing] the illusion of increasing light within the building" (Flores 84).<sup>87</sup> Such practical applications of the scientific debates about color and perception also impacted the textile industry. The chemist M. E. Chevreul was hired by the Gobelins tapestry manufactory in the

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the works of French chemists such as Berthollet, Jean Hellot, and Pierre-Joseph Macquer were published in English translations. See also Archibald and Nan L. Clow, *The Chemical Revolution*, Chap. 10; Albert Edward Musson and Edward Robinson, *Science and Technology in the Scientific Revolution*, Chap. 9; and Susan Fairlie, "Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century." On nineteenth-century scientism more generally, see Dale, *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art, and Society in the Victorian Age*, and Smith, *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

<sup>86</sup> On window curtain design, see Dornsife.

<sup>87</sup> Jones' ratios and arrangement of eight parts blue placed on the concave surfaces to five parts red on the horizontal areas to three parts yellow on the convex surfaces were based on examples from Egyptian, Byzantine, and medieval decoration, as well as the color theory of George Field, a dyemaker, who wrote highly popular books on color, such as *Chromatics; or, An Essay on the Analogy and Harmony of Colours* (1817) and *Rudiments of the Painter's Art; or, A Grammar of Colouring, Applicable to Operative Painting, Decorative Architecture, and the Arts* (1850).

1820s to improve their dyestuffs; however, he “discovered that their apparent dullness was due not to the quality of the dyestuffs but to the subjective effect of optical mixture: adjacent threads of complementary or near-complementary hues were mixing in the eye to a neutral grey” (Gage, *Colour and Culture*, 173). His extensively illustrated *De la Loi du Contraste Simultané des Couleurs* (1839) addressed the applicability of the law of “Harmony in Contrast” (§§16) to painting, décor, and dress; it was translated into English in 1854 and was one of the main color manuals of the century. Chevreul is cited by name in Mrs. Merrifield’s “The Harmony of Colours as Exemplified in the Exhibition,” published in the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, wherein she laments that “the subject [of the laws relating to the harmony and contrast of colors] is not more studied in England”; the inferiority of their color arrangements, in comparison with the French, “arise[s] not only from the more skillful contrasts of colour in the [latter], but also from a mechanical difference in the mode of execution” (I-V). This concern with the physics of color is no triviality, as “the value of the quiet and semi-neutral colours,” she asserts, is “in giving repose to the eye” (III), a physiological dimension of the subject that we see playing out in *North and South*.

Margaret’s personal taste accords with these principles of color harmony, both in her personal appearance and her aesthetic judgment of her surroundings. Bessy Higgins, having actually worked in a mill, has her physical powers of perception conflated with industrial economy: “her Milton eyes appraised [Margaret’s print gown] at sevenpence a yard” (148).<sup>88</sup> Prior to this explicit assertion of Bessy’s heightened ability to judge commercial quality, she notes approvingly of Margaret’s frock, ““Most fine folk tire my eyes out wi’ their colours, but

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<sup>88</sup> Bessy is not unique in this perspective, but rather quite representative: when Margaret first walks through the factory area of Milton, “girls, with their rough, but not unfriendly freedom, would comment on her dress, even touch her shawl or gown to ascertain the exact material” (72). While the narrator ascribes this to a typically girlish interest in fashion, the focus on the actual textiles of her clothing speaks to the basis of the encounter lying in manufacturing.

somehow yours rest me” (100).<sup>89</sup> The narrative has not provided an explicit description of Margaret’s dress prior to this remark, and so the reader is left to imagine her appearance solely through its stated physiological effect upon Bessy, a textual synesthesia that is both purely associational and aesthetically authoritative. Having lived and worked within the textile industry, Bessy is an apt judge of the myriad colorings possible in dyes and prints, and so the “technical expertise” of her remark bolsters the superior, class-inflected taste that Margaret has already shown herself to possess. Proposition 4 of Jones’s *Grammar of Art* – “True beauty results from that repose which the mind feels when the eye, the intellect, and the affections, are satisfied from the absence of any want” – underscores the design reformers’ conception of sight as inherently passive and thus in need of defensive strategies to counteract an assaultive visual environment. The superiority of Margaret’s simple, refined taste, and of Owen Jones’ aesthetic philosophy, is affirmed in the narrative’s description of the Thorntons’ dinner-party décor:

Every cover was taken off, and the apartment blazed forth in yellow damask and a brilliantly-flowered carpet. Every corner seemed filled up with ornament, until it became a weariness to the eye, and presented a strange contrast to the bald ugliness of the look-out into the great mill-yard, where wide folding gates were thrown open for the admission of carriages. The mill loomed high on the left-hand side of the windows, casting a shadow down from its many stories, which darkened the summer evening before its time. (159)<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Bessy will also ascribe to Margaret the idealized atmospheric purity of the non-industrial South which is so sharply contrasted to the choking pollution of Milton: ““She’s like a breath of country air, somehow. She freshens me up above a bit”” (138).

<sup>90</sup> Merrifield praises Jones’s color schema for the decoration of Hyde Park and its clear evidencing of his familiarity with the laws of harmony and contrast, noting in particular the sparing use of yellow, “which, next to orange, is the most exciting colour to the eye, and should therefore be admitted in small quantities only” (II).



The visual disharmony created by bright yellow damask displayed with boldly patterned and presumably multi-colored carpeting is conjoined with the vulgarity of such a blatant display of socio-economic hierarchies. While the apartment itself “blazes forth,” the visually overwhelming effect of these combined colors and ornaments is set in stark relief by the looming darkness of the mill whose profits have made such ostentation possible.

Goethe, rejecting Newton’s demonstration of prismatic light and the appearance of color via light’s various degrees of absorption or reflection, had reasserted Aristotle’s dualistic conception of color, whereby light is fundamentally without coloration and that various tints are created by the addition of darkness. The Thornton home, described even prior to this dinner party scene, seems to demonstrate this very principle: “The walls were pink and gold: the pattern on the carpet represented bunches of flowers on a light ground, but it was carefully covered up in the centre by a linen drugget, glazed and colourless. ... Everything reflected light, nothing absorbed it” (112). The apparent severity of Mrs. Thornton and her son’s behavior and bearing is appropriately matched by the visual effect of their home, which refracts light just as they themselves seem to “refract” human sympathy and affection. The bright coloring within the drawing room, however, thus emanates from the necessary admixture of darkness cast by the “colourless” drugget – and the ever-present next-door mill in which such an article of fabric would likely be produced. The gleam and shine produced by the other features of the room – its “glass shades” protecting decorative items from dust, and “gaily-coloured” books adorn the “polished surface” of the table – contribute to the multiplicative effect of early nineteenth-century technologies upon artificial coloring and light, allowing consumers an increasingly mediated experience of perceiving domestic life.<sup>91</sup> Thus the garish brightness of the Thornton

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<sup>91</sup> Andrew H. Miller notes the confluence of these optic-mediating technologies, plate glass and gas lighting, in modern nighttime consumerism: “This nocturnal world of show, illuminated by newly available, relatively safe gas

home, and of the wallpaper that would offend the Hales, is visual testimony to industrial innovations that changed not only what consumers could see in their households but *how* they saw.

Newtonian optics made light the medium of color itself. But when the art historian and theorist John Gage asserts that “Newton regarded light as material” (*Colour and Culture*, 169), neither he nor the scientific discoveries of the *Opticks* appreciate the ironies that nineteenth-century technological innovation would create in regards to the relationship between lighting and color. The introduction of coal gas works at the start of the nineteenth century meant that gas lighting was at once byproduct of and a means for industrialization and the evolution of industrial capitalism: the gas produced for lighting was previously an unexploited waste product of the process of distilling coal into coke, while the reach and intensity of the lighting made it ideal for factories, “freeing” the work day from the external constraints of natural daylight and subsuming the individual worker’s body into a comprehensive system of mechanized labor and economy (Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night*, 8-18). Moreover, while the atmospheric pollution produced by various industries, especially the use and processing of coal, reduced the purity and intensity of natural sunlight, gas, one of the products of the processes that now obscured the sun, could be the very means of compensating – indeed, overcompensating – with its strong, direct light.

In the Hales’ cozy drawing room, the type of lighting used is left unspecified, with Margaret “lighting the lamp,” which simply “threw a pretty light into the centre of the dusky room” (79), but it is therefore this generalized, and generally pleasant, visual effect that

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lights, improving on the natural but mundane experience of daytime life, presents the commodity fetish in all its glory, easily available to the admiring eye if not to the acquisitive hand” (4). Like paper, dye, printing, artificial lighting, and many of the other products and processes under discussion in this chapter – and in this thesis as a whole – advances in glass-making technology and the reduction or excision in Britain of duties and taxes on plate glass in the second quarter of the nineteenth century allowed for massive increases in its manufacture and use.

matters.<sup>92</sup> When artificial lighting is explicitly mentioned, it is contributing to the drama of public exposure: Having taken her fugitive brother, Frederic, to the train station, “Margaret insisted upon going into the full light of the flaring gas inside to take the ticket,” and it is within the brightened, heightened setting that she gives a “proud look” to the “impertinent stare” of a young man (258), continuing the novel’s motif of putting Margaret on display while recording her discomfort with and defiance at being the object of another’s gaze.<sup>93</sup> Frederick, having “turned round, right facing the lamp, where the gas darted up in vivid anticipation of the train,” is then identified by a drunken Leonards, who must be thrown off in order for Frederick to successfully escape the country (259). The inspector – “a very keen, [though] not a very deep observer” (269) – is persuaded not to follow up on witness testimony that would implicate Margaret in Leonards’ death by Thornton, and this misunderstanding will constitute the central obstacle to their romantic reconciliation for the rest of the novel.<sup>94</sup> Thornton’s typically “sudden comprehensive glances” (161) had been most appreciative of Margaret’s physical appearance – and arguably best suited to appreciating it in such brief but deep looks, given her desire to be unwatched. Thus it is a painful irony that he must use his social standing to counter the visual authority of witness testimony in order to protect, even though she has “stained her whiteness by a falsehood” (274) in his regard, expelled from “the light in which [he] thought she lived perpetually” (307).

The novel’s contrast in lighting and coloration between the South and the North clearly aligns both as mutually inflected – or, perhaps, *reflected*. In idyllic, pastoral Helstone, dust

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<sup>92</sup> Natural light preserves private feeling for Thornton as well: His mother speaks contemptuously of Margaret, but, “[i]f these words hurt her son, the dusky light prevented him from betraying any emotion” (142).

<sup>93</sup> This dynamic is of course made most obvious and dramatic during the mill riots when she throws herself in front of Thornton, “in the face of that angry sea of men, her eyes smiting them with flaming arrows of reproach” (176). Later, Margaret dwells on her “deep sense of shame that she should thus be the object of universal regard,” wanting “to hide herself” from “that unwinking glare of many eyes” (189).

<sup>94</sup> Tightening the web of connections between Margaret and Thornton even more, we come to learn that Leonards had been engaged to one of Mrs. Thornton’s servants (272).

brings “a filmy veil of soft dull mist obscuring, but not hiding, all objects, giving them a lilac hue” (54). By contrast, in Milton, “whose silver mists were heavy fogs,... the sun could only show long dusky streets when he did break through and shine” (247).<sup>95</sup> An all-encompassing introductory description of the town and its residents simply states that “[t]he colours looked grayer – more enduring, not so gay and pretty” (59), while upon their approach to Milton the family “saw a deep lead-coloured cloud hanging over the horizon...” (60). The lighting and coloration of industrial life must by necessity be artificial in order to be effective – that is to say, industrialization begets industrialization. In order to work without the clear and direct natural light that has been blocked out by industrial pollution, artificial lighting must be manufactured; and in order to make products visually appealing beneath these newly intensified sources of illumination, artificial colors, which were “more enduring,” though too garishly bright to be authentically “gay and pretty,” must be developed. And, in terms of invention and manufacture, these two industries would be perfectly symbiotic.

The development of the manufacture of gas lighting in the 1810s and '20s resulted in massive quantities of coal tar, which was essentially a waste product. In 1842 the Russian chemist N. N. Zinin discovered aniline, a plant-derived alkaloid distilled from indigo, and three years later the German chemist August Wilhelm Hofmann synthesized this basic alkaline oil from nitrobenzene, a coal tar byproduct.<sup>96</sup> The synthetic dye industry was born. It was one of Hofmann's students, William Henry Perkin, who in 1856, just one year after the publication of *North and South*, would invent a process for making the brilliant, colorfast, and wildly popular

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<sup>95</sup> When the family first arrives, they are greeted by “[t]he thick yellow November fogs,” which “crept up to the very window, and [were] driven into every open door in choking while wreaths of unwholesome mist,” atmospheric conditions that are then analogized to the thick “fog of circumstance” which has circumscribed the Hales' new life (66-67).

<sup>96</sup> He would, at the Royal College of Chemistry in London in 1859, discover magenta, and go on to create aniline blue and black in the next decade.

purple dye known as mauve.<sup>97</sup> This was not the first coal-tar dye – yellow picric acid was discovered in France in the mid-1840s – nor should one assume that technical and scientific innovation in the dye industry was stagnant in the first half of the century. Even prior to the advent of aniline dyestuffs chemical and technological advances were rendering color – on the walls, furnishings, and clothed bodies of modern consumers – increasingly bright and lasting. (The garishness the Hales’ pink and blue wallpaper is no doubt little tempered by its predating the advent of magenta and aniline blue. Pre-synthetic colors could be just as vulgar as their manufactured successors; indeed, their visual impertinence fairly demanded the invention of even brighter tints.) The vivacity of the new synthetic colors, however, in addition to their fastness and consistency, was a critical innovation in the textile and printing industries.

Prior to the development of synthetic dyes, dyeing consisted of immersion and/or printing with colors derived mainly from insects or vegetable materials, such as indigo, woad, and madder root, the use of which had been fairly unchanged since antiquity.<sup>98</sup> “Turkey red,” in fact, refers less to the rich, cool color itself than to the elaborate dyeing that produced it, which involved up to twenty treatments in a madder solution.<sup>99</sup> Natural dyes could produce truly vivid colors, but they required the careful mixture and application of mordants (from the French *mordre*, “to bite”) in order to fix the color and prevent fading. This, in addition to laborious multiple processes and the expertise necessary to produce exact and consistent tints, meant that

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<sup>97</sup> For an excellent introduction to the full history of aniline dye, including explanations of the chemical processes necessary for its production, see Travis, *The Rainbow Makers*. For a wider overview of pre-synthetic technologies and practices, see Nieto-Galan, *Colouring Textiles*.

<sup>98</sup> The popularity of “blue papers” – indeed, the synonymy of the very term with wallpaper in eighteenth-century England – was due to the predominance of blue patterned linen on the market (and the preference for matching the fabric furnishings with the papers). The legislation that restricted the use of printed or dyed calicoes in order to protect the domestic flax and wool industries had exempted indigo dyers (Philips 79).

<sup>99</sup> Angélique Kinini notes the commercial dimension of the dye’s identity, as inflected by its role in the global market: “Dès la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle l’application *rouge du Levant* ainsi que celle du *rouge d’Andrinople* étaient employées par les Français pour indiquer le rouge turc dans tous les rapport consulaires du Levant” (96n1). For an exhaustive history of the color, particularly its geopolitical significance, see Chenciner’s *Madder Red*; Greenfield’s *A Perfect Red* focuses on the equally fascinating history of cochineal.

the printing and textile industries were dependent upon skill practitioners of a highly developed craft. The advent of synthetic dyes, however, meant that color had, in its turn, been industrialized. The waste products of modern manufacture could be processed into cheap, colorfast, visually consistent, and appealingly vivid shades that would, critically, stand out under the glare of the newly intensified sources of lighting from which they were distilled.

The garish pinks, blues, and yellows that decorate the Thornton and Hale homes are visual testimony to the onset of industrial coloration, presaging a loss of individualized hand labor and craftsmanship. In the transitional period in which natural dyestuffs were gradually replaced by synthetics, the former's consistency in quality, cost, concentration, and manufacture "paralleled the modernization of dye works and calico printing works... By working under such preconditions, the dyeing and textile printing trades became rationalized, standardized sectors of modern industry" (Simon 313). It would be too great a stretch to read Mrs. Thornton's having run out of Turkey-red thread as a parable of this historical shift in yet another segment of the textile industry. However, by following metonymy's logic of contiguities and connections, rather than the substitutions of metaphor that such an allegorical interpretation would demand, we restore the lost or obscured origins of these bright tints, and their theoretical and technical linkages to the lighting under which they could be so insistently visible, and thus legible and novelistically real.

