Prison Forms: Genre and Excarceral Politics in Victorian Literature

by

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DEDICATION

For my grandmothers, Marilyn Dunkel and Jean Cawkwell, who passed away while this dissertation was in progress.

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ABSTRACT

Prison Forms: Genre and Excarceral Politics in Victorian Literature focuses on popular nineteenth-century literature that engages with criminal justice topics that were timely in their era and continue unresolved in the twenty-first century. I read literary and periodical texts from the Victorian era through a lens of carceral studies scholarship to locate carceral and excarceral tendencies in the intertwined and centuries-long trajectories of prison reform and penal abolition. I center the word "excarceral" to focus on the aspects of penal abolitionist thought that works to undo prison logics and structures and to create viable alternatives, rather than the prison moratorium or decarceration strains of thought. This term also centers Peter Linebaugh's formulation of excarceration as inspiring broad recognition of and resistance against carceral forces. In addition to contributing to the ongoing theoretical conversation over this broader time frame, this project closely examines four case studies to understand how literature contributes to the political discussions of their moments. Each chapter of this dissertation extends from a single text to examine both a genre concern and an aspect of the British penal system. I articulate how an instance of a literary genre emerges from an intersecting horizon of expectations, the generic and the political. These two exigencies together encourage or inhibit the text's alignment with liberatory or carceral logics.

The United Kingdom increasingly moved towards incarceration as its primary mode of punishment over the nineteenth century, but the four chapters of this dissertation resist the idea of a unified, inevitable progression toward reliance on carceral logics. I begin by exploring the

concept of excarceration within the ballad form. Ballads about jail-breaking hero Jack Sheppard, originally written for William Harrison Ainsworth's 1839 *Jack Sheppard*, propagated and normalized the potential of excarceration for readers, by shifting and spreading through the media of theater and cheap broadsides. I next move to the mid-1850s to consider the generic expectations of life stories in and beyond prisons. In Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, the novel form plays with the full range of the life story genre, from personal fantasy to recorded memoir, and I use this opportunity to examine how incarceration shapes life paths and self-conceptions. Then, I focus on the process of reentry in the realm of melodrama, through Tom Taylor's 1863 play *The Ticket-of-Leave Man.* I show how the melodramatic mode's unique relation to realism establishes real concerns about national character while failing to transcend the form's focus on static heroes and villains. Finally, I return to the excarceral themes of the first chapter to explore the intersection between penal abolition and utopianism. I read William Morris's theatrical and periodical work on the late 1880s alongside his 1890 novel *News from Nowhere* to show Morris's consistent pairing of immediate action with an abolitionist future vision. Collectively, these case studies affirm the value of marrying generic and political analysis of texts. At a moment when the United States is engaged in national conversation around the racist history and effects of our criminal justice system, my dissertation suggests the value in looking comparatively at historical case studies to understand the way processes of expression interact with theories of punishment and freedom.

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of *Jack Sheppard*, William Harrison Ainsworth's 1839 novel, readers encounter a speech about prison abolition from a minor character, the Master of the Mint. The leader of a debtor's sanctuary in London, he talks of the future he desires for himself and his indebted companions:

> I hope to see the day, when not Southwark alone, but London itself shall become one Mint, —when all men shall be debtors, and none creditors, —when imprisonment for debt shall be utterly abolished, —when highway-robbery shall be accounted a pleasant pastime, and forgery an accomplishment, —when Tyburn and its gibbets shall be overthrown, —capital punishments discontinued, —Newgate, Ludgate, the Gatehouse, and the Compters razed to the ground, —Bridewell and Clerkenwell destroyed, —the Fleet, the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea remembered only by name! (225)