### **Boucher's Body**

By way of conclusion, I would examine the subplot of John Boucher, the impoverished mill worker whose narrative arc with regard to the trade union, eventual death, and very person, I argue, encompasses the several strands of socio-historical connection that have been traced in

preceding sections. The reader's invitation to read the homes and bodies of persons of virtually every class level is a generic prerogative; that is to say, the novel renders legible the physical settings and the persons for which they are physiognomic metonymies, allowing us to read the realist detail with the same access and fullness with which we presented individual psychological interiorities and multivalent plotlines that are eventually subsumed into more or less tidy closures. In her discussion of *Mary Barton*, Mary Poovey asserts, "So prominent is domesticity in Gaskell's novel that her representation of political events ... stresses only the domestic repercussions..., not its political significance" (146). I would like to reverse this trajectory, however, to assert that in *North and South* it is in fact the *political* repercussions of the novel's domestic elements that are, by implication, most prominent. In closely reading the bodily sufferings of Mrs. Hale, Bessy Higgins, and ultimately John Boucher within the contexts of domesticity and industrial economy, we come to appreciate the political valence of the novel's personal concerns, and, thus, the deeper significance of the reconciliation of these seemingly competing elements posed by the romantic and fiscal union of Margaret and Thornton.

The narrative's treatment of – its veritable incursions into – the domestic and bodily integrity of its characters maintains and reinforces the privileges and privileging of privacy according to class. Early anti-factory rhetoric frequently invoked the physical effects of industrialization upon the individual laborer (e.g., pollution, deformity, mechanization), analogizing them to the effects of the system as a whole upon the "body politic" (see Southey 1:166-171, and Ruskin, "The Nature of the Gothic"). This former dynamic is dramatized in the sickly person of Bessy Higgins, who has been "poisoned" by the "fluff" produced in mill work:

'Fluff?' said Margaret, inquiringly.

‘Fluff,’ repeated Bess. ‘Little bits, as fly off fro’ the cotton, when they’re carding it, and fill the air till it looks all fine white dust. They say it winds round the lungs, and tightens them up. ... I just worked on till I shall ne’er get the whirr out o’ my ears, or the fluff out o’ my throat i’ this world.’ (103)

The waste products of manufacture – like the harsh glare of gas lighting and synthetic colors assaulting the eyes – inflict themselves not only upon but *within* the laboring body, both in its literal internal parts and in its sensual effects; the pollution of factory labor is rendered a compromise of the senses as well as the body, in the apparently persistent auditory aftereffects. The novel’s granting of descriptive access to private homes and individual psyches is extended even to the internal organs of its poorest characters.<sup>100</sup> Curiously, this exchange serves to link Bessy’s fate to that of Mrs. Hale: after she and Margaret have squeezed hands, the narrative abruptly shifts, stating simply, “From that day forwards Mrs. Hale became more and more of a suffering invalid” (104). The symbolic logic of this transition suggests an analogizing of the two as both fatally ill, but the class difference between their situations is dramatized by the

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<sup>100</sup> The presumptive right of the philanthropy-minded middle-class woman to enter the homes of the poor is invoked in the novel, albeit with some of the anxiety apparently prompted by regional differences: having met the Higgins family, Margaret assumes that she can and will visit them, “for at Helstone it would have been an understood thing, after the inquiries she had made, that she intended to come and call upon any poor neighbour whose name and habitation she had asked for” (74). This invasive, often voyeuristic form of altruism, practiced by groups such as Manchester’s Ladies Sanitary Society in the 1840s and ‘50s, attempted to police the urban poor’s literal and moral “filth.” Nicholas Higgins’s objection to such intrusions – “‘I’m none so fond of having strange folk in my house’” (ibid) – seems more of a piece with his own political leanings than with any reticence on the part of the novel toward this violation of domestic privacy and familial autonomy. For a contemporary example of this voyeurism, see Godwon’s 1854 *London Shadows: A Glance at the Homes of the Thousands*. For earlier studies of the impact of mechanization on the working classes, see James Kay-Shuttleworth’s 1832 *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* and Peter Gaskell’s 1833 *The Manufacturing Population of England, Its Moral, Social, and Physical Conditions, and the Changes which Have Arisen from the Use of Steam Machinery; with an Examination of Infant Labour*. See also Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*. On working class perspectives, see R. J. Morris.



narrative's textual strategies and the metonymic connections of what has made them ill and how.<sup>101</sup>

Mrs. Hale, whose health is also compromised by Milton manufacture and, by extension, industrial production more broadly, is granted a bodily autonomy that remains inviolate, even in disease and death. The care and caution with regard to Mrs. Hale that prompts Margaret and Mr. Hale to worry about the pink and blue wallpaper in the first place would seem to suggest a general insipidity on her part that tips delicacy of feeling into the broadly comic. And yet, in order to bolster his assertion that in wallpaper designs, "nothing should disturb their flatness" (*True and False*, 78), Owen Jones explicitly analogizes the dangers of floral-patterned papers for the invalid: "Every one who has been ill of fever, or restless night or morning, well knows how the vacant mind is constantly exercising its fancy on the pattern of a paper,... and thereby materially increase our fever or headache" (80-81). The actual dangers posed by the new colors of the era were in fact quite literal: an arsenic compound byproduct of aniline dye manufacture, called "London purple," proved a highly popular insecticide (Lanman 210), while arsenic poisoning via other colors, especially "Scheele's Green" (also known as emerald green), was a legitimate, if exploitable, source of public anxiety. Concerns from the medical community about the presence of arsenic in consumer goods were expressed as early as the 1830s, and "[b]y the early 1860s, medical and other literature was making regular connections between chronic arsenicism in the home and the presence of arsenical wallpaper and other goods (Bartrip 933). The powdery surface of flock papers and the dye particles that flaked off more cheaply made wallpapers were thought especially dangerous in "poisoning" the air of the home.

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<sup>101</sup> On the environmental pollution and Victorian health, see Wohl, *Endangered Lives*. See also Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, and O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture*. As Thorsheim notes, "Concerns about environmental degradation were also connected to anxieties about cultural decline" and the perceived subordination of the nation and its "'natural' character" to urbanism and industry (6-7).

Regardless of these concrete threats produced by industrial manufacture, Mrs. Hale's illness remains environmental, in the figurative sense, and defiantly unspecified. While she, in a moment of bitterness, expresses blame and resentment that Mr. Hale brought her to "this unhealthy, smoky, sunless place" (202), the actual cause of Mrs. Hale's decline is given by indirection and withheld from explicit narration: Margaret asks the doctor for "the simple truth," more unnerved by her inability "to read" his face than any words he could say, but he fears "the secret will be known soon enough without [his] revealing it" (125). Having astutely interpreted Margaret's character via *her* face, however, "He spoke two short sentences in a low voice, watching her all the time; for the pupils of her eyes dilated into a black horror, and the whiteness of her complexion became livid. He ceased speaking" (126). The textual withholding, allowing the intimate details of Mrs. Hale's diagnosis to be shared with her daughter while bypassing the reader, preserves the bodily autonomy – and familial authority – granted to the middle class but denied to the laboring poor. The raw materials of industrial manufacture invade the bodies and pervade the lives of factory workers, whose domestic and bodily interiors are open to the observing and evaluative judgment of the middle and upper classes. By contrast, the latter's homes and persons, even when compromised by the polluting and poisonous byproducts of urban industry, are shielded from public scrutiny, resonating with the initial efforts to shield Mrs. Hale from visual exposure to the more obvious products of industrial manufacture, namely ugly décor.

This class-inflected model of the body in relation to political-economy and industrial manufacture will be dramatized most strikingly in the case of John Boucher, who is pressed into joining the mill workers' strike despite his acute poverty and desperation. The social body in the rhetoric surrounding the factory system faced clear and certain danger from trade unions, which,

according to Ure, “are conspiracies of workmen against the interests of their own order, and never fail to end in the suicide of the body corporate which forms them” (41). Ure’s metaphor fits neatly with Boucher’s fate (i.e., his literal suicide), but it is the metonymic compromises of the latter’s body that I wish to highlight here. Boucher’s body is discovered after he has drowned himself, with his face “swollen and discoloured; besides, his skin was stained by the water in the brook, which had been used for dyeing purposes” (288).<sup>102</sup> The competing political and economic forces of industry and unionism are here subsumed into the broken body and spirit of the individual laborer, his very face bearing the visual evidence of manufacture.

The dangers of industrial coloration that were posed to Mrs. Hale by metonymic linkages and the bodily pollution of manufacture embodied – or rather, in-bodied – by Bessy are taken to their extreme endpoints in Boucher’s visage. The abstract and interweaving concerns of design and manufacture have already been visually evidenced upon the walls of the Hale home, its patterning and colors vividly testifying to the impact of emerging technologies upon the intimate lives of the modern individual. This novel’s obvious engagements with the concerns of (and over) industrialization in its depiction of labor unrest and workers’ hardships are simultaneously illustrated – pun intended – in its more implicit staging of the complex social arguments about aesthetics, socioeconomics, and their interrelationship. Wallpaper, and, by extension, dress and décor more generally, are not just metaphoric substitutes or even simply metonymic signifiers of the characters; rather, the piece of material culture contains within it the indicators of a wider

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<sup>102</sup> The history of waste disposal in the dyestuffs industry is sparse but suggestive of the overall tendency toward carelessness with regard to environmental pollution. Simon notes, for example, that the sumac extraction waste “was dumped in the 1880s on the banks of the Rhine or occasionally thrown directly into the river” (327). For Ruskin, the psychic and spiritual turmoil of modernity was manifested physically in environmental pollution, “a total carelessness of the beauty of the sky, or the cleanness of streams, and I believe that the powers of nature are depressed or perverted, together with the Spirit of Man; and therefore that conditions of storm and of physical darkness, such as never were before in Christian times, are developing themselves, in connection also with forms of loathsome insanity, multiplying through the whole genesis of modern brains” (28:79). See also Wheeler, ed., *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, especially his own chapter “Environment and Apocalypse”; Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*; and Mosley, *The Chimney of the World*.

history of industrial design, social economy, and aesthetic criticism. The novel's romantic plot concludes itself with the successful joining of Margaret's financial assets, Thornton's business interests, and, in the abrupt final paragraphs of the book, their mutual affection. I argue, however, that this intertwining of the political and economic with the private and personal has in fact been dramatized throughout the whole of *North and South*, un-hidden in plain sight. In the following chapter, I depart from this singular focus to discuss Lev Tolstoy's late works in the context of his own aesthetic and moral crises; for the author, aesthetics' compromise with artistry eventually requires that we abandon art altogether.

## Chapter Three

### Aesthetic Exigencies in Tolstoy: The Floral, the Moral, and the Real<sup>103</sup>

Сами кустики около дома красовались с какой-то парижской чопорностью, сами цветы, усаженные и уставленные где только можно, принимали какой-то вид хорошего тона, сама природа делалась неестественна. Одним словом, все было, как следовало быть.

Каролина Карловна Павлова,  
*Двойная жизнь*<sup>104</sup>

The human body under capitalism is thus fissured down the middle, traumatically divided between brute materialism and capricious idealism, either too wanting or too whimsical, hacked to the bone with perverse eroticism.

Terry Eagleton,  
*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*

In an early expository passage in Ivan Turgenev's short story *First Love* (*Первая любовь*) (1860) the narrator describes his family's Moscow residence in the summer of 1833:

во флигеле налево помещалась крохотная фабрика дешевых обоев... Я не раз хаживал туда смотреть, как десяток худых и взъерошенных мальчишек в засаленных халатах и с испитыми лицами то и дело вскакивали на деревянные рычаги, нажимавшие четырехугольные обрубки пресса, и таким образом тяжестью своих тщедушных тел вытискивали пестрые узоры обоев. (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [PSS] 9:9-10)

<sup>103</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published as an article in the *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, vol. XXI (2001).

<sup>104</sup> "The very foliage around the cottage flaunted a sort of Parisian haughtiness, the very flowers, planted and positioned in every available space, took on a certain look of bon ton, nature herself made unnatural. In a word, everything was *comme il faut*" (Pavlova, *A Double Life*).

the wing on the left was occupied by a small factory producing cheap wallpaper... I often stopped by to watch the ten or so skinny, disheveled boys in their greasy coats with their pinched faced jumping on the wooden levers pushing down the square blocks of the press and thus, with the weight of their scrawny bodies, stamped out the brightly colored patterns of the wallpapers.

The other wing of the house is soon rented by the narrator's titular "first love," and while this workshop is never mentioned again in the story – indeed, it may seem highly anomalous for a story so divorced from politics and economics – the brief glimpse of exploited bodies and tawdry décor echoes throughout the rest of the narrative.<sup>105</sup> Jane Costlow analogizes this moment of "sociological *realia*" to the romantic drama of the story's heroine, who submits to being whipped by the narrator's father: "Just as Zinaida's body becomes a kind of tool of erotic devastation, so these boys' bodies are appendages of a machine; the finale emblem of erotic violence in 'First Love' – the welt that Zinaida kisses – is prefigured here in the imprint of body on paper" (10). (Moreover, the alliterative quality of those thin bodies' stamping with their weight – *tiazhest'iu svoikh tshedushnykh tel vytiskivali* – turns narrative description into onomatopoeic transcription, the physical action of the boys' jumping now stamped onto the page, and into the reader's auditory experience of the scene, just as it is imprinted upon both their scrawny laboring bodies and that labor's output.<sup>106</sup>) While the focus of this chapter is on the turn of the century, the significance of the body in this fleeting glance at pre-mechanized industry will resonate throughout my analyses of technology's impact on aesthetics.

The novelistic encounters with wallpaper that I analyze here are all fraught but fleeting, each in its own way – Anna in post-partum distress, Ivan Ilyich about to take a fatal fall,

<sup>105</sup> In 1896, after listening to a reading of the story, Tolstoy commended the ending of the story – in which the narrator's father warns of the "slow poison" that is erotic love – as a "classic" (qtd. in Gusev 214).

<sup>106</sup> My thanks to Harriet Murav for this observation.

Pozdnyshev steeping in murderous jealousy. In previous chapters I discussed static descriptions, wherein wallpaper was a focal point of the characters' or narrators' conversations, and its strong metonymies extended in clear webs throughout the works as a whole; the references analyzed here, by contrast, are extremely quick, increasingly made by a critical authorial voice, and risk being overloaded with meaning amidst the scenes' larger dramas. More critically, these brief glimpses give way, in Tolstoy's late work, to an aesthetic and domestic paradigm that cannot support such material details, either as physical emblems of a corrupted culture or as narrational tools of a literary genre to which the author can no longer contribute. In this way, we must read the *absence* of wallpaper in order to comprehend more fully the significance of its earlier appearances.

Whereas the previous chapter addressed the implications of political economy for the romantic plot of the realist novel, which ultimately allowed for the reconciliation of both the romantic and the industrial "halves" of the industrial romance, in this section I address how later commentary on the industrialization of art and manufacture reverberated throughout the writings of Lev Tolstoy in the final decades of his life and shaped not only his philosophies but the very substance of his prose. Moreover, I place Tolstoy's later fiction and nonfiction in conversation with the writings of Victorian art critic John Ruskin (and, to a lesser extent, William Morris). In Tolstoy's confluences of moral and aesthetic criteria, it is easy to see the parallels between his ideas and those of Ruskin,<sup>107</sup> whose work Tolstoy greatly admired and who, in his art criticism, rejected pictorial convention in favor of moral and material "truth." Rather than claiming to read specific lines of connection from Ruskin to Tolstoy, trying to establish the former's particular

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<sup>107</sup> Such a stance was certainly not new to Russia, where mid-century intellectuals like Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Chernyshevsky had advocated for an artistic imperative not simply of reflecting current reality but also commenting upon and ultimately improving it. All creative production – from the visual arts to literature – was bound by a mission of social and political reform.

points of influence and how it was incorporated into the latter's work,<sup>108</sup> however, I wish to focus on the ways in which Tolstoy's earlier work *anticipated* this ideological kinship. By highlighting how Tolstoy's approaches to art and ethics intersect, the ways in which Ruskin's aesthetic theories would later resonate with him become all the clearer, regardless of direct, chronological influence. In this way, I read "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" and "The Kreutzer Sonata" as transitional works, both aesthetically and thematically, between the artistic virtuosity of *Anna Karenina* and the often dry parables and hectoring essays of Tolstoy's final years. As Justin Weir notes, many of Tolstoy's post-"conversion" stories are reworkings of his earlier fiction, attempts at redefining his earlier aesthetics, and reconfiguring autobiography to serve his new moral paradigm (167). For this reason, I will often be approaching Tolstoy's bibliography in non-chronological order, tracing the aesthetic elements and ideas under discussion back from their more explicit articulations to their early signals of and affinities with Ruskinian ideology. My claim here is not an accounting of *why* Tolstoy makes this shift from richly detailed realist aesthetics in his fiction to often descriptively simple narratives and nonfictional tracts, but *how*.

The social conditions and aesthetic trends to which Ruskin was responding were, of course, notably different from those in Tolstoy's Russia, and it is these historical contexts that I will briefly outline and contrast, not simply to highlight the comparison, but, rather, to interrogate how these material circumstances are manifested in the artistry of Tolstoy's own works. In the first section of this chapter, I will offer some historical background on Russia's manufacturing industries in the nineteenth century, their implications for art production and labor, and why those were so important, particularly in regards to *kustar'* manufacture. Next, I

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<sup>108</sup> Such overviews have mostly consisted of historiographic sketches. See, for example, Nikitina's "Dzhon Reskin i Lev Tolstoy: Priglasenie k dialogu." In these studies their connection is usually left at a superficial level of a like-minded "wisdom," generally stated. Tolstoy himself contributed to the creation of this shared pseudo-mysticism by including many quotes from Ruskin in his collections of teachings, published late in life, inadvertently transforming Ruskin's work (and his own) into a miscellany of aphoristic platitudes.



will address more fully the resonances between Ruskin and Tolstoy in terms of the ethical imperatives of art, the question of “ornament,” and the evils of imitation. Finally, I will argue that the alienation of artistic labor serves to explain why, according to Tolstoy, art must be “infectious,” and what the implications of this model are for the generic concerns and aesthetic execution of his own fiction.

### **In the Aftermath of Industry**

Given the wealth of scholarship that has been written on the traditional arts in Tolstoy, such as analyses of portraiture in *Anna Karenina* and other forms of ekphrasis,<sup>109</sup> the material focus of my attention may seem incidental to the larger questions in his oeuvre or else merely pieces of social *realia* at most signifying the characters’ inner qualities. Interestingly, Tolstoy suggests seemingly trivial crafts as of a piece with the more traditional arts in the first pages of *What Is Art?* (1898). Mentioning theatre, music, the visual arts, and literature, he then invokes the “Hundreds of thousands of workers – carpenters, masons, painters, joiners, paper-hangers, tailors, hairdressers, jewelers, bronze founders, typesetters” who labor to “satisfy the demands of art.” Describing his tour backstage at the rehearsal of an opera, Tolstoy seems to rewrite the famous scene of Natasha Rostova at the opera, with himself in the role of estranged observer, defamiliarizing his readers with descriptions of the mechanized sets, tatty costumes, and bizarre singing. By focusing on the physical labor and commonplace items that come together to create a work of art, Tolstoy calls to mind the complementary imaginative labor of the audience. By extension, the emotional value with which we invest our domestic environment, and the aesthetic importance of that setting, is no less critical in the performance of private life.

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<sup>109</sup> See Mandelker’s seminal *Framing Anna Karenina*. More recently, Hutchings’s *Russian Literary Culture in the Camera Age* incorporates photography and film into visual analyses, examining “how [literature] translated photographic epistemologies into new structures of literary meaning” in the nineteenth century (10).

More broadly, the decorative arts took on ideological significance in matters of national identity and artistic worth. After the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, expositions and world's fairs in the subsequent decades provided an international stage from which individual countries could not only display the latest innovations in domestic industry, technological progress, and manufacture but also shape the visual dimension of their own national identity in an emerging global commodity culture.<sup>110</sup> In the midst of larger philosophical debates about Russian cultural identity – i.e. the Westernizer/Slavophile dichotomy – the arts played a complicated role: To V. V. Stasov, the art critic and self-appointed defender of Russian realism in painting, Western Europe was a crucial model and standard for those in the fine arts; the decorative arts, however, were a source and a safeguard for native designs, skills, and values.<sup>111</sup> What actually constituted “Russian style” (*ruskii stil'*), however, was not easily defined. Among academics and artists the aim was to “reflect an ethnically or nationally “true” form of decoration, usually described as design or ornament that had appeared or been in use before any sort of outside foreign influence could be detected” (62).<sup>112</sup> While the era of the Petrine reforms provided one obvious “break” in the history of Russian visual culture, it was not the only demarcation suggestion. Illustrated publications that provided a visual record of Russia's ancient (*drevnii*) styles in architecture and crafts, such as I. M. Snigirev's *Pamiatniki drevnego khudozhestva v Rossii* (*The Monuments of Ancient Artwork in Russia*, 1853), provided design sources for metalwork, textiles, furniture, and fine objects. Pan-European trends in style and décor continued to dominate among producers and consumers, especially the upper classes; nonetheless, Russia's contemporary manufacturing, its

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<sup>110</sup> See, e.g., Gere, *European Decorative Arts at the World's Fairs, 1850-1900*, and Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Exhibitions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*.

<sup>111</sup> See Stasov, *Ruskii narodnyi ornament* (1872) and *Slavianskii i vostochnyi ornament* (1884-1887); and also Olkhovsky, *Vladimir Stasov and Russian National Culture*.

<sup>112</sup> See esp. Kirichenko, *Russian Design and the Fine Arts, 1750-1917*, “Russkoe kupechestvo i ruskii stil',” and *Ruskii stil'*.

material and visual culture, became inflected with the ideological prerogatives of a Romantic nationalism, one that imbued the peasant class with cultural authority, as their arts and craftwork, like the rest of their traditional lifestyles, were presumably less “corrupted” by modernization (Tolz 73-91).<sup>113</sup>

While Turgenev’s workshop scene, which opened this chapter, could be transferred to any Western European, British, or North American setting, pre-Industrial Revolution, without discontinuity, it also depicts a unique moment in the history of Russian manufacturing at the midpoint between the factory and general mechanization. The usual narrative of production history is as follows: a household activity, such as weaving, arises from family need; there is a transitional period of artisanship and cottage industry, which is then subordinated to mercantile capitalism under the putting-out system; and finally, the factory system emerges as the final stage of capitalist evolution. Russia, however, did it somewhat in reverse. Peter the Great’s efforts to establish factory production entailed granting government sponsorship and importing foreign management to whom ownership would then be given.<sup>114</sup> Prohibitively high tariffs and sometimes import bans on foreign goods protected domestic industry, while manufacturers would be granted production monopolies for extended periods of time to encourage the factory industries. An exclusive monopoly on silk, velvet, brocade, and damask fabrics production, for example, was granted in 1717 to the company of Shafirov and Tolstoy (*Polnyi Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, V, 3:89, 3:162, cited in Tugan-Baranovsky, 8). This economic strategy on the part of the state continued under Empress Elizabeth, in particular the granting of production

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<sup>113</sup> See also *Stil’ i epokha v dekorativnom iskusstve 1820e-1890e gody. Istorizm v Rossii*. On russkii stil’ in the world market, see Kettering, “Decoration and Disconnection: The Russkii Stil’ and Russian Decorative Arts at Nineteenth-Century World’s Fairs.”

<sup>114</sup> This practice was not of course entirely new: Ivan IV (i.e. the Terrible) extended an invitation to English artisans to work in Muscovy via the English court, regularizing the practice with a charter in the 1560s to support such merchants and craftsmen on Russian soil (Batalov and Shvidkovsky 137).

monopolies to foreigners whose training and expertise both introduced new industries to the empire and stifled domestic entrepreneurship. In 1755, for example, an Englishman named Butler was granted a ten-year exclusive right to produce wallpaper in Moscow; five years later an additional ten year extension was granted, and a native paper manufacturer's petition to erect a wallpaper factory was denied (*ibid.*, XIV, 10:376; XV, 11,080; 30). A year prior, this same papermaker, Ol'khin, was forbidden to expand his paper mill following the petition of a Baron Sivers, who contended that his own product was of superior quality and sufficient quantity for the St. Petersburg province (Tugan-Baranovsky, 30). (One of the few wallpapers displayed in the Russian Court at the 1851 Great Exhibition was produced by the manufactory of Fetter and Rahn, decidedly un-Russian names; a few of their designs were deemed "delicate in colour and on just principles," but were nonetheless "mixed up," notes the Supplementary Report in a typical tone, "with the others in the usual false taste" [718].) By the end of Elizabeth's reign, however, the drive toward a new industrial policy was emerging, one that freed small, private producers from the constraints of government sponsorship. Under Catherine II, who, in her *Nakaz*, for example, opposed monopolies and extolled small industry, large-scale manufacturing enterprises –and, metonymically, machines – were criticized for their curtailment of handicrafts and exploitation of bonded labor (see Lodyzhenskii, 107-8, cited in Tugan-Baranovsky, 31).

While mechanization would eventually reverse the process, subordinating hand-labor to factory manufacture, by the start of the nineteenth century, the factory had given birth to domestic industry. The simplicity of cotton weaving and printing prompted some mill owners to adopt the putting-out system, while peasant workers, having acquired these skills, set up their own works. These *kustar'* (artisan) enterprises included calico and chintz printing, cotton and silk weaving, furniture manufacture, and wood- and metal-work, among others. Whereas in

England cottage industry workers entered the factory system in order to acquire the technical skills of product design and manufacture, Russian laborers, having learned these arts in large factories and workshops, became independent laborers and joined small production units. For the upper classes, of course, luxury goods, particularly those that would be most visually accessible to guests, would be imported from Western Europe; for wallpaper, in particular, German and English production was especially popular, and French wallpaper was the most desired (Kiselev, 43).

Another key component in this rather unusual evolution of industry is how late mechanized production came to Russia. The mechanical loom became part of cotton weaving only in the late 1840s, and until the late 1850s hand labor was still predominant, and *kustar*' weaving dominated calico production even as late as the 1880s (Tugan-Baranovsky, 364). Russian industry was literally late at another key moment in mid-century production: Its display for the 1851 Great Exhibition was largely incomplete, as the second main shipment from St. Petersburg had been delayed by ice floes in the Baltic Sea and did not arrive until June. Moreover, the majority of the display was made up of raw materials and large-scale industrial goods from state-producers, such as the Imperial copper works and metal foundries, rather than machine-produced finished goods; the decorative products that were on display – such as malachite and jasper works and jewelry, textiles and dyed cloth – signified the riches of the empire's natural resources, rather than emphasizing sophistication of design and craftsmanship (Ruby, *passim*).<sup>115</sup> While government ministers had pushed for participation in the hopes that

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<sup>115</sup> This is not to say that the effect wasn't suitably impressive. The *Illustrated London News*, for example, extolled the "brilliant" effect of the malachite's "perfect polished surface," complemented by the "burnished gold of the paneling and ornaments" ("The Russian Court"). The Russian press noted «всеобщее внимание знатоков...[д]аже лионские фабриканты» ("widespread attention of connoisseurs...[e]ven Lyon manufacturers") paid to Russia's silks, but again this emphasizes the richness of the materials *qua* resources rather than the skilled utilization of them in producing finished goods ("O londonskoi vystavke," *Sovremnik*).

Russia's contributions would demonstrate that the country's high tariffs were reflective of efforts to protect and nurture its fledgling industries (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Archiv [RGIA], fond [f.] 398, opis [op.] 15, delo [d.] 4850a, listi [ll.] 71-5, qtd. in Fisher 125).<sup>116</sup> The Ministry of Finance dispatched L. M. Samoilov and A. A. Sherer, specialists in textiles, to greet visitors and serve on exhibit juries.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, the British press took the opportunity to ascribe the Russian displays' riches to Nikolai I's "conservative absolutism," in stark contrast to the "spiritual idea of progress and improvement" in Britain ("The Old and New Holy Alliance," *London Illustrated News*), bemoaning the opulence of fine art specimens as evidence of slavery and despotism rather than free industry and entrepreneurialism. Many of Russia's factory owners had declined to participate in the Exhibition, insisting that their products would not stand up to comparison, let alone competition, with those of western nations; some, insisted that the quality of their raw materials and manufactures could not be truly appreciated without analysis, use, and an assessment of the material conditions within which they were produced – that is to say, within the context of their manufacture, not just the visual display of the finished state (RGIA, f. 37, op. 1, d. 289, ll. 51-58).<sup>118</sup> By the final decade of the century, however, the power loom had ascended and the industrial capitalism of the factory system had overtaken the mercantile capitalism of *kustar*' industries; in parallel development, print culture expanded rapidly with the

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<sup>116</sup> Russia was still bristling at Europe's view of the empire as backward and repressive, especially in the wake of the Marquis de Custine's popular but acidic tirade-cum-travelogue *Russie en 1839* (see Kennan). The brief feelings of international alliance engendered by the joint efforts to defeat Napoleon had quickly curdled. (Note as well that the Crimean War was only a few years way.)

<sup>117</sup> Fisher notes that their dispatch to the Russian public, "Vzgliad na Russkoe otdelenie," published in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, also appeared in a number of periodicals – *Kommercheskaia Gazeta*; *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, *Zhurnal Manufaktur i Torgovli* – and was included in their final report on the Exhibition, *Obozrenie Londonskoi vsemirnoi vystavki po glavneishim otrasliam manufakturnoi promyshlennosti*, in 1852 (191, in Fisher 140n60).

<sup>118</sup> For analysis of the "Crystal Palace canon" – the structure as literary device in Chernyshevsky's *What Is to be Done?*, Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, and Turgenev's *Smoke* – see Dianina. See also Sarah Young's series of blog posts on "Russian perspectives on the Great Exhibition," at: [sarahjyoung.com](http://sarahjyoung.com)

aid of technical improvements, especially after the introduction and adoption of the rotary press in the 1870s and 1880s (Brooks 92).

In broad terms, Moscow and St. Petersburg each represented opposite poles of industry, with the former embodying manufacture and the latter consumption, at least in the cultural imagination and, more critical, in Tolstoy's moral topography. As indicated above, major and minor factories were generally established in Moscow, and its "printer's row" (*pechatnyi dvor*), founded by Ivan IV in 1553, was the first in Russia, located on Nikolskaia Street in the city's traditional business center, Kitai-Gorod.<sup>119</sup> As a comparatively "new" and wholly "invented" city, St. Petersburg, the urban monument to Peter's forced modernization and westernization of Russia,<sup>120</sup> represented both the artificiality of its wealthiest residents and the superficiality of the activities and consumer goods that visually defined life there. (This is not to say that St. Petersburg wasn't a major industrial center,<sup>121</sup> but, rather, that "the textual map of Petersburg renders industrialization as marginalia" [Julie Buckler 179]. Petersburg's mass production is often suggested to be that of the "paper factories" of government bureaucracy, as in Nikolai Gogol's stories of beleaguered clerks.) If Nikolskaia Street embodied Moscow's merchant history, St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospekt represented the capital's glittering, refined (and often empty) modernity.<sup>122</sup> Vissarion Belinsky's "Peterburg i Moskva," in Nikolai Nekrasov's

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<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Pozdeev's *Moskovskii Pечатnyi dvor – fakt i faktor russkoi kul'tury. 1652-1700*, Litvinov's *Istoriia Nikolskoi ulitsy*, and Orlove's *Poligraficheskaiia Promyshlennost' Moskvy*.

<sup>120</sup> Herzen referred to it as a "city without history" (2:31). The tradition of dual (and dueling) readings of the two cities warrants its own historiography (see Burlaka's anthological *Moskva-Peterburg: Pro et Contra*).

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Bate's *St. Petersburg: Industrialization and Change*.

<sup>122</sup> Buckler's *Mapping St. Petersburg* and Martin's *Enlightened Metropolis* pair well as readings of Petersburg and Moscow, respectively, as "city-texts." For a more specific discussion of the Moscow-Petersburg dichotomy in Tolstoy, see, e.g., Schefski. It is notable, for example, that the setting described in the opening passages of *First Love* is a suburb of the metropolis and yet seems quite pastoral; in contrast to the entirely urban St. Petersburg, Moscow was a mixture of city and country environs. On other Russian cities in this era, see Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900*.

*Fiziologiia Peterburga* (1845),<sup>123</sup> stressed the essential domesticity of Moscow, as sought by its residents, in contrast to the cosmopolitan existence of Petersburg and its residents. This essentialist dichotomy plays out in *Anna Karenina*, which opens in the disordered Moscow home of Stiva Oblonsky, who is last seen in the novel in St. Petersburg pursuing an appointment to a railway and banking agency, which will make him, a “descendent of Rurik,” the first in his family’s history not to work in government service (19:297-302).<sup>124</sup> His final appearance in the text brings full circle the domestically disruptive train motif first seen with his children’s unsupervised roughhousing, and it reinforces the link between Petersburg and the railroad, both top-down impositions of state authority and forced modernization, while confirming the latter’s power to rend even the oldest ties of tradition.<sup>125</sup>

Turning then to the question of domestic tradition and modern manufacture – embodied broadly in the oppositions of Moscow and Petersburg, the carriage and railroad,<sup>126</sup> the workshop and the factory, and so on – I focus here on the unique nature of Russian artisanship. In the latter half of the century, the term *kustarichestvo* referred to the crude and ill-made.<sup>127</sup> By the turn of the century, however, a *kustar’* revival emerged, analogous to the Arts and Crafts movement promoted by Ruskin and especially William Morris in Western Europe, Britain, and the United

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<sup>123</sup> See Loman’s *Nekrasov v Peterburge* for an overview of his feuilletons, and especially Murillo’s preface to his translation, *Petersburg: The Physiology of a City*, for a comprehensive introduction of the publication and its place in Russia’s adoption and adaptation of the *physiologie*, discussed in chap. 1.