Although framed as a rousing speech, Ainsworth undercuts the Master's words by having him describe an unfathomable and vice-ridden abolitionist future. When the Master of the Mint calls for the removal of all debtors' prisons and the end of capital punishment, he speaks in the excess, naming prison after prison that should be destroyed. Such excess makes his speech seem ludicrous and his demands absurd. The Master of the Mint's vision also links an inconceivable end of carceral control over the London poor with the inevitable triumph of immoral actions. He imagines highway robbery occurring as a "pleasant pastime" and forgery being celebrated. In a future without debtors' prisons, the Master still foresees debt. Despite living in a space resistant

to police forces, a positive, societal construction of an undercommons,[1] the Master does not focus on the positive, additive aspects of abolitionism, i.e. the creation of a world in which prisons are not necessary. Instead, Ainsworth limits the dreams of the Mint's leader to only the negative, subtractive side of abolition. He suggests that in removing carceral structures, people will collectively fall, rather than collectively flourish.

While Ainsworth chooses to trivialize in this passage the likelihood of systemic change on the scale the Master imagines, within the year of *Jack Sheppard*'s release, fellow writer William Makepeace Thackeray would make a sober call to end the use of capital punishment.[2] Within thirty years, public execution would be outlawed with the Capital Punishment Act of 1868 (Collins, Philip 5). The following year, new legislation would abolish debtors' prisons (Finn 186). The Marshalsea would, in fact, no longer house debtors but would live on "only by name," in novels like Charles Dickens's 1855-7 *Little Dorrit*. The laws of the late 1860s did not lead to a utopian future or the complete abolition of carceral control, but they also did not result in the criminal landscape painted by the Master of the Mint. Change was coming to Britain's carceral landscape, and the nation's writers would play a role in how those changes unfolded and how the public perceived the changes.

Between the publication of *Jack Sheppard* in 1839 and the nominal elimination of debtors' prisons in 1869, the purpose and form of punishment in the United Kingdom underwent a series of debates. Concerned with *Jack Sheppard* and similar "Newgate novels," England's middle class public feared the role of literature in contributing to the establishment and glorification of a criminal figure (Hollingsworth 15). Concurrently, prison officials debated what

[1] Fred Moten and Stefano Harney theorize the "undercommons" as a persistent, subversive, underrepresented space that exists as subversive surrounds to the dominant status quo core of society.
[2] Thackeray wrote "Going to See a Man Hanged" in 1840 for *Fraser's Magazine.* He describes his experiences seeing a public execution and describes the monstrosity of the affair.

prison structures and practices would result in the reform of convicted criminals. As the nation shifted away from the use of transportation as a form of punishment, it considered new carceral forms, such as solitary confinement and systems of parole. These conversations occurred in the nation's newspapers and within its literature, including some of its most popular novels, plays, and poetry. We can extend from Benedict Anderson's explanation of how newspapers help create a sense of nationhood, or "an imagined political community," to understand how a reading public, across multiple genres, saw themselves as engaged in collective political questions.[3] These texts focused not only on individual policy questions, but on underlying theories about national character, the ability for people to change, and the role of the government in the lives of its people.

This dissertation looks at how literature engaged in these carceral conversations about changing carceral forms. The four chapters of this dissertation each focalize a carceral concern that was percolating in periodicals at the time of a key text's publication. I am interested both in the way literature provides additional content to an ongoing conversation, and the way the literature itself, and in particular its literary form, is shaped by the surrounding political landscape. I draw upon the contention of Carolyn R. Miller that genre is social action, produced by a rhetorical situation. Each chapter considers how a literary piece, an instance of a literary genre, emerges from an intersecting horizon of expectations, the generic and the political. These two horizons are not simply parallel mountain ranges, encircling a text, but interacting fields.

[3] Many of these political questions expanded beyond the United Kingdom, just as the texts were read by Anglophone populations across the empire and in the US. As Amanda Claybaugh points out in *The Novel of Purpose*, not only did "social reform depen[d] on print," but also "social reform was crucially Anglo-American in scope" (2). While this dissertation will primarily focus on the United Kingdom, I will occasionally flag carceral conundrums and reckonings of national identity within other spaces.

And the literary component of politics—its speeches, reports, and editorials—are like literature in that they are shaped by and help shape what is sayable and what is valued.