<sup>124</sup> Oblonsky had previously expressed his preference for Petersburg over Moscow, and, most damningly, needs this job to cover the debts that have driven him to beg Dolly to sell her country estate, Ergushevo, underscoring not simply his profligacy but his willingness to betray family tradition and squander domestic patrimony.

<sup>125</sup> See Westwood’s *A History of Russian Railways* for an introductory overview.

<sup>126</sup> The myriad references to and meanings of the railroad in Tolstoy’s oeuvre, the subject of which is too vast to fully address here and has been discussed at length elsewhere – see, for example, Al’tman, Stenbock-Fermor, Bethea, and, most recently, Bond.

<sup>127</sup> Lenin would use the term in his *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) to denote the primitive “handicraft” methods of organizing that must be overthrown for the success of the Marxist movement.



States.<sup>128</sup> While peasant-made goods – from lacework to wooden furnishings – had acquired significant cultural capital, the similarities in some of its designs to the *stil' modern* (the Russian term for Art Nouveau) added to the appeal while still invoking a distinct national tradition in aesthetics and craftsmanship (Salmond 1-2).<sup>129</sup> Morris's medievalism and the larger discussions of aesthetics and ornament were welcomed in Russian art circles, thanks in part to Zinaida Vengerova's critical writings, such as her important article on Morris "Vozrozhdenie dekorativnogo iskusstva" ("The Revival of Decorative Art," 1903). Vengerova wrote extensively on English literature and art, from Keats to Walter Pater and the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>130</sup> In addition to her circulation within the Bloomsbury group, Vengerova became a good friend of the Garnett family, including Constance Garnett, whose translations of Tolstoy, among other Russian writers, were among the first to introduce him to English audiences.<sup>131</sup> Vengerova hosted Garnett on the latter's first visit to Russia, in 1894, when the author and translator first met. I cite this point of connection not as an assertion of causality or even influence but rather as a striking example of the intellectual overlap between visual and textual art at the turn of the century.

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<sup>128</sup> On Morris's influence in Russia, see Makarov. See also Arscott on the political implications of Morris and materialism, *William Morris: Centenary Essays*, and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, on his politics more generally.

<sup>129</sup> For an historical overview of Russian art in relation to the West, see Blakesley and Reid. See Douglas for discussion of Russian and English textile design.

<sup>130</sup> See Rosenthal and esp. Neginsky.

<sup>131</sup> See also Henderson's account of the Russian émigré community and its relationship with the London literary scene at the end of the century, and Johnson's *Tea and Anarchy!* and *Olive and Stepniak* for more on the Garnetts in particular. For a discussion of the reverse trajectory of influence, see W. Gareth Jones's *Tolstoi and Britain*, and, for an account featuring one of Tolstoy's other early translators, see Holman's "Half a Life's Work: Aylmer Maude Brings Tolstoy to Britain."

The scholarship on Tolstoy's own time physically *in* Britain is quite sparse and largely speculative: it is certain he visited Herzen (Knowles 111), possible he saw Dickens (112), and likely he met Matthew Arnold (Lucas 111), but since he was there in 1861, prior to achieving international fame with the publication and translation of *War and Peace*, there are few traces in English or Russian records of the trip.

## Reading Ruskin in Russia

During her second trip to Russia, in 1904, Garnett commented that Ruskin was, in Vengerova's circle, "all the rage" (qtd. in Polonsky 141).<sup>132</sup> While some scholarship has been done on Tolstoy's relationship to Ruskin, much of it has focused on their moral (and moralizing) sympathies.<sup>133</sup> My focus here, however, is on their aesthetic affinities. Ruskin's writings were tremendously popular across Europe, not least of all in Russia, where Tolstoy acolyte L. P. Nikiforov was his first Russian translator.<sup>134</sup> Tolstoy had a number of works by and about Ruskin, in both English and Russian, including "The Nature of the Gothic," in his library at Yasnaya Polyana, and claimed to have read the whole of his oeuvre. Ruskin was, however, new to the Russian reading public in the last decade of the nineteenth century; rather than witnessing his transition from art to social criticism over the course of several decades, Ruskin's "Russian readers were exposed to the whole abundance of his work at once," necessarily blurring the lines between the topics of aesthetics, ethics, and post-industrial decay (Polonsky 142). When a collection of Ruskin's lectures and essays was translated and published in Moscow in 1898,

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<sup>132</sup> See Vengerova's tribute upon his death, "Dzhon Reskin, 1819-1900," in *Vestnik Evropy*, which critiques the stifling strictures of Ruskin's work while acknowledging his wide influence, particularly on the revival of the decorative arts across Europe.

<sup>133</sup> Their names were being paired for this purpose even before Tolstoy's death, as in May Alden Ward's *Prophets of the Nineteenth Century: Carlyle, Ruskin, Tolstoi*, published in 1900. More recent work has been done on the socio- and religio-political resonances, such as Gilmore's *The Christian Anarchists: Ruskin and Tolstoy, and a Consideration of Their Influence on Gandhi*. (Mohandas Gandhi famously lived on an ashram dubbed a "Tolstoy farm" in South Africa, where he read and was profoundly influenced by Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, the first work of Ruskin's that Tolstoy read.) Ryuzo Mikimoto, founder of the Tokyo Ruskin Society in 1931, included a long section on "Ruskin and Tolstoy's Thought in Japan" in his *What is Ruskin in Japan*, published the same year, addressing their shared Christian idealism (see Hanley, "The Ruskin Diaspora," in *Persistent Ruskin*, 192-94). Eagles addresses the legacy of Ruskinian political ideology in his *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920*, and Holman's "The Purleigh Colony: Tolstoyan Togetherness in the Late 1890s" discusses the application of their Christian anarchist utopian socialism at the colony, which briefly sheltered Dukhobors and at which the Maudes resided for a time. See also Marks's "Tolstoy and the Non-Violent Imperative," in his *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism*. On Ruskin more broadly, see Landow.

<sup>134</sup> Selections of his works were published in Moscow four times in 1900 alone (Sternin, *Russkaia khudozhesvennaia kul'tura vtoroi poloviny XIX-nachala XX vekov*, 97), and by the same year Olga Solovieva's translated assemblage, under the general title *Iskusstvo i deistvitel'nost'* (*Art and Reality*), was in its second translation (Polonsky 144-45). See Nikiforov's multivolume *Izbrannye mysli Dzhona Reskina*, published 1899-1904, and *Sochineniia Dzhona Reskina*, 1900-03.

Tolstoy authored the preface, in which he lauded the critic as “один из тех редких людей, который думает сердцем (les grandes pensées viennent du coeur)” (“one of those rare people who thinks with his heart [great thoughts come from the heart]”), but bemoaned the fact that his accolades in England as a writer and art critic were not extended to him as “как философа, политико-эконома и христианского моралиста” (“a philosopher, a political-economist, and a Christian moralist”) (PSS 31:96). This physiological metaphor will prove telling in Tolstoy’s negotiations of the tensions between art and ethics.

One of Ruskin’s central tenets was that the moral conditions of given era could be identified in its artistic standards and productions. By the time he published *What Is Art?* Tolstoy was articulating a similarly strident philosophy, pointing to bad art as both cause and symptom of society’s degeneration – an effect that is both moral and distinctly physiological:

Жить так, как живут богатые, праздные люди, в особенности женщины, вдали от природы, от животных, в искусственных условиях, с атрофированными или уродливо развитыми гимнастикой мускулами и ослабленной энергией жизни, нельзя было бы, если бы не было того, что называется искусством, не было бы того развлечения, забавы, которая отводит этим людям глаза от бессмысленности от их жизни, спасает их томящей их скуки. (30:169)

To live, as wealthy, idle people live, especially women, away from nature and animals, in artificial conditions,<sup>135</sup> with atrophied or abnormally developed muscles from gymnastics and with weakened vitality, would never be possible were it not for what is called art, were it not for the diversion, the amusement, which draws these people’s eyes away from the meaninglessness of their lives, saving them from their oppressive boredom.

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<sup>135</sup> Note that the words *iskusstvennyi* (artificial) and *iskusstvo* (art), as in English, share the same root.

Moreover, both responded to the rapid industrialization of their age with language that evoked both the body and the soul, which are violently affected and indeed afflicted by technology. Ruskin's obsession with the organic pervades his discussions of art, architecture, and society itself.<sup>136</sup> In one of his most famous essays, "The Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin rejects the "steely precision" of modern manufacture because of that very accuracy of execution, preferring instead the Gothic's imperfections and thus its innate humanity, not least because its flaws are indicative of its being a Christian system of ornament, "Christianity having recognized, in small things as well as great, the individual value of every soul" (7-8). (Tolstoy also credited Christianity with the ability to transcend art's capacity for potentially being misunderstood or simply incomprehensible, because it allowed for the transmission of feeling, rather than meaning, vis-à-vis the common, shared relation of man to God [30:109-10].) The modern worker's soul, guided by its "invisible nerves" is "saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity" (8).<sup>137</sup> The "great civilized invention of the division of labour" in fact "divide[s]" the laborers themselves "into mere segments of men" (10). Contrasting so-called "mechanical contrivance" with true organic beauty, he compares good design to the body, whose internal anatomy both supports and is contained by its external form; likewise, strictly utilitarian necessities of design and construction can and should still be transcended by ornamental features (Bizup 180).

This aesthetic hierarchy, however, is upended by the railroad – a synecdoche for both Ruskin and Tolstoy for modern technologies. Ruskin describes the railroad in stark terms of bodily violence: it is a network of "iron veins" across the "frame" of England (8:246) – the

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<sup>136</sup> On Ruskin and architecture, see Michael Brooks.

<sup>137</sup> Ruskin's reference to a ten-hour workday is an explicit invocation of the labor law debates of the era, putting his comments, despite their ostensible focus on the Medieval era and style, in direct conversation with contemporaneous social issues.

industrialized landscape rendered a flayed body, like that of Anna Karenina after she's thrown herself under a train. Tolstoy made this conflation of the railroad and the body distinctly feminine and explicitly violent in an 1857 letter to Turgenev, in which he famously stated, «Железная дорога к путешествию то, что бардель [sic] к любви – так же удобно, но так же нечеловечески машинально и убийственно однообразно» (“The railroad is to travel what the brothel is to love – just as convenient, but just as mechanistically inhumane and murderously monotonous”) (*PSS* 60:170).<sup>138</sup> In addition to the railroad's metaphorical and practical contributions to Anna's adultery and downfall, its impact upon Russia's agricultural economy was also a part of Tolstoy's objections, which he allows to be voiced in the novel by Levin, our solid traditionalist, who knows the spiritual value of working the land (and is far more comfortable on horseback).<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, Ruskin's reverence for the natural, particularly in aesthetics, is tied up with his ethical concerns. By mid-century the relative simplicity of Regency-era classicism, with its Grecian lines, had given way to a full rococo revival – dress and décor was elaborate, eclectic, and excessive, aided and abetted by the advent of mechanical production. In bemoaning industrial manufacture's physical and spiritual subordination of the worker to the machine – indeed, a “degradation of the operative *into* a machine” (9, emphasis added) – Ruskin turned the era's assertion of a mutually-sustaining technical and aesthetic progress inside out: industry not

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<sup>138</sup> Despite its being formed as an analogy, there is in fact a metonymic dimension to his comment: In an 1863 report on the rates of syphilis among prostitutes, Dr. Eduard Shperk noted the demographic mobility, commercialization, and other material changes wrought by the railroad – all of which leads to venereal syphilis. In a particularly Tolstoyan turn, he asserts that appearance of a railroad in a given place «увеличивают число отдающихся в наем квартир, экипажей и . . . женщин» (“increases the number of our rented apartments, equipages and . . . women”) (68, dramatic ellipsis in original). Levin's vague sense of shame and confused feelings at talking indiscriminately with strangers on the train in *Anna Karenina* (Pt. 1, Ch. 26), suggesting the seamier possible meanings of unrestrained socializing, will be borne out in extremis by the intermingling of strangers and their stories, including that of a murderer, in “The Kreutzer Sonata.”

<sup>139</sup> The railroad was also threatening in the Russian imagination because “it moves, like ‘atheistic’ logic, along iron rails without any higher reason for being... Since the train is perceived as a self-enclosed ensemble of origin/destination, coach rails, and telegraph, the passenger feels cut off from nature and the outside world and begins to experience the space-time of the journey in relative terms” (58-59).

only couldn't contribute to the elevation of art, its social effects necessarily degraded art.<sup>140</sup> Bad art could not be reformed without improving the society from which it emerged and upon which it so clearly exerted a negative influence.<sup>141</sup>

Kitty's father, whose traditionalist judgments will be vindicated, in both negative and positive terms, in Vronsky's carelessness and Levin's eventual success with Kitty, dismisses the young Petersburg fop («франтик петербургский») with evocatively technological imagery. Berating his wife for surrounding their daughter with such *tiut'kov* ("twits," emphasis his), Prince Scherbatsky insists that «их на машине делают, они все на одну статью, и все дрянью» ("they are machine-made, all to one pattern, and all rubbish") (18:60). Conflating the templated behaviors of high society, particularly in the sexualized context of matchmaking, with the visual uniformity of personal fashion and the mechanized systems that produce such fashions, the prince can dismiss both the insincerity of young men's superficial lusts and the technological innovations by which they are at once metaphorized and made visually legible.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> The crimes of mass manufacture condemned consumers as well: "every young lady...who buys glass beads in engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavouring to put down" (11). Tolstoy's rejection of machines in favor of hand labor and the nobility of spinning in his Christian anarchist tract *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894) profoundly influenced Gandhi, effecting real political change via radical socio-economic idealism.

<sup>141</sup> See also Sherburne, *John Ruskin, or, The Ambiguities of Abundance: A Study in Social and Economic Criticism*, and Spear,

Spear, *Dreams of an English Eden: Ruskin and His Tradition in Social Criticism*.

<sup>142</sup> Hutchings places this quote in the larger context of the novel's photography motif, wherein Vronsky's "photographically idealized manliness," which captivates both Kitty and Anna, mediates visual appreciation to disastrous ends and is part of the negative technological imagery that pervades the narrative as a whole (41). Note as well that although early photograph and daguerreotype technologies in the 1840s and 1850s consciously adhered to the aesthetic tradition of painted portraiture, by the 1860s efforts to formalize photography as an art form in its own right had to grapple with the question of its hybridity, as either technological innovation, branch of the fine arts, or both. In an 1864 article in *Fotograf*, Florentii Pavlenkov described photography as "united organically from the elements of chemistry and the heart, from optics and the senses, from apparatus and thought" ("Iskusstvo v fotografii," no. 17/18, qtd. in Barkhatova 42). I cite this quote to highlight its explicit invocation of organicist terminology, which not only distances it from other, more alienating and wholly mechanistic technologies of the day but *integrates* photography as a natural extension of the body's own aesthetic and physiological capacities.

### In Metonym and Metaphor

In the realist aesthetics of Tolstoy's major fiction, metonymic detail and metaphoric shading coexist in characterization, though they increasingly vie for dominance as Tolstoy struggles with the tensions he has set up for himself between narrative and morality. An early scene in *Anna Karenina* is set in the salon of Anna's fashionable friend Princess Betsy, who encourages the increasing flirtation between Anna and Vronsky. This is unsurprising, as Betsy's very home is, apparently, a visual conduit to adultery:

— Вы не находите, что в Тушкевиче есть что-то Louis XV? — сказал он, указывая глазами на красивого белокурого молодого человека, стоявшего у стола.

— О да! Он в одном вкусе с гостиной, от этого он так часто и бывает здесь. (*PSS* 18:141)

"Don't you find there to be something of the Louis XV in Tushkevich?" said one, indicating with his eyes the attractive fair-haired young man sitting at the table.

"O yes! He matches the room's decor, and that is why he happens to be here so often."

The implicit remark – namely that Tushkevich is carrying on an affair with their hostess – manifests an explicit conjunction of private behavior with personal aesthetics, in the decoration of both body and home. The direct and rather obvious symbolic logic of a metaphoric reading would simply note the conjunction of personal aesthetics and ethics, the excesses of nouveau rococo style – its rich, indulgent coloring and materials, heavily curved designs, trompe l'oeil patterns, and overabundant gilding, embellishment, and ornamentation – with the indulgent moral laxities of Betsy, her lover, and their social set.<sup>143</sup> However, the aesthetic contiguities of

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<sup>143</sup> Such an interpretation would certainly be supported by Victorian design reformers, one of whom, in an unsigned article in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures*, describes the "Louis Quatorze scroll" as an artistic feature that "recalls the debaucheries of courts, the corruption of the people, Voltaire and infidelity!" (iv:19, 1). For visual reference, see Apra, *The Louis Style*, and, for its revivalist style, see Haaff, *Louis-Philippe Möbel*. For visual

nouveau rococo style do not simply code these characters as sexually illicit through the direct substitutions of symbolic logic; rather, we must read them as synecdoches in order to understand the meaning of their relationships, the visual contiguity between dress and décor signifying the deeper ties of sexual transgression. The aesthetics of Tushkevich's dress and Betsy's décor are indeed a visual metaphor for moral vacancy, but the narrative that they construct in matching one another constitutes a metonymic chain whereby we – spoken for by the unnamed commentators who make the observation – may read the true nature of their relationship, and *then*, by extension, their moral failings.

Unlike designer and architect A. W. N. Pugin, Ruskin did not advocate a neo-Gothic style based on direct imitation of the original medieval forms and features; rather, he was drawn to an idealized authenticity of spirit in its production and the “noble” adherence to nature in its design.<sup>144</sup> He praises the Gothic's “Naturalism,” its “love of natural objects for their own sake, and the effort to represent them frankly, unconstrained by artificial laws,” this latter component being crucial – the mechanical precision of reproduction that adheres to graphical “truth” in fact sacrifices the more abstract value of the aesthetic object that constitutes its true beauty (19-20). Ruskin's emphasis in “The Nature of Gothic” is on the ethical, rather than aesthetic, superiority of the style and its epoch, using his discussion to decry the mechanization of production and its harm to the modern worker; the moral failings of bad art are thus those manifested in its very manufacture. Similarly, the moral failings of Betsy's décor lie in its execution, namely in its blatant display, mirrored on the body of her young lover.

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examples and histories of nineteenth-century Russian furnishings more generally, see Chenevière, Krasner, and Sokolova and Orlova.

<sup>144</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the era's competing styles, see Bøe, *From Gothic Revival to Functional Form: A Study in Victorian Theories of Design*.



By the time Anna has consummated her affair with Vronsky, given birth to his child, and fallen seriously ill, the narrative authority of metonymy has become increasingly fraught, while metaphor continues to prove unstable. In the middle of her delirium and deathbed repentance, having instructed her distraught lover and estranged husband to join hands, Anna makes one of the stranger comments in the whole of Tolstoy's oeuvre:

— Слава Богу, слава Богу, — заговорила она, — теперь всё готово. Только немножко вытянуть ноги. Вот так, вот прекрасно. Как эти цветы сделаны без вкуса, совсем не похоже на фиалку, — говорила она, указывая на обои. — Боже мой, Боже мой! Когда это кончится? Дайте мне морфину. Доктор! дайте же морфину. Боже мой, Боже мой!

И она заметалась на постели. (18:435)

“Thank God, thank God,” she said, “now everything is ready. Only I can’t stretch my legs. There, that’s wonderful. How tastelessly those flowers are done, they don’t look at all like violets,” she said, indicating the wallpaper. “My God, my God! When will it end? Give me morphine. Doctor! give me morphine. My God, my God!”

And she began thrashing about on the bed.

This exclamation, in all its absurdity and seeming meaninglessness, prompts a number of simplistic metaphorical interpretations, in keeping with the suggestible logic of symbolic substitutions: in her moment of crisis, Anna wants to embrace an authentic, naturalistic state; she finally sees the falsity of her social surroundings and where they have led her; the symbolic “modesty” of violets are an ironic commentary upon her sins<sup>145</sup>; and so on. The ornamental

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<sup>145</sup> The minor publishing industry producing popular books on the “language of flowers” arose in Napoleonic France and thrived throughout Europe well into the Victorian period, codifying the “expressive function” of floral symbolism from earlier eras (Seaton 60). See, e.g., Genlis’s 1810 *La Botanique historique et littéraire, contenant*

excesses of *chto-to Louis XV* (“something of the Louis XV”), and the young men associated with such aesthetic indulgence, would certainly suggest such a reading, prompting us to substitute Betsy’s sexual and decorative profligacy with Anna’s apparent punishment via divine or authorial retribution. But the question remains as to the meaning – metaphoric as well as metonymic – of a flower that doesn’t look like itself.

The degree to which the visually mimetic can be appropriate and tasteful in *décor* was a contentious issue: overly accurate, explicitly naturalistic depictions of the organic threatened to suggest biology, sensuality, and all those unseemly aspects of the natural world. Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* decreed that “nature may be typified or symbolized, but not actually imitated”; to directly imitate natural objects in the decorative arts was to degrade both (68). Design reformers were responding to the mechanization of industry in such dictates: the *Journal of Design and Manufacture*, complaining the engraved cylinders made overly accurate imitations of natural patterns too easy to produce and replicate, called for “a higher mode, wherein nature is viewed in its simplest and most *characteristic* qualities, akin to that abstract treatment which becomes pure ornament” (iii:17, 147-8, emphasis in the original).<sup>146</sup> Using similar terms, Ruskin praised a botanical pattern in an example of Gothic design, “not that the form of the arch is intended to *imitate* a leaf, but *to be invested with the same characters of beauty which the designer had discovered in the leaf*” (43, emphasis in the original). Where earlier commentators insisted on the material determinism of ornament – rejecting *trompe-l’oeil* effects and realistic imagery to assert that the flat surface of the wall must be respected and deferred to in its decoration, incorporating its essential quality into its visual expression, using

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*tous les traits, toutes les anecdotes et les superstitions relatives aux fleurs*. On floral design vis-à-vis international art expositions toward the end of the century, see Gallé.

<sup>146</sup> In Owen Jones’ rhetoric, ornament, being independent from “representational and expressive values,” is analogous to botany in that both have their own “laws of transformation” (Schafter 29).

bold, flat patterning – Ruskin extends this logic to the design (indeed, the very designer) of the ornament itself. This moment in the novel then points to an internal tension between the artistry of the medium and that of the message: For wallpaper to be “honest,” its imagery must remain true to its material nature; but in order to properly convey “violets,” the imagery must be legible as “violets.” To demand the viewer’s artistic interpretation is thus a form of artistry itself, and so this brief, strange exclamation, in which Anna refuses to interpret, refuses to read the floral patterning as symbolically suggestive of an authentic visual representation, is quickly finished and left unaddressed. Without any additional description of the setting, the conventional narrative artistry we would expect from a realist text, the scene soon ends, precluding our interpretive impulses.<sup>147</sup>

Justin Weir reads “After the Ball” (1903) as one of the critical later works in which Tolstoy is “trying to dismantle the aesthetics of his earlier novels that did not serve a moral purpose” (177) – especially important for *Anna Karenina*, most of which, he notes, takes place “after the ball” (167), both in terms of plot and thematics. In the later story of that name, the typical, early Tolstoyan “flurry of realistic description that integrates the environment metonymically” gives way to “detail as fetish, weighed down with unsustainable meaning, utterly unimportant to character development – an aesthetics, in sum, of antinarrative” (177). I suggest, however, that this bizarre exclamation is an early gesture toward the future Tolstoy’s antinarrative approach. Metonym allows the body to be “approached by way of its phenomenal presence in the world,” and this focus on “the way” rather “the endpoint,” according to Peter

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<sup>147</sup> The scene is similar in this way to the section of the novel in which the reader sees the immediate aftermath of Anna and Vronsky’s first sexual encounter: Anna’s movements – sinking from the divan, on which they have presumably just had intercourse, to almost fall upon the carpeted floor – are the only locative elements of the chapter, which is otherwise dominated by the characters’ emotional distress and descriptions of their psychological tumult (18:157). The physicality of realist narrative, usually overstuffed with the tangible materials of everyday life, is here transferred to the metaphorically murdered body of Anna, sullied in its tangibility, limp in her lover’s arms.

Brooks, “is indeed virtually a definition of narrative” (*Body Work*, 19). I would supplement Brooks’s statement by asserting that the “endpoint” is (and is typically supplied by) metaphor – the interpretive conclusion that metonym has led us to, concluding and *precluding* further reading. Overtaking the usual authorial strategy of supplying a character’s metonymic referent – her red handbag, his receding hairline, their gaudy furniture, etc. – Anna herself inserts into the narrative a piece of environmental *realia*, ripe for interpretation, and then refuses to allow it to be used as such. She has directed the other actors in the scene – instructing Vronsky to uncover his face, having him and Karenin join hands – taking over Tolstoy’s authorial role by substituting his narration with her directions for simple bodily movement. Her screams of pain are transcribed without comment, followed by the brief, detached statement of her physical distress (“And she began thrashing about on the bed”); the narration then retreats from this sickening closeness to the suffering body, guided by the clinical assessments of the physicians; finally, it settles on the moral travails of the men she is at risk of leaving behind – Karenin, Serezha, Vronsky, and Tolstoy. If there is no way to make (aesthetic or ethical) sense of violets that don’t look at all like violets, then there may be no way of narrating a character who, at least momentarily, doesn’t allow herself at all to be looked at – that is to say, *read* – like a character.

This is not, however, the first time in the novel that a character contends with a (re-)reading of floral imagery.<sup>148</sup> At the fateful ball where Kitty will see Vronsky drop his flirtation with her in order to pursue Anna, the younger woman is dressed in pink and adorned with flowers, quite literally from head to toe:

В СВОЕМ СЛОЖНОМ ТЮЛЕВОМ ПЛАТЬЕ НА РОЗОВОМ ЧЕХЛЕ, ... КАК БУДТО ВСЕ ЭТИ РОЗЕТКИ, КРУЖЕВА, ВСЕ ПОДРОБНОСТИ ТУАЛЕТА НЕ СТОИЛИ ЕЙ И ДОМАШНИМ НИ МИНУТЫ ВНИМАНИЯ,

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<sup>148</sup> In an oft-quoted letter, Tolstoy expressed pride in the “architectonics” of the novel, which is girded not by plot or even characters’ relationships but rather its internal links (27:377). See especially Stenbock-Fermor’s *The Architecture of Anna Karenina: A History of its Structure, Writing and Message*.

как будто она родилась в этом тюле, кружевах, с этою высокою прической, в розовой и двумя листками наверху ее. (18:82)

in her intricate tulle dress over a pink [*rozovom*] underskirt, ... as though all those rosettes [*rozetki*], laces, all the details of this toilette had not cost her and the servants one minute's attention, as though she had been born in this tulle, lace, with this high coiffure, a rose [*rozovoi*] and two leaves atop.

Valeria Sobol notes that the imagery of looking “pervades Kitty’s scene of shame, the ball scene,” in which she is both “a spectator and a spectacle” (173). Moreover, despite the color and flowers “seem[ing] to suggest innocence and naturalness,” Tolstoy stresses the particular care and labor that went into achieving that very effect of unaffectedness, thus underscoring its resonance with the larger theme of “faked authenticity” that pervades such society scenes and, especially, young women’s experiences on the marriage market (174). Even before this ironized description, however, Kitty is introduced into the setting via metonymic linkage and subsuming metaphor: She ascends stairs that set «цветами и лакеями» (“with flowers and lackeys”), extending the visual dimension of the physical décor to other bodies – serving bodies, such as the ones tasked with bedecking Kitty with lace and rosettes (18:82).<sup>149</sup> Then, just before Kitty’s appearance is described, she is admired by an onlooker, who smiles at «розовую Кити» (*rozovuiu Kiti*, “the pink Kitty”) (ibid.). Before the metonymic details that adorn her body, allowing it to be “approached” by the reader, have even been presented, she has already been subsumed into totalizing visual metaphor; the decorative touches that make up her toilette and, by extension, her “phenomenal presence” as a realist character, have not yet been accounted for, and yet they have been preemptively put into the service of this visual schema, like the bodies, both the aestheticized and the assisting, it has absorbed.

<sup>149</sup> The grammatical declension of both nouns – *tsvetami i lakeiami* – underscores this conjunction.

Anna arrives not in lilac, as Kitty had expressly wished (18:78), but in black, with «маленькая гирлянда анютиных глазок» (“a small garland of pansies”) for accent (18:84). (Whereas Anna can direct the physical movements of a scene’s actors, Kitty cannot even command the characters’ costuming.) The contrast is as striking to Kitty as it is to the reader: «Теперь она поняла, что Анна не могла быть в лиловом и что ее прелесть состояла именно в том, что она всегда выступала из своего туалета, что туалет никогда не мог быть виден на ней» (“She now knew that Anna could not be in lilac, and that her brilliance consisted precisely in that she always stood out from her toilette, that the toilette could not be seen on her”) (18:85). This unobtrusive framing even allows Anna a grammatical subjectivity that is denied to Kitty: where Anna “stands out” *from* her dress, Kitty had gloried in feeling as though she’d “been born *in* this tulle.”<sup>150</sup> Seeing Vronsky’s admiration fully shifted to Anna, Kitty, sinking into a chair in a lonely corner, finds that her entire person had been subsumed into decorative pastiche of romantic symbols: «Воздушная юбка платья поднялась облаком вокруг ее тонкого стана; одна обнаженная, худая, нежная девичья рука, бессильно опущенная, утонула в складках розового тюника» (“The airy skirt of the dress rose in a cloud around her thin form; one bared, thin, delicate girlish arm, impotently, sank into the pink [*rozovogo*] tunic’s folds”) (18:88). Kitty attempted to narrate her own destiny by narrating the interpretive import of her appearance – dressing in the visual symbols of the love story in which she believes herself to star alongside Vronsky – and is rendered a crumpled cloud of tulle, sitting alone. Metaphors have failed her.

There is one element of Kitty’s toilette, however, which is neither pink nor floral and which warrants attention. She wears a locket on a black velvet ribbon – a slender referent to and

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Mandelker, who describes Anna’s presentation as that of “a work of art within a frame,” but states that Kitty’s “attire is [presented as] part and parcel of her character” and claims that this is *appealing* (116).

contrast with Anna's striking aesthetic restraint – and, «глядя в зеркало на свою шею, Кити чувствовала, что эта бархатка говорила» (“looking in the mirror at her neck, Kitty felt that the ribbon spoke”) (18:83). Russian does not use a subjunctive case in the way that English or French might, and so the construction “the ribbon spoke” could simply be translated as “the ribbon could speak.”<sup>151</sup> Regardless of the form, however, the sentence still bequeaths to this small decorative detail a momentary *voice*, or at least the possibility of voice, one whose power of gesture – namely, toward Anna's aesthetic and erotic triumph over Kitty at the ball – carries the force of metaphor while confined to the form of metonym.<sup>152</sup>

The substitutions of symbolic logic – simply pairing decorative flowers with their implied meaning, trading ornament with affect – cannot sufficiently convey Tolstoy's moral imperatives. The superficialities of social life, from speaking in French to papering one's walls, are not simply *representative* of evil, they *embody* and *convey* evil. Thus these visible and visual, ever-present and perniciously quotidian elements of modernity, in all their resplendent failures at authenticity, are far more dangerous than mere symbols.

### ***Pox realium***

Raymond Williams neatly sidestepped the interpretive task of reconciling the two main strands of John Ruskin's work:

Both sides of Ruskin's work are comprised in an allegiance to the same single term, Beauty; and the idea of Beauty (which in his writings is virtually interchangeable with Truth) rests fundamentally on belief in a universal, divinely appointed order. The art

<sup>151</sup> In their much lauded translation, Pevear and Volokhonsky render the phrase as “it could almost speak” (77).

<sup>152</sup> See again Genette's discussion of how Proust's metaphors unfold metonymically: “seule la croisée d'une trame métonymique et d'une chaîne métaphorique assure la cohérence, la cohésion ‘nécessaire’ du texte” (“only the crossing of a metonymic frame with a metaphoric chain ensures the coherence, the cohesion ‘necessary’ of the text”) (60, emphasis in the original).

criticism and the social criticism, that is to say, are inherently and essentially related, not because one follows from the other, but because both are *applications*, in particular directions, of a fundamental conviction. (135, emphasis in the original)

By focusing on a Ruskinian *praxis* of engagement, Williams allows us to forego the work of attempting to read art commentary into ethical proscriptions (the reverse being somewhat more feasible, as discussed above). I contend that this same approach is highly applicable to Tolstoy, and that in analyzing his joint – and even parallel – *applications* of art and social criticism, we can account not only for the author’s turn away from richly descriptive, multiplot realist narratives but for how this transition into “antinarrative” is in fact anticipated in such earlier works. Where Donna Tussing Orwin identifies a transition, via Schopenhauerian philosophy, from “nature” to “culture” between *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* (143-64), I add that his later works signal a move away from “culture,” from the artistry of literary realism, even one bound by moral codes, into an increasingly untenable position.