This dissertation itself is shaped by the intersecting pressures of generic expectations and carceral politics. This text is produced with the aim of all literary doctoral dissertations: to produce new knowledge about literature as a field and/or important texts. Yet it also is borne out of a political moment in which there is widespread reckoning with the inherent problems of carceral institutions. As Michel Foucault noted in *Disciple and Punish*, disappointment in carceral apparatuses is part of the renewing cycle of carceral regimes. For more than a hundred years the carceral state has proposed itself as the answer to its problems, shifting forms without addressing the core issues of carceral logics (Foucault 268). It has been decades since Foucault made this observation, but the need to track and push back against evolving carceral logics continues, as a growing public consensus of the problems of mass incarceration and militaristic policing sometimes leads to calls for different carceral options, like electronic surveillance. James Kilgore, for instance, has pointed to the way carceral forces are rebranding themselves as "carceral humanism." Jackie Wang, similarly talking about the move towards control beyond prison walls, imagines there might be a "future where the prison as a physical structure is superseded by total surveillance without physical confinement" (40). While prison forms may change, carceral logics of racial criminalization and violent discipline continue. Responding to these political concerns, this dissertation takes an abolitionist approach in its knowledge production. The grounding strategies of abolition are moratorium (stopping new prisons from being constructed), decarceration (reducing the number of people in prison systems), and

excarceration (pursuing alternatives counter to carceral logics).[4] Primarily this dissertation will engage with the ways literary texts do or do not engage with liberatory, excarceral logics.

I focus on the excarceral strain of abolition in order to engage with the way texts make visible the problems of carceral systems and offer alternative modes of behavior. In using the term "excarceral," I invoke not only abolitionist thought, but the work of Peter Linebaugh, who theorized excarceration as both physical prison-breaking and inspiring others to recognize their entrapment in other aspects of the carceral archipelago. In seeking to understand these Victorian texts and political situations, I consider them within their own particular moment, with the existing and circulating carceral and excarceral ideas; but I also bring twenty-first century knowledges about morphing carceral systems into the analysis, to point out the continuity in oppressive structures and to sign the possibility of alternative futures. Ultimately, the new production of knowledge for literary studies is a rereading of moments in literary history within an abolitionist contextualization, which allows us to better understand the role of literary expression in furthering or interrupting carceral logics and to better grasp how such processes unfold in our current moment.

This project is indebted to the field-building scholarship of Michel Foucault, whose 1975 *Discipline and Punish* made the case for a monumental shift occurring in the nineteenth century, from corporeal punishment to systemic surveillance. While drawing upon some of the foundational ideas in Foucault, this dissertation is less interested in making a claim that spans the nineteenth century, in the mode of *Discipline and Punish*, and more concerned with interpolating specific historic moments in regards to literature. It builds on the genre-focused work of scholars

[4] John Washington explains, in an article for *The Nation*, how these three terms have been the "pillars of abolitionism" since at least the mid-1970s when the Prison Research Education Action Project published their "Instead of Prisons" pamphlet.

such as Keith Hollingsworth, who engages the concept of genre in *The Newgate Novel 1830-1847* as he looks at how a group of texts about criminals became established as an internally diverse subgroup of literature. Similarly, Rosalind Crone, in *Violent Victorians*, has documented how a range of forms of entertainment, including plays and periodicals, had very high levels of violence and yet were positively received and normalized in culture. And Anne Schwan, in *Convict Voices*, considers textual forms as disparate as nineteenth century periodicals and *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood. These texts pay attention to how literature is taken up by various publics and connects the cultural responses to underlying cultural values or interests, providing a model for my own methodology.