“The Death of Ivan Ilyich” takes up once again the trope of imitative décor, but unlike Betsy’s nouveau rococo furnishings (and lover) or Anna’s un-violet-like violets, Tolstoy uses the novella to cast a broader condemnatory eye upon bourgeois society. Newly promoted after years of service in government bureaucracy, Ivan Ilyich undertakes the redecorations of his family’s new Petersburg apartment with zeal, and he is greatly pleased with the results; from the wallpaper and upholstery to the newly purchased antique furniture, it all seems to him quite *comme il faut*.<sup>153</sup> The apartment, however, resembles the homes of all those who want to look

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<sup>153</sup> Anna, by contrast, must contend with the dissatisfaction of a pre-decorated apartment. Having moved back to the city, and been made acutely aware of her status as a social pariah, Anna grows restless, irritable, and lonely, as manifested in her complaint about their lodgings before her final fight with Vronsky: “‘- Ты не поверишь, как мне опостытели эти комнаты,’ - сказала она, садясь подле него к своему кофею. ‘- Ничего нет ужаснее этих *chambres garnies*. Нет выражения лица в них, нет души. Эти часы, гардины, главное обои - кошмар....’” (“‘You wouldn’t believe how sick of these rooms I am,’ she said, sitting beside him over coffee. ‘There’s nothing worse than these *chambres garnies* [pre-furnished rooms]. There’s no expression [*vyrasheniia*] in them, no soul. This



rich and whose homes thus «только похожи друг на друга: штофы, черное дерево, цветы, ковры и бронзы. Темное и блестящее, — все то, что все известного рода люди делают, чтобы быть похожими на всех людей известного рода» (“only look like each other: damasks, ebony, flowers, carpets, and bronzes. Dark and gleaming – everything that a certain class of people has in order to look like all the other people of a certain class”) (23:79).<sup>154</sup> It is the tautology of this remark that I would like to highlight – the aesthetic logic of what constitutes “good taste” being generated by purely representational values. The hollow core at the center of all of these material possessions is the essential dishonesty that thus colors all of it. The older pieces of décor are purchased not for an inherent aesthetic value, but because their age suggests that they have been in the family for generations. It is the *imitation* of an actual connection between Ivan Ilyich and his surroundings that he most prizes. Fittingly, then, he is fatally injured while hanging new curtains, an incident that would, according to the metonymic logic of realist fiction, link his subsequent illness directly back to these ugly furnishings and thus allow his death to be metaphorized within the larger interpretive schema of superficiality, falsity, and spiritual emptiness. It would be futile, then, to assign meaning, since “meaning” has already failed: By focusing the point of injury and the subsequent pain emanating from this single bodily location and frustrating the reader’s attempts at diagnosis – that is to say, at inscribing meaning onto his illness and death – Tolstoy refuses to allow narrative meaning to be generated by the

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clock, these curtains, above all the wallpaper – a nightmare”) (19:325-26). This set-piece representation of a home lacks the personalized touches of legitimate domestic life, whose comforts and intimacies should buffer its inhabitants from the cruelties of the outside world.

<sup>154</sup> Compare this with the description in *War and Peace* of the socially ambitious Colonel Berg’s new apartment, with its “new, clean, bright study, decorated with little busts, and little pictures, and new furniture,” wherein Berg is dressed in his new uniform and seated beside his new wife (who brought her the gloss of her family’s “old” name to the marriage), and from the guests to the cakes “everything was exactly the same as with everyone else” (10:213-16). My thanks to Valeria Sobol for suggesting this parallel.

conventional realist details of fiction.<sup>155</sup> Weir asserts that *What Is Art?* constitutes “a meta-aesthetic revision of the psychologism of Tolstoy’s major fiction, as the aesthetic conditions for understanding narrative analysis of the emotions are now interrogated” (201). In “The Death of Ivan Ilyich,” the main character’s physical suffering takes precedence over aesthetic narrative, his psychological and eventually spiritual trials becoming the central foci of the story – a move practiced, in miniature, by Anna’s scene of illness.

“The Kreutzer Sonata” is infused with the language of infection – artistic, spiritual, and venereal.<sup>156</sup> Ruskin had insisted that in art, as “in design which cannot be mathematically defined, one man’s thoughts can never be expressed by another: and the difference between the spirit of touch of the man who is inventing, and of the man who is obeying directions, is often all the difference between a great and a common work of art” (12). While the implicit condemnation of slave labor in production and slavish imitation in aesthetics certainly accords with Tolstoy’s own philosophies, the latter also offered a revision of this dictate, one that moves beyond its “commodity manufacture fetishism,” so to speak, to explore how thoughts may in fact be expressed by others. While he acknowledges the superiority of the “physiological-evolutionary” definition of art, over metaphysical ones, Tolstoy is still committed to an ethically engaged interrogation of the notion that art’s purpose is to produce pleasure – indeed, it is not art’s capacity to be a means of pleasure that defines it, but rather its purpose as a means of communication (30:63-6):

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<sup>155</sup> In his now-(in)famous dismissal of Tolstoy’s work, Henry James complained, “what do such large loose baggy monsters, with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary, artistically *mean*?” (*The Critical Muse*, 515).

<sup>156</sup> See also Herman. Such a discourse is evident in the dialogue and criticism of other artistic mediums as well. When Tretiakov purchased Serov’s *plein air* painting *Girl in Sunlight* (1888), Konstantin Makovskii commented that the national art museum had been infected with syphilis (Sternin, *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn’ Rossii na rubezhe XIX-XX vekov*, 68, qtd. in Valkenier). Noting that syphilis is typically linked to foreignness – termed the “French pox,” the “Italian disease,” etc. – Valkenier asserts that he “condemned Serov’s art as alien infection” (51).

*Вызвать в себе раз испытанное чувство и, вызвав его в себе, посредством движений, линий, красок, звуков, образов, выраженных словами, передать это чувство так, чтобы другие испытали то же чувство, - в этом состоит деятельность искусства. Искусство есть деятельность человеческая, состоящая в том, что один человек сознательно известными внешними знаками передает другим испытываемые им чувства, а другие люди заражаются этими чувствами и переживают их. (30:65, emphasis in the original throughout)*

*To call up in oneself a once-experienced feeling and, have called it up in oneself, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, images, expressed through words, to convey that feeling so that others experience that same feeling, - therein consists the activity of art. Art is that human activity, consisting in one man's consciously, by certain external signs, conveying to others the experienced feelings, and [in] other people being infected by these feelings and experiencing them.*

Art's purpose lies not in the *quality* of the "lines, colors, sounds," and so on, being conveyed, but rather the efficacy of that conveyance – the *contagiousness* (*zarazitel'nost*) of the given work and thus the value of the feeling that is transmitted. In this focus on infectiousness, Tolstoy denies art any inherent goodness as such – a condition that is dramatized in the experience of artistic infection in "The Kreutzer Sonata."

It has been suggested that Tolstoy's use of *zarazhenie* (infection) was influenced by its verbal parallel with *vyrazhenie* (expression), evoking the communicative process of artistic expression (Jahn 65n2).<sup>157</sup> I would also note, however, *vyrazheniia* (expressions) also reference

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<sup>157</sup> Michael Denner also notes the "latent, etymological meaning of the *zarazit'*, to infect, the root of which is *razit'*, to strike, a military term that likely resonated with Tolstoy, a war veteran" ("Accidental Art," 284). In the context of "The Kreutzer Sonata," however, I would add that the violence of this etymological echo also resonates with Pozdnyshev's murderous assault on his wife.

facial expressions, such as the ones Pozdnyshev continually reads as indicators of his wife's adultery.<sup>158</sup> Part of what had first irritated Pozdnyshev about the young musician Trukhachevsky, newly arrived from Paris, was his manner of speaking, referring to everything «намеками и отрывками, как будто вы все это знаете, понимаете и можете *сами дополнить*» ("by hints and fragments, as though you know all of it, comprehend, and can *yourself fill it in*") (27:49, emphasis added). This style of conversation, in which hints and suggestions require the interlocutor to complete the thought, is *expression as infection*, turning words and gestures into the pathogens of communication, and anticipating the effect that the young man's music will have.

In condemning the social conventions which permit «самая большая и опасная близость»<sup>159</sup> ("the greatest and most dangerous intimacy") between a man and woman, the main character-cum-narrator, Pozdnyshev, links society, medicine, and art in their incitement to adultery: it is «близост[ь] на балах, близост[ь] докторов с своей пациенткой, близост[ь] при занятиях искусством, живописью, а главное – музыкой» ("the intimacy of balls, the intimacy of doctors with their patient,<sup>160</sup> the intimacy of the arts, of painting, and most of all – music") to which one cannot object, and yet are most reprehensible (27:56-7). Pozdnyshev's reference to the "intimacy" or "nearness" facilitated by music suggests of course his wife's possible adultery with Trukhachevsky but also his own physiological response to music. Music irritates him, because «она переносит меня в какое-то другое, не свое положение» ("it<sup>161</sup> transports me to

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<sup>158</sup> Compare as well Kitty's visual reading throughout the ball scene of Vronsky and Anna's facial expressions, which tell her the truth of their developing relationship.

<sup>159</sup> Note that *blizost'* can mean both literal, physical nearness as well as the more abstract, personal, or erotic quality of intimacy.

<sup>160</sup> Note that here the feminine form, *patsientka*, indicating a female patient, is used. See esp. Sobol's discussion of Kitty's medical examination when she has fallen ill following her rejection by Vronsky; the procedure is highly defamiliarized, stressing its physical, visual, and even verbal violations of the girl (166-70).

<sup>161</sup> *Muzyka*, being feminine, allows for the use here of the pronoun "she," adding another gendered dimension to art's seductiveness, albeit an oblique one.

some other state, not my own”); under its influence, «я чувствую то, что я, собственно, не чувствую, что я понимаю то, чего не понимаю...» (“I feel that which I myself do not feel, to understand what I don’t understand...”) (27:61). Far from the noble independence of thought and expression in Ruskin’s idealized medieval artisans, Pozdnyshchev, when infected with music, experiences the enforced empathy of aesthetic communication.

Rushing home from a business trip, wracked with jealousy over his wife’s imagined adultery, Pozdnyshchev recalls a conversation in which Trukhachevsky’s brother asserts that no respectable man would go to a brothel, «где можно заболеть» (“where one might get infected”) – hence the appeal of women like Pozdnyshchev’s wife; rationalizing away her fading looks, Pozdnyshchev notes that she at least would be safe, «думал я за него» (“I thought *for him*”) (27:66, emphasis added). Having already imagined the connection between his wife and another man due to his sexually corrupted sensibilities, Pozdnyshchev now “thinks what he doesn’t actually think” – he occupies the place of the artist involuntarily, this time not in the space of aesthetic expression, but rather sexual transgression.

Just before he has worked himself into such a paranoiac state that he sets off home, however, he has a strange encounter with his décor: unable to continue lying in the dark in his distress, «я зажег спичку, и мне как-то страшно стало в этой маленькой комнатке с желтыми обоями» (“I lit a match, and the yellow wallpaper in that little room seemed somehow frightening to me”) (27:64). This yellow wallpaper permits a few interpretive valences: its coloring may not in fact be intentional but rather the inadvertent result of age and grime, speaking to the dilapidation of the setting, in which case the metonymy of physical decay leads us clearly and easily into the metaphor of spiritual degradation. The coloring could also be suggestive of another piece of social *realia*. In 1843, Russia’s *Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del*

(Ministry of Internal Affairs) had instituted governmental regulation of prostitution in an effort to combat the spread of venereal disease, especially gonorrhea and syphilis. Following the model of the Parisian *police des mœurs*, the MVD's "medical-police committees" issued the famous *zheltye bilety* (yellow tickets), effectively creating the "public woman" as an official social category, subject to judicial and medical oversight (see Engelstein, "Morality and the Wooden Spoon" and "Syphilis, Historical and Actual," and Bernstein).<sup>162</sup> As Weir indicates, "[b]oth *What Is Art?* and 'The Kreutzer Sonata' make metonymic detail, and any ornament detracted from the efficiency of infection, into sexual depravity" (208). The interpretive teleology of such a reading simply leads us to the same stridently moral metaphors that Pozdyshev himself insists upon, namely that all communication – whether by expression, art, or gaze – is indicative of and a means toward sexual transgression. Rather than indulge either interpretation, however, I would like to focus on a moment that seems to build upon this "frightening" yellow wallpaper as an aesthetically, if grotesquely, logical extension of its effect.

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<sup>162</sup> Even Dr. Veniamin Tarnovskii, the first president of the Russian Syphilological and Dermatological Society and a professor at the Imperial Academy of Medical Medicine, expressed concern that the issuing of a yellow ticket was an irreversible sentence (Bernstein 38). Nearly incapable of extricating herself from the bureaucracy of medical-police registration, the urban prostitute had little recourse to an alternative or anonymous social identity – she became a "public woman" in every sense. This bureaucratic policy parallels the moral transgression that Pozdyshev points to: Expanding upon the Gospel verse quoted in the story's epigraph, according to which «смотрящий на женщину с вожделением, уже прелюбодействовал с нею в сердце своем» ("looking at a woman with lust is *already* to have committed adultery with her in one's heart") (27:7, quoting *Matthew* 5:28, emphasis added) – but, tellingly, omitting the specified "in one's heart" – Pozdyshev insists that this applies not only to another man's wife, «а именно – и главное к своей жене» ("but precisely – and especially to one's own wife") (27:31). To have looked with lust is always and already to have made a woman complicit in one's deviance; likewise, the prostitute, officially designated as such, is always and already a "public woman" – and, according to state and social rationale, always and already infected and infectious. While this attribution validated the state's attempts to regulate prostitution in the hopes of reducing disease – and released from responsibility both the men who spread venereal disease and the state which could not or would not treat them – it elided the inevitable spread of infection to *within* the bounds of respectable society, i.e., to unsuspecting wives and children. (See also Sponberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse*.) Pozdyshev's condemnation of sexual desire even within the bounds of marriage and his refusal to absolve children of its moral taint reveal not only Tolstoy's appropriation of contemporary theories of degenerative contagion and heredity, but also the narrative power of disease as discourse and metaphor.

On the bacteriological turn in Russian medicine, see Hutchinson, Vucinich, and Beer, chap. 4. On syphilis and nineteenth-century literature, see Showalter and esp. Lasowski; see also Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*. On the moral coding of venereal disease more generally, see Rosebury.

While traveling by carriage through the countryside is calming and restorative,<sup>163</sup> in accordance with the Tolstoyan ecological order, transitioning to train travel dooms Pozdnyshev and his wife: «Как только я вошел в вагон, началось совсем другое. ... как я сел в вагон, я уже не мог владеть своим воображением, и оно не переставая с необычайной яркостью начало рисовать мне разжигающие мою ревность картины...» (“As soon as I entered the train car, it all became different. ... as I sat down in the car, I was already unable to control my imagination, and it incessantly, with extraordinary vivacity,<sup>164</sup> drew me pictures stoking my jealousy...” (27:65-6).<sup>165</sup> Railroad technology takes on the distorted function and disturbing capacity of art, as Tolstoy would define it, forcing upon its audience-traveler foreign and perverted feelings. Here, the art – the *kartiny* (pictures) of Pozdnyshev’s addled imagination – is projected before his mind’s eye, not unlike the disturbing visual expanse of yellow wallpaper to which he is involuntary exposed.<sup>166</sup> Tolstoy insists, however, that the morality and even the *meaning* of a given piece of art are secondary to its “goodness,” as in its communicability:

Если оно передалось другим людям, то они испытывают его, и мало того, что испытывают каждый по-своему, и *все толкования и излишни*. Если же произведение не заражает людей, то никакие толкования не сделают того, чтобы оно стало заразительно. *Толковать произведения художника нельзя*. (30:123, emphases added)

<sup>163</sup> Kliger dubs the chronotope of the country road “meandering,” located “between the railway and the peasant idyll” (40).

<sup>164</sup> *Iarkost* can also indicate “brightness,” as in describing color quality.

<sup>165</sup> Anna, reading an English romance, is struck by «образы и звуки» (“images and sounds”) «с необычайной яркостью» (“of unusual vivacity”) on her train trip back from St. Petersburg (18:107).

<sup>166</sup> The optics of retinal afterimages was a central topic in Goethe’s *Theory of Colours*, discussed in the previous chapter, in which they were treated not as subjective visual experiences but objective physiological phenomena, allowing “one to conceive of sensory perception as cut from any necessary link with an external referent” (Crary 98).

If it is conveyed to others, then they experience it, and, moreover, experience it each in their own way, and *all interpretation is superfluous*. If the work does not infect people, then no interpretation will make it infectious. *One cannot interpret works of art.*<sup>167</sup>

Thus the question of how to interpret both or either of these details – the physical realistic detail of the yellow(ed) wallpaper or the aestheticized imaginings of Pozdnyshov's jealousy – is entirely moot. It is not the content of the artistic work but rather its means and efficacy of conveyance that matters.

The narrative frame of the railroad, another highly effective if morally hollow means of travel, never quite disappears from "The Kreutzer Sonata," even if the conventional authority of full narrative description does. In this railcar, in which the unnamed narrator encounters Pozdnyshov, there is a constant, indiscriminate mix of men and women, into whose conversations anyone, from Old Believers and merchants to feminists and murderers, may listen and interject.<sup>168</sup> (Isenberg compares the setting to a latter-day Ship of Fools [83].) With his constant exclamations and interruptions, of others as well as himself, Pozdnyshov gradually takes over not only the narrative but the authority of narrative voice. By the final portion of his story, however, both he and the setting are completely invisible to the listener-reader in the dawn's half-light, rendered a disembodied, though still increasingly agitated and suffering, voice (27:65). Olga Matich writes that in *What Is Art?* Tolstoy responds to the criticism in Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (*Entartung* 1892; published in Russian as *Vyrozhdienie* in 1894) of his detailed realism by "arrogating the excess of descriptive detail which he called 'bad art'"; his major fiction had, of course, been characterized by so-called "superfluous detail," which acted as

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<sup>167</sup> Tolstoy's following comment, «Если бы можно было словами растолковать то, что хотел сказать художник, он и сказал бы словами» ("If it had been possible for the artist to explain in words that which he wanted to say, he would have said it in words") (ibid.), echoes his remarks regarding the impossibility of commenting upon *Anna Karenina*, namely that to do so would simply require his re-copying the entire novel (62:268-69).

<sup>168</sup> On the wider ideo-historical context of the story, see Møller.



synecdoches, “conjuring up the body as a whole” (30). Here, bodily renunciation is extended beyond moral pronouncement, and even beyond rhetorical strategy, and into narrative form. When our initial narrator is about to take his leave, Pozdnyshchev merely repeats his “Forgive me” — «то же слово, которым заключил и весь рассказ» (“with that very word the whole story concluded”), that story and ours being one and the same in its conclusion (27:78). There is no final exit from the railcar, just as there is no real exit from the story which has overtaken the narrative.

### **The Unaesthetics in Antinarrative**

The version of Ruskin’s “On the Nature of Gothic Architecture” that I have been citing in this chapter is a pamphlet publication of the text, rather than a section of the multivolume complete works. This version includes a bracketed note on the final page: “The profits arising from the sale of this pamphlet will be offered to the Working Men’s College, 31, Red Lion Square, London” (48). Ruskin (and his publisher) was here participating in and adding to the mid-century Victorian design reformers’ practical as well as ideological commitment to arts education, especially at the working-class level. While this direct application on Ruskin’s part of his art criticism to social activism attests to his commitment to and philosophical reconciliation of both, Tolstoy wrestled with his own apparent inability to produce an accord between his art and his morality. He lays out seemingly self-incriminating strictures in *What Is Art?*: «А как только искусство стало профессией, значительно ослабилось и отчасти уничтожилось главное и драгоценнейшее свойство искусство — его искренность» (“Just as soon as art became a profession, the main and most valuable property of art — its sincerity — was significantly weakened and partially destroyed”) (30:122). This pronouncement retroactively condemns his

own major works as contributing to the spread «поддельного, фальшивого искусства» (“of counterfeit, false art”) (ibid.) Following his crises and conversion in the late 1870s, described in his *Confession* (1882), Tolstoy put thought to action by, among other things, renouncing the copyright to his works.<sup>169</sup> This break with “professionalized” (i.e., monetized) artistic production is also notable for its transition in genre, away from the multiplot realist novel and toward the allegorized short story.

Of his own earlier works, in *What Is Art?* Tolstoy singles out only “God Sees the Truth But Waits” and “The Prisoner of the Caucasus,” both published in 1872, as “good art.” The former is one of Tolstoy’s early parables, taking a seemingly Dostoyevskian premise of violent crime and its punishment and inverting it according to the moral algorithms of his own narrative imperatives: the protagonist is in fact innocent of murder, but he must nonetheless go to prison in Siberia, finding redemption not in punishment but in the forgiveness of another’s crimes. The latter takes up a story previously told by Pushkin and Lermontov; like *Hadji Murat* (which was published posthumously in 1912), “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” is set in the foreign, wild, and orientalized Caucasus mountains, freeing the narrative from the aesthetic constraints of realist detail – there is no need to include the thick descriptions of domestic, “civilized” life in a setting entirely removed from the society lives of Russia’s urban centers. Tolstoy published a plethora of short stories, beginning in the mid-1880s, the majority of which are explicitly religious allegorical tales, fables, and parables, such as “The Grain,” “What Men Live By,” “The Three Questions,” “Wisdom of Children,” “How Much Land Does a Man Need?,” and “Alyosha the

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<sup>169</sup> While he had wanted to renounce the copyright to all of his publications, including *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, his wife, taking their large family into account, urged that he merely renounce the claim on any and all works he produced after his conversion.

This dilemma plays out in interview recounted in “The Latest from Tolstoy,” an August 4, 1903, article in the *Daily Chronicle*: “One of us quoted Ruskin’s lament to a friend that he had not renounced his possessions. ‘That interests me very much,’ Tolstoy said, ‘for it is my case also. And why did not Ruskin do it?’ ‘He found it so difficult. He had so many ties, artists to support, etc.’ ‘Ah!’ he replied, with a sigh. ‘That is it; we do not become Christians until late in life, and then there are ties’” (qtd. in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 34:729).

Pot.” In addition to their overt moralizing, these tales are also notable for their settings, characters, and singularity of narrative focus. Taking place mostly in provincial locations and featuring middle-class and peasant protagonists, these stories foreclose aesthetic descriptions of the kind necessitated by the fashionable Moscow and Petersburg social circles of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*; the bourgeois bureaucrats of the novellas “The Death of Ivan Ilyich” and “The Kreutzer Sonata” not only fail to make goods of any real value, they live among material luxuries that help them approximate the lifestyles of Tolstoy’s earlier character types. By contrast, the short stories’ humble artisans, such as the cobbler in “What Men Live By,” make by hand the meager physical comforts of their lives, or else, like in “How Much Land Does a Man Need?”, “The Grain,” and “Promoting a Devil,” learn through bitter experience the evil manifested by producing any more than absolutely necessity.<sup>170</sup> (Note as well that the socio-economic logic of this eco-ethos does not allow for the existence of cities, which can only survive and thrive through the importation and stocking of food and goods above the level of mere subsistence agriculture.<sup>171</sup>) Excess of any sort, even agriculture plenitude beyond one’s most immediate needs, is, allegorically, a tool of the devil; reading backward to Tolstoy’s earlier major fiction then, the material excesses that were standard aesthetic elements of real and realist homes now stand out all the more starkly as ethically unsustainable.

More critically, the formal constraints of these short stories – their short length and their narrowed, mono-plot focus – free them from the moral complexities of longer realist narratives that threaten to allow for disjunctive and disruptive interpretations. (Short stories needn’t be

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<sup>170</sup> “Kholstomer” (1886), whose “protagonist” isn’t even human, dramatizes the nobility of self-sacrifice: in death, the horse gives sustenance to a wolf’s cubs; this moral lesson is finally enacted by people in “Master and Man” (1895).

<sup>171</sup> The utopian aspects of this envisioned setting resembles the ideally just state imagined by Socrates in Plato’s *Republic*, a pre-politicized, pre-monetized, classless community living simply, harmoniously, and pacifically. Crucially for my discussion, this hypothetical society neither produces nor consumes art or literature of any sort. See also Jacques Rancière’s work on the *partage du sensible* (“the distribution of the sensible”) in Plato and the politics of labor versus, or rather vis-à-vis, those of aesthetics.

published serially, as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were, a format that impacts the narrative's plotting by necessitating chapter, part, and volume breaks.<sup>172</sup>) The exception here, both in its form and fate, is Tolstoy's late novel, *Resurrection* (1899). While arguably just as moralizing as his parables, *Resurrection* is still open to multitude of interpretive readings, in no small part because of its context within "the reader's knowledge of Tolstoy's previous novels, the tradition of the society novel, as well as the model of the wives of the Decembrists" (Weir 204). What sets it apart from Tolstoy's other novels, however, is also what distinguishes it from his later writings, namely that it was published for profit. This was done in order to help fund the relocation of the Dukhobors, a Christian fundamentalist sect, to Canada. By using the publishing industry and its monetization of aesthetic output for an overtly moral aim, Tolstoy is able to utilize the meta-textual constraints of the novel's purpose – serving the cause of a distinct social good – to contain the multitude of textual valences made possible by the novel's generic form and legacy. Thus the moral imperative of the book's production validates that of its content.

Like the majority of Tolstoy's late stories, *Resurrection*'s moral and narrative teleology of moving to Siberia as a form of literal and metaphorical repentance also allows for a further retreat away from the corrupted and corrupting technologies of modernity. Major technological innovations of the nineteenth century, like the railroad, fundamentally altered the modern subject's relationship to space and time and thus the capacities of fiction to dramatize these rapidly changing rhythms of modern life. The increased mobility and urbanization enabled by industrialization also permitted large, multiplot narratives. Many of *Anna Karenina*'s major plot

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<sup>172</sup> *Anna Karenina* was first published in the *Russkii vestnik* (*Russian Herald*) between January 1875 and April 1877; its publisher, M. N. Katkov, famously refused to publish the final part of the novel, which subsequently appeared as a separate text. See Todd, "Reading *Anna* in Parts." See also Todd's "The Responsibilities of (Co-)Authorship" for a discussion of how Tolstoy and Katkov's work together shaped the novel in its serial form. Todd notes elsewhere that the novel only appeared twice, in 1878, as a separate edition, and so for Tolstoy's contemporaries the serialized version of the text was the more familiar one ("Anna on the Installment Plan," 56-57).

points are only possible because the railroad compresses narrative space and time, shuttling characters between cities within hours, rather than days, and thus allowing from the tightened analogies of comparison and contrast that undergird the novel's various plotlines. Tolstoy's characteristic device of highlighting the contrasts between similar, closely paired elements – for example, country estate life on Pokrovskoe versus Vozdvizhenskoe, a comparison that dominates part 6 of the novel – is facilitated by the irreparable changes made to the perception of distance wrought by the railroad. Anna's ability to travel between Moscow and Petersburg by train within twenty-four hours sets the novel's various plotlines in motion, while making the relative closeness of the various pastoral settings later in the novel, i.e., the distance between those estates that is apparently easily covered by carriage, seem less conveniently novelistic.<sup>173</sup> In its distinct "capacity for temporal condensation," the railway is a technology of emplotment (Kliger 40).<sup>174</sup> Moreover, the "new experiences of speed and machine movement disclosed an increasing divergence between appearances and their external causes," collapsing the ontological boundary between optical experience and optical illusion (Crary 112).

Similarly, technological innovation allowed for a superabundance of material décor to aestheticize the body, the home, and, by necessary extension, the descriptive dimensions of realist fiction. The moral weight of these decorative elements, both in their literal and fictive metonymies, becomes too overburdened for Tolstoy to sustain in his later, ascetic philosophies of art and life. Metaphor, however, threatens to open up narrative to a variety of interpretive

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<sup>173</sup> The railroad, by contrast, also replaced a medium of illusion and artifice: by allowing for a less expensive and less onerous journey to distant and exotic places, the railroad could offer what the panorama and diorama, discussed in my first chapter, had merely imitated (Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 62). (This is not to say that rail travel replaced panorama entertainments, but rather that they supplemented what had previously been a substitute. Indeed, the opening of the Paris-Orleans line, in 1843, was commemorated with a panoramic print that reproduced the views from the journey in sequence.)

<sup>174</sup> Several contemporary British commentators noted the railway's impact on perceptions of space and time, asserting more specifically that "time itself 'annihilated' space, reducing the significance of space in the collective sensorium of mid-Victorian culture and leaving an experience of time dominant" (Andrew H. Miller 54). See also J. Francis's 1851 *A History of the English Railways: Its Social Relations and Revelations*.

valences, any one of which may lead the reader astray from the author's moral purpose. Relying on the basic function of analogy, rather than the potential anarchy of symbolism, parable conforms to Tolstoy's earlier metonymic methodology, while restricting the reader's interpretive possibilities as tightly as possible forestalls any of the involuntary associations that undermine the hierarchy of mind and spirit over body. Thus it is only in the short, ascetic unnarrative of his final years that Tolstoy is able to craft an art that can be ethical in its unaesthetics.

## Conclusion

### Art and Craft

Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and  
unallied with definite form, can speak to the  
soul in a thousand different ways.

Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist"

My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the  
death. One of us has got to go.

Oscar Wilde (apocryphal)<sup>175</sup>

The "technical power" of the visual arts, according to John Ruskin, relies upon "a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify" (15:27). This ideal "*innocence of the eye*" is "a vision achieved at great cost," says Jonathan Crary in his *Techniques of the Observer*, one "that claimed for the eye a vantage point uncluttered by the weight of historical codes and conventions of seeing, a position from which vision can function without the imperative of composing its contents into a reified 'real' world" (96). Such an ontological independence, however, is impossible within both the narrative of domesticity – by which I mean the domestic setting described in fiction as well as the culturally constructed space of home in real life – and the dominating force of commodity culture. Wallpaper, material representative *par excellence* of aestheticized domesticity, is inseparable from and exemplary of the systems of "production, display, and reproduction" that transform thing culture into commodity culture (Freedgood 149). From color and composition to design

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<sup>175</sup> Polonsky notes in Wilde's tremendous popularity in Russia at the start of the twentieth century, especially among the Symbolists, "a tendency to take him very seriously. His artistic works were seen to preach moral truths and his aphorisms to contain aesthetic theories of great gravity and worth" (168). I offer both epigraphs in this same spirit. Fortunately, the "shabby flowered wallpaper in the hotel room where he died on November 30, 1900 has been replaced by vibrant blue-green frescoes as part of a refurbishment of the former Hotel d'Alsace pension house on the Left Bank" to mark the centenary of the writer's death ("Wilde's wallpaper replaced after 100 years," at <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/STYLE/design/11/30/france.wilde> [no longer available]).

and the materials of manufacture, wallpaper cannot be unallied from the myriad metonymic ties of its history; moreover, the imagery it projects, whether abstract or representational, gestures backward to the forms and figures it imitates as well as forward to larger decorative schema within which it will serve as a backdrop. The contiguities of these connections, however, are contingent upon several factors, not least the continuities of historical memory and the dominating force of metaphor (and its interpretation) required by literary fiction.

George Eliot writes in *Middlemarch* that “every sign is apt to conjure up wonder, hope, belief, vast as a sky, and coloured by a diffuse thimbleful of matter in the shape of knowledge” (25). Elaine Freedgood aptly notes that within the very statement “knowledge takes material form,” but I would like to add that the rhetorical “coloring,” which, Freedgood states, is provided in place of “clarity,” itself conveys matter and meaning (112). Realist fiction is defined, in part, by its attempt to show *all*, from the profusion of physical details to the depths of psychological states. While the latter can be read in terms of the characters’ personal histories and dramas, provided in the course of the narrative, the former carries within it material histories beyond those lent by their ostensible role within the story and on the page. As described in the preceding chapters, color itself – the very matter with which it is produced – contains scientific, technological, and philosophical meanings that anticipate and restrain the interpretive potentials of its metaphoric reading.