In addition to paying attention to genre and form, this dissertation is also attentive to how these forms resonate with readers. In this light, it draws upon scholars who have focused on readers and textual circulation within prison spaces. For instance, Jenny Hartley, in "Reading in Gaol," details the types of reading materials available in different facilities. Additionally, Casie LeGette has looked at the poetry circulated by radical political prisoners. Helen Rogers has written two articles on Sarah Martin, a woman who visited a correctional facility in order to teach reading and writing. Rogers examines the culture of reading and writing in prisons as well as Martin's shifting relationship to the prisoners through her journals. Carceral contexts not only interact with existing literary material but also produce their own. Ellen O'Brien has shown that the last lamentation in Victorian street ballads is a "resistant cultural and textual space where ballad writers could interrogate specific crimes, judicial proceedings, and punishments" (322). While these scholars were primarily interested in the circulation of texts within prisons, this dissertation will focus on the circulation of the figure of the prisoner beyond prison walls.

Beyond literary scholarship, this dissertation is shaped by the growing interdisciplinary field of carceral studies. Reading in the fields of history, anthropology, and sociology has allowed me to better theorize carceral logics. While activists and scholar-activists like Angela Davis have been attentive to carceral powers for decades, the academic field of carceral studies has been rapidly expanding and developing over the past decade in particular. In 2010, Heather Ann Thompson published "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," issuing a call for historians to be attentive to the power of carceral institutions and impulses. Over the subsequent ten years, the field of history answered the call, expanding beyond the framework of mass incarceration to explore the idea of a carceral state more broadly. As early as 2015, the field had already tackled a wide variety of adjacent topics or subfields, including immigration, parole, and probation (Hernandez, Muhammad, Thompson). Central to this burgeoning scholarly tradition are emphases on state power, economic structures, and racialization. In focusing on nineteenth century literature, my dissertation operates less on these larger planes of thought than on the smaller spheres of discourse in national periodicals and reader or audience engagement. Yet these larger principles undergird my approach. Throughout the dissertation, I flag contemporary resonances, often through the secondary space of footnotes, to create an adjacent space for processing the workings of carceral logics outside my specific text-based arguments.

Each chapter of this dissertation extends from a single text to examine a genre concern and contemporary theorizations of an aspect of the penal system. The first chapter takes William Harrison Ainsworth's 1839 novel *Jack Sheppard* as its starting point. I respond to Peter Linebaugh's identification of excarceration in the historical moment of Jack Sheppard's prison escapes. Linebaugh shows how Sheppard's celebrated escapes represented the ability of

eighteenth century Londoners to escape from parallel carceral systems. My chapter examines how this excarceral ideal is perpetuated through the flexible and mobile form of the ballad. While Ainsworth limited his novel's enthusiasm for excarceration, the life of its ballads in and beyond the novel promote a greater sense of connection between common people's actions and the prison-breaks of Jack Sheppard. I follow the ballads from the novel to Ainsworth's ballad anthology, J. B. Buckstone's 1839 melodrama *Jack Sheppard*, and multiple cheaply produced broadside ballads. Building on scholarly work by Meredith McGill, Michael Cohen, and Dorice Williams Elliot, I explore the ability of the ballad form to encourage adaptation, reiteration, embodiment, and connection through time.

Chapter II moves from excarceration to incarceration, specifically in the debtors' prison of the Marshalsea. I show how Charles Dickens's 1855-7 novel *Little Dorrit* plays with the full range of the life story genre, from personal fantasy to recorded memoir. The potential for "truth" in a fictional form as opposed to supposedly more truthful forms of nonfiction allow us to contextualize the content of Dicken's novel alongside ongoing debates about a wide range of interconnected issues of confinement. The novel addresses the conditions of confinement not only in debtors' prisons, which were soon after abolished, but in relation to ongoing debates around prisoner isolation and prisoner work, both of which dominated periodicals in the 1840s. My chapter engages with Michel Foucault's account of nineteenth-century penal regimes and with Margot Finn's historically-informed accounts of debtors' prisons. The novel's multiple arcs of confinement to reentry are varied, yet share the same final consequence of remaining indelibly stained by stigma, pain, and institutionalization. These life story arcs, in which prisons damage their occupants, stand in contrast to the political tracts and published memoirs of successful

character reform in the harsh conditions of separate system prisons, further questioning the comparative truth value of fiction and nonfiction writing.

Chapter III focuses more intently on the process of reentry through Tom Taylor's 1863 play *The Ticket-of-Leave Man.* The play responds to the relatively new ticket-of-leave system, a stop-gap early release system meant to address the decreased use of transportation as punishment. I examine how both the play and contemporary periodical accounts respond to the new situation through the mode of melodrama. In conversation with Carolyn Williams, I explore the melodramatic mode's unique relation to realism, as it establishes real concerns about national character while openly flaunting its larger than life features. I show that melodrama's foregrounding of duality and evil, limits the form's ability to dive into systemic problems, beyond individual questions of character. Melodrama's foregrounding of fixed character aligns with contemporary belief in a "criminal class." These concepts, which imagine character of formerly imprisoned people to be beyond repair, ultimately reifies the need for incarceration.

Chapter IV revisits the first chapter's linking of excarceration and temporalities in order to consider how the utopian form facilitates the imagining of penal abolition. Whereas Chapter I focused on physical escape from confinement, this chapter looks at the abolition of prison systems. Using abolitionist principles enumerated by David Scott as a guide, this chapter claims William Morris's 1890 utopian novel *News from Nowhere* as an abolitionist text. Beyond the single utopian text, we can see Morris's consistent pairing of immediate action with a future vision in his 1887 play *Nupkins Awakened; or The Tables Turned,* songs from his *Chants for Socialists*, and records of his socialist activism in the late 1880s. Morris uses a dialogic and pluralistic utopian framework to continually ground his socialist writing and activism in a future without police, courts, or prisons.

Finally, I close with a brief coda that addresses the gaps in time and space between the works studied here and my moment of writing. I address the continued relevance and value of Victorian literature, particularly material dealing with complicated carceral concerns. I demonstrate how I approach Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" in the undergraduate literature classroom in order to both honor how the piece worked in its own time period and explore the resonances in the twenty-first century. Then I turn to Danez Smith's "not an elegy for Mike Brown," to sketch the ways that a united generic and political reading works in a contemporary context.

CHAPTER I

The Ballads of Jack Sheppard:

Imagining an Excarceral Future with a Refrain from the Past

> "Ainsworth opens it [*Bentley's Miscellany*] with a sort of second 'Rookwood,' in which Jack Sheppard enacts the hero, instead of Dick Turpin. We cannot judge from the introduction what the work is likely to be, but we augur something spirited and attractive, relieved and interspersed, we hope, with songs, like the bold ballads which gave so much freshness to the first 'highway novel.'"
>
> "Bentley's Miscellany," *The Morning Post*, January 14, 1839

Readers in 1839 would not need an introduction to Jack Sheppard, the eighteenth-century figure famous for his escapes from prison, as he had appeared in ballads and plays since the days of his escapades. [5] *The Morning Post*'s article suggests readers, despite being familiar with Ainsworth's hero, would still expect novelty and "freshness" in the newest version of the Sheppard tale. Even so, the reviewer predicts the form of William Harrison Ainsworth's novel not by anything within the text itself, but by looking to the past. *Jack Sheppard* is viewed through the lens of Ainsworth's 1834 historical "highway novel," *Rookwood*, and the features of

[5] Ruth Baldwin suggests that "Jack Sheppard had never really fallen out of the public imagination" between his death in 1724 and Ainsworth's novel of 1839 (241). She counts more than 85 accounts of Jack's life appeared in sources as varied as biographies, ballads, and plays from 1724 to 1900. However, Baldwin notes that Ainsworth's novel was a turning point in Sheppard bibliography as it reinvigorated public interest by consolidating a wide variety of fictional and historical documents, as well as infusing new fictional material.

that preceding text become the criteria for his new work. The review particularly highlights *Rookwood*'s ballads as key to the prior novel's "freshness." Would reusing the same format and poetics reproduce a feeling of novelty the second time around? The reviewer certainly hopes so, and the following month, *The Morning Post*'s "Bentley's Miscellany" column happily claims that the next installment has "a capital song, after the manner of those in Rookwood." This time, the reviewer spares space in the review for an excerpt: the last verse of the ballad "Saint Giles's Bowl." These past stylings, done over again, merit attention.