The long history of optics is the dual, intertwining histories of technology and theory, of the limits to material innovation and expansions upon philosophical understanding. Popular diversions such as the stereoscope, the thaumatrope, and the diorama were part of a larger conceptual shift in vision: in the preceding centuries the relation between the eye and the optical device, such as the telescope and microscope, was “essentially metaphoric,” the two being



“allied by a conceptual similarity, in which the authority of an ideal eye remained unchallenged”<sup>176</sup>; in the nineteenth century the relationship became metonymic, with eye and apparatus “now contiguous instruments on the same plane of operation, with varying capacities and features” (Crary 129). Technology rendered optics relational, complementary, and supplementary – the naked eye could be tricked by optical illusions or enhanced by technical innovation, the empirical truth of vision giving way to a balancing of diversion and discovery.<sup>177</sup>

The technology of realist fiction works along similar lines, with the nineteenth-century novel attempting to accommodate and make sense of an ever-expanding material world that was increasingly visual and visible in new and innovative ways, while incorporating the illimitable psychic expanses of the modern subject. Wallpaper marks the division between these dimensions, and yet is capable of embodying both. In its capacity to visually gesture toward the web of concrete metonymic links that bind it to the real world and then offering a visible expanse upon which to project interpretive meaning, wallpaper represents a distinct piece of literary material, in every sense of the world.

### **The Un-Yellow Wallpaper**

Any discussion of wallpaper in the context of literary fiction would be remiss without at least a mention of “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), by the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman. As the story’s narrator descends into postpartum psychosis, she fixates upon the wallpaper, which “makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw...” (11). Her inability to settle upon interpretive meanings, whether in the wallpaper’s patterns, color, or even smell, echoes the

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<sup>176</sup> Due to the lack of technical development and refinement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the telescope and the microscope were of more instructive value than practical use for scientific application until the nineteenth century.

<sup>177</sup> See also Goulet, *Optiques: The Science of the Eye and the Birth of Modern French Fiction*.

reader's own instability within her disturbing narration.<sup>178</sup> Yellow walls appear repeatedly in fiction of the era to suggest, via the metonym of dirt, poverty and decay, and also, via metaphor, the descent in mental illness.<sup>179</sup>

The opening pages of Fedor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) would seem to use "yellow" for both of these purposes, while eliciting similar feelings of dread and horror (though the tone is more grotesque than gothic).<sup>180</sup> "Yellow" recurs throughout the novel's early passages in reference to various characters and their surroundings, serving as physical descriptor as well as semantic matrix, connecting them therein. The pawnbroker's clothing is "yellow with age," the wallpaper in her apartment is yellow and the cheap prints hung for decoration are in "yellow frames," while the old furniture is "of yellow wood" (6). Likewise, Raskolnikov's garret is hung with "yellow, dusty wallpaper," the entire room being described as "that yellow closet" (7). These instances of "yellow" as realist(ic) physical descriptor could of course be indicators of St. Petersburg's marshy climate, allowing the literality of environmental pollution to segue into the literary of stagnation and degeneration dramatized in the novel; the physiognomic reading prompted by metonymy thus permits the psychological reading of metaphor.

This interpretation, however, does not quite apply to the other instances in which "yellow" contributes to the semantic composition of the novel's beginning. Marmeladov has a "yellow, even greenish face," suggestive again of environmental factors (including their effects

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<sup>178</sup> The paper's sulphurous scent certainly evokes the larger sense of the setting as a hellscape, but its appellation as a "yellow smell," while still conducive to a symbolic reading of general sickliness, disconnects that initial metaphoric equivalency of sulphur with hell. Indeed, it refers more concretely to the chemical additives used in wallpaper pigments, from sulphur to arsenic, which had very real effects for residents' physical and psychological health. On arsenic poisoning in the Victorian home, see Barstrip. On alkali manufacture and air pollution, see Dingle.

<sup>179</sup> The Obukhovskaia hospital, the first public state hospital to open in St. Petersburg in 1779, was painted yellow, and Vladimir Dal asserts in his dictionary that the idiom *zheltyi dom* ("yellow house") quickly entered the language to mean "madhouse" in reference to its psychiatric ward, a synecdoche akin to English's use of the word "Bedlam." (Pushkin's "Queen of Spades" [1834] ends with Hermann locked up in Obukhovskaia after he has lost his mind.)

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Hunt, "Color Imagery in Dostoevskij and Balzac."

on the health of the city's poorest residents), but his daughter Sonya carries a "yellow pass," with which she works as a prostitute (14). To live thus "on a yellow pass" renders the bureaucratic sign a physical locus upon which her public identity is staked and by which she moves throughout the urban setting. Both the Petersburg body and the cityscape within which it moves have been "yellowed." Raskolnikov, moreover, is later offered tea with "two lumps of yellow sugar" (28). This last descriptive touch could again indicate a metaphorical manifestation of the characters' physical situation. Such a reading, however, would demand an interpretive overreach encompassing all of the instances of "yellow" as an artistic object of perception within the work that goes beyond the immediate purview of the reader's knowledge and beyond "yellow" as a functional element within the larger compositional framework of the story: "the observed phenomena represent the same constructional element with respect to the overall composition. Although differently stated, they result in identical patterns in the progress of the plot's" (Propp 114). (I invoke Vladimir Propp here not to assert or even imply that Dostoevsky's novel is particularly suited to analyses along the lines of fairy tale morphologies, but rather to isolate the constituent elements within the text and highlight how they might be read in terms of the most basic formalist explications.) Sonya's pass is not yellow because of societal degeneration and moral decay – indeed, the interpretive question of why this particular piece of social *realia* is that particular color is wholly moot – and thus, by extension the walls and faces and sugar cubes that further illustrate the surrounding scenes are not yellow for similar metaphorical reasons. Rather, it is the consistent, and narratively contiguous, application of "yellow" as an artistic object for the reader's repeated perception that creates the artistry of the color as an aesthetic object within the work in the first place, using the color as a structural element whose patterns lead to the semantic progress of the narrative as such.

## The Red Rooms

Metaphor, in all its rich potentialities, leads us easily astray. To take another example of color and its contents, the infamous “red-room” at Gateshead in which a young Jane Eyre is confined is fodder for countless analytic digressions, its shade and shape lending themselves to a myriad of symbolic interpretations – feminist, psychoanalytic, eschatological, to name a few. The room and its striking décor are indeed evocative for our heroine: the bed is “hung with curtains of deep red damask,” the windows “half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery”; the carpet is red and the table “covered with a crimson cloth” (Brontë 15). And yet, despite its name, the room is not in fact wholly red: “Out of these deep surrounding shades” cast by the heavy mahogany furniture “rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane,” while the white easy-chair and footstool resemble, to Jane’s eye, “a pale throne” (15-16).<sup>181</sup> Finally, the room’s wallpaper – the decorative feature most capable of setting the visual tone and schema of the setting – is “a soft fawn colour, with a blush of pink in it,” complementing the red elements but in no way producing an oppressively totalizing redness that the room’s title would suggest.

While a wholly red room would certainly be conducive to the horrors that the space evokes for Jane, the color scheme is not mentioned again as she succumbs to youthful fits of terror in the dark. Before this, however, the room’s potentially gothic elements are explained in distinct, logical ties to concrete reality: “The room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered.” Each of these descriptors would fit easily within the symbolic set pieces of horror, and the room’s history – Mr. Reed having died and laid in state in it – has “guarded it”

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<sup>181</sup> Freedgood dedicates the whole of chap. 1 in *The Ideas in Things* to mahogany furniture, noting in particular that Jane’s later decoration of Moor House with “old mahogany” furniture and crimson drapery constitutes the crafting of “a souvenir of the sadism she endured at the hands of her cousins and her Aunt Reed at Gateshead” (32).

from use with “a sense of dreary consecration” (16). By prefacing this history, and young Jane’s torments, with a simple list of logical explanations and then interweaving that history with those very causes, the narrative has preempted a more evocative but less grounded reading. Alone in the dark, Jane frightens herself when a light “gleam[s] on the wall,” though she “can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern”; this acknowledgement comes with the safety of temporal and narrative distance, when her mind is no longer “prepared ... for horror” (19). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert that the room is, if not haunted, “realistically and gothically haunting,” its angles and shadows emphasizing and elaborating upon Jane’s social isolation and the dead Mr. Reed a “specter” who “hovered in the red-room” (340, 347). The room returns to Jane in her sleep – haunts her, so to speak – the night she leaves Rochester and Thornfield: “I was transported in thought to the scenes of Gateshead; that the night was dark, and my mind impressed with strange fears. The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall, and tremblingly to pause in the centre of the obscured ceiling” (321). The only recurrence of red in the early scene she remembers here is the “terrible red glare” she had awoken to, only to realize that it was “the nursery fire,” indicating that she has been freed from the red-room (20). In this later dream, however, that same red glare gestures forward in the narrative, to the fire that will consume Thornfield.<sup>182</sup> The former incidence of a red glare points, with the clarity and directness of metonym, to logical explanation, the image soon placed within the explanatory context of its being an emanation from the physical fire; the latter, then, gestures with the evocativeness and indeterminacy of foreshadowing and of metaphor.

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<sup>182</sup> Gilbert and Gubar make this connection as well, and then play on the metaphor by referring to young Jane’s “fiery words” to Mrs. Reed (343). Jane herself metaphorizes red as fire in her initial impressions of the drawing-room at Thornfield, with its white carpets and mouldings, “beneath which glowed in rich contrast crimson couches and ottomans,” and “sparkling Bohemian glass, ruby red,” the whole scene, to Jane’s eye, a “general blending of snow and fire” (107).

The elements of and within the household that “haunt” its inhabitants fulfill the promise of narrative, namely that every part will at some point prove to be of use and significance. The most striking example of this is, of course, Bertha Mason, whose initial, gothic appearances are *from* the walls, emerging via unseen, unknown apertures in the house’s construction and, by extension, from the unknown elements of Rochester’s own history. (Bertha’s disturbing laughter, which Jane hears through the walls and ceilings, is a sensorial metonym of the former’s presence within the house, and yet it also foreshadows the fantastical, almost Gothic narrative device of Jane imagining that she’s heard Rochester calling for her after her departure.) Rochester’s inability to secure the walls of Thornfield and keep Bertha confined within the attic is not simply a metaphor for his inability to cordon off that secret, it is metonymic fact: the household and patrimony that he wishes to bequeath to Jane comes with a wife literally concealed within its walls and habitually threatening to break through.

To read red according to standard metaphoric tropes is to elide its appearances outside the singularly evocative setting of the red-room. In the novel’s opening lines, young Jane finds solace within red: “I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement. Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day” (9-10). Unlike the horrors of being forcibly confined with a red room as punishment, to confine oneself within a readymade red enclosure is to create one’s own security and, via the imaginative power conjured in Jane’s reading, the origins of selfhood. In the book’s introductory pages she “could not pass quite as a blank,” its descriptions evoking “bleak shores” and “forlorn regions of dreary space,” but “[o]f these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own” (10). Narrative relies on the

cooperative power of the reader and that which is read – “Each picture told a story” (11), each story constructed in the mind’s eye, both mutually reinforced. To read a red room without the fuller picture of its visual echoes throughout the text as a whole is to miss and misread its possible meanings and thus to foreclose the stories within it.

### **Reading and Seeing**

This dissertation has engaged telling a dual narrative, a material history of wallpaper told alongside a literary history of the realist novel; within that narrative has also been a literary history of wallpaper, recounting its appearances within literary fiction, and a material history of the realist novel, addressing its evolution in form and function. Each of the major novels discussed was published serially before appearing as a complete text. This publishing format presented certain constraints for the shape and pacing of the narratives’ plotlines, necessitating logical and regularly spaced breaks in the action and the characters’ progress.

This seriality has its most immediate resonances with my discussion of *Le père Goriot*, in terms of the novel’s construction and its place within the textual whole of the *Comédie humaine*. In its linguistic and architectural play with a multiplicity of spatial planes, the novel reorders early-nineteenth-century realism’s seemingly anarchic superabundance of material details according to the metonymic archeology of its literal and literary things. The classical story told on its walls, like the visual narratives told within the era’s panorama rotundas, defy easy metaphors of paternity, history, and progress, insisting instead on a spatial evocation of narratological panopticism – reading all *en rama*.

Focusing next on ugly décor in mid-century Britain, I used the garish and vulgar wallpaper referenced in *North and South* to reconstruct a history of industrial production,

political economy, and the romance plot through the controversies and concerns of design theory. By asserting the inextricability of the converging narratives, I show how the novel's social, economic, and ideological conflicts are teleologically reconciled by the inseparable entities of good taste, good women, and good capital.

Finally, I assess the legacy of the design reformers alluded to and anticipated in the previous chapter in terms of their resonance with the aesthetic and moral concerns of Tolstoy's late writings. Despite their fleeting and interpretively resistant appearances, I use the brief and often confounding allusions to and descriptions of wallpaper to explore how the "false art" of ornament and mimetic design fit within the larger technological degenerations of the late nineteenth century. For Tolstoy, the artificiality of decoration eventually extends to and subsumes the artistry of literary fiction, both of them infected and infectious with spiritual falseness, aestheticized dishonesty, and the untenable strictures of realist narrative.

A thesis examining the historical connections between these three authors could certainly be constructed, given the reach of their work across Europe and the legitimate arguments to be had about who read whom and when; my focus, however, has stayed on wallpaper itself, foregrounding what is typically background, rather than attempting to assert a narrower, though more direct, narrative of literary influence and response. By continually centering this actual piece of material culture within the larger considerations of literary and industrial histories, I have sought to recuperate a wider array of meanings and referential allusions from within wallpaper than would be discoverable in a more traditionally oriented study of its symbolic appearances in fiction. For all its material fragility and textual ephemerality, wallpaper has proven a durable and enduring backdrop to the nineteenth-century novel; in drawing it forward and subjecting it to the strongly metonymic analyses of material culture and history, I have found



within its patterns and colors, its borders and glue, the constituent elements to a larger story of how the nineteenth century was seen, lived in, and read.

A significant tension that I have negotiated within this dissertation is that presented by the actual materials being described in the texts under discussion and the potential problems of visual description in text more generally. To take this second point first, visual detail must be mediated by textual description, suggesting an essential and irreparable distancing of the reader from the immediate sensual experience that the narrative is attempting to effect. While such an experiential “gap” is aesthetically unbridgeable (at least in a novel published without visual illustrations), I am not asserting that it is necessarily a lack or an impediment that is to the detriment of the realist narrative. Citing Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, Elaine Freedgood analogizes the undecorated rooms of Ferndean in *Jane Eyre* to “the fictitious but still convincing ‘blank’ spaces on the map of empire,” noting the “the idea of empty space invites the exercise of habitation as a demonstration of power” (33). I would extend this “exercise of habitation” to the imaginative power of reading.<sup>183</sup> Every physical detail, with which the realist text overflows, contributes to the mental illustration of the novel’s spaces and characters in the reader’s imagination. Upon the empty space of the page and of the mind’s eye, the physicality of narrative fills in lines and contours, shapes and shades the angles, and produces a visual totality within the characters and their readers may move. In navigating and negotiating these details’ physical layout, we engage with the concrete webs of meaning out of which they have emerged and to which they continually refer.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> It is for this very reason that I have opted not to include images in this thesis, even where apt visual examples are available to illustrate the specific designs whose histories I have recounted.

<sup>184</sup> One might place this argument within a larger discussion of nineteenth-century perspectivalism, which disrupted the easy equivalencies of symbolic logic as empirical truth in favor of a relativistic stance that takes context more fully into account. This paradigm shift can be witnessed on the abstract level and in concrete, real life terms: for Nietzsche, for example, morality must read via a genealogical account and thus situated within historical context rather taken as atemporal and universal truth; according to Marx, capital may for the investor signify potentialities,

The historical *reality* of the wallpapers I have discussed, however, presents a problem for the modern reader: to their nineteenth-century audiences, these novels and the physical details described within have immediate and easily accessible visual referents. The décor described in the text could be similar, if not identical, to that within readers' own homes. This experience of the realist narrative is wholly inaccessible to audiences geographically and temporally removed from it, and it is typically metaphor that fills such distances: Without the concrete immediacy of familiar visual reference, the symbolic logic of substitution supplies easy, and often interchangeable, meanings. Flowers, for example, can evoke naturalism and fertility or coquettishness and romance; without the historical context of organicism in design theory to supply specific and determinant meaning, a rose can go by any and every other name. Things contain meanings – aesthetic and economic, literal and literary – often more than could be gleaned at a first glance.<sup>185</sup> To rely upon metaphor for a singular meaning without first investigating, unpacking, and acknowledging the wealth of metonyms already contained within the literary object is to miss its potential meanings, and the potentialities of meaning, entirely. Walled within paper, the novel contains its own shades and symbols, diversions and designs, all waiting to be read.

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the fertility of (re)generating wealth via investment, while for the worker capital is the physical good produced by one's own labor – the meaning depends on whomever is wielding the term.

<sup>185</sup> The abundance (and occasional overabundance) of footnoted information included in this dissertation has, in part, been indulged in this same spirit.

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