These two reviews might seem contradictory in their desire for originality in the form of repetition, but it is the nature of ballads to draw upon the past to orient readers towards a new future. Michael Cohen suggests that nineteenth-century balladry "promise[d] the rejuvenation of literature" ("Getting Generic" 151). In traveling forward through time, ballads stand out as something different, seemingly fresh when arrived in a changed landscape. Ballads have the power to transcend anachronism, or, as Justin Sider has suggested about balladry created by Victorians, to thrive because of their anachronism. This power partially derives from the multifaceted conceptualization of the ballad form in the nineteenth century. Ballads signified both the past and the present simultaneously as balladry was regularly created anew for cheap print publications at the same time old tunes were preserved by ballad collectors like Francis James Child and Joseph Ritson. Meredith Martin explains that these latter, long-lived ballads "were at once imagined to be the authentic record of a nation's earliest poets as well as evidence of early songs that appeared at the beginning of every culture" (348). Although symbolically connected to the past, they were yet a means to reify a current sense of national identity, a guiding cornerstone for future action.

And while the "highway novel," or Newgate novel, was still emerging as a generic form, responding to society's desire for lurid and sensationalized adventures of the law-breaking poor, ballads had long been associated with the criminal activity of the poor, most famously in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. In using ballads, Ainsworth linked his story to established generic conventions, while also ushering in new possibilities for the ballad form. His ballads were not contained within the conservative frame of his novel, but burst forth into theater productions and everyday song. In this movement, we can observe the ways ballads circulated and operated within nineteenth-century England, but also the ways they contributed to popular understandings of criminality and its relation to poverty.

An Excarceral Hero for the Criminalized Poor

The story of *Jack Sheppard* is one of excarceration, both in terms of his escape from carceral spaces and his disruption of carceral logics. Historian Peter Linebaugh theorized the concept of excarceration in his discussion of the historical figure Jack Sheppard in *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in Eighteenth-Century England.* He meant the term to serve as a counter to Foucault's emphasis on the logics and power of incarceration, by pointing to instances where working people "escap[ed] the newly created institutions that were designed to discipline people by closing them in" (Linebaugh 3). Jack escaped from the most iconic carceral structures, jails and prisons, but Linebaugh points out that this popular success stands alongside everyday "escapes" by working people from disciplinary structures like workhouses, factories, hospitals, schools, and ships (23). Jack serves as an excarceral hero and role model, acting against the forces of social control that dictate the behaviors of everyday life.

While Ainsworth belittles an abolitionist future in his Master of the Mint speech (discussed in my Introduction), Ainsworth's Jack nevertheless serves as an excarceral hero. Jack's four prison escapes are the foundation of the novel as he breaks out of St. Giles's Roundhouse and Willesden as a youth and Newgate twice as an adult. With each heroic escape, Jack Sheppard confirms prisons are places that people *should* attempt to flee or disrupt. Jack Sheppard's escapes are not only engaging and exciting, but they are linked to a sense of moral urgency. His escapes from Newgate result in the protection of three purportedly noble characters: Winifred, Thames, and Mrs. Sheppard. His escapes are not merely for the sake of spectacular adventure, but for the betterment of individuals, perhaps even a large portion of society. In their introduction to the Broadview edition of *Jack Sheppard*, Edward Jacobs and Manuela Mourão claim that escape becomes "not only necessary but improving" in the novel because of the condition of carcerality that is normalized in the working-class population (20). They note that excarceration is not necessarily a feature of the Newgate novel genre, but a unique theme of Sheppard's story, which they term a "romance of excarceral redemption" (21).

Jack Sheppard further fulfills the promise of an excarceral, redemptive romance in its presentation of a flawed carceral system. The text questions the carceral system's focus on individual wrongdoing by portraying its main "criminal" hero as not fully to blame for his actions. The novel disperses blame for Jack's arrests across multiple actors and events, including Jack's family history, abuse by Mrs. Wood, Jack's romantic heartbreak, and the plotting of Jonathan Wild, a corrupt thief-catcher.[6] Instead of depicting Jack as innately criminal, Ainsworth

[6] Jack has several "signs" against him when he is born: he was born in Newgate on the day his father died and with a coffin mole (55). Jack is supposed to have inherited "hempen fever" from his father, i.e. a greater likelihood of being hung to death by a rope noose (77). Jack himself claims that Mrs. Wood and Winifred combined to make him turn criminal as a combination of abuse and rejection (375). However, Wild takes credit for orchestrating everything that happens to Jack (235).

includes scenes where Jack stresses his honor, by eschewing violence and keeping his word.[7] Additionally, the characters depicted as most noble and moral in the story value Jack and attempt to facilitate his escapes. Thames brings Jack a small saw (355) and Mr. Wood planning to bring Jack similar implements (426). Jack is not portrayed as deserving imprisonment or capital punishment, creating space in the novel for readers to question the value of such systems.

The novel further implicates the carceral system in terms of its environs and personnel. Each of the spaces Jack escapes—the Roundhouse, the Willesden cage, Bedlam, and Newgate—are described at length as miserable, dirty, confining and unfit for human habitation.[8] Additionally, the people who work for the carceral system are not as honorable as Jack. The text humorously depicts the incompetence of the gaolers and chronicles their abusive power. The gaoler Shotbolt is an object of ridicule when Jack tricks him, to the delight of both the readers and Shotbolt's fellow gaolers (385) and Blueskin is forced not only to forfeit his money to his capturer but also is tortured by being pressed during his imprisonment (398). Jack's honor outshines the system when Jack refuses to take a portion of the profits made by the gaolers by visitors coming to see Jack imprisoned, (337-8). The gaolers themselves call him a "gallant fellow" and "noble" for refusing his share and giving it instead to other debtors and felons, while they have no scruples at making money off of Jack's imprisonment. Nor do they hesitate to receive help from the notorious villain, Jonathan Wild's, corrupt policing practices. These portrayals prime readers to see Jack's escapes as justified, given a corrupt carceral system.

[7] Jack claims of himself, "Though a thief, Jack Sheppard is a man of his word" when he sets off to rob the Woods (276). He also tells his companion Blueskin, "[M]ind, no violence" (276).
[8] These descriptions can be found in the text as follows: Roundhouse (201-3), Willesden (251-3), Bedlam (314-317), Newgate (322-334, 336-7, 394-395, 399, 414-421).

While justifying Jack's escapes within Jack's own time, Ainsworth stresses that carceral institutions have changed by the mid-nineteenth century. He concludes a chapter detailing the horrors of Newgate by positively reflect on prisons in his own era:

> It is a cheering reflection, that in the present prison, with its clean, well-whitewashed, and well-ventilated wards, its airy courts, its infirmary, its improved regulations, and its humane and intelligent officers, many of the miseries of the old gaol are removed. For these beneficial changes society is mainly indebted to the unremitting exertions of the philanthropic HOWARD. (334)

Ainsworth celebrates nineteenth century prison settings as significantly improved due to the work of John Howard, who advocated for prison reforms in the 1770s and 1780s. Despite Ainsworth's optimism about prison reform, when England created a system of prison inspectors in 1835, they reported frequent problems in the country's disorganized prison system.[9] At the time of Ainsworth's writing, the healthful state of prisons was regularly in question, which is a cyclical issue in prisons, associated with the perennial problem of overcrowding.[10] For instance, one inspector noted in 1837 that he opened a door in one jail, behind which 10-20 men were housed and "a stream of heat and effluvia pours forth which is unsupportable" (quoted in Henriques 63). Additionally, by judging prisons based on cleanliness and isolation, like Howard did, Ainsworth fails to address the heart of carceral logics, as to whether imprisonment or capital

[9] The entirety of the prison system was not nationalized until 1877 (Stockdale 220).

[10] A moratorium on new carceral facilities is one of the pillars of penal abolitionism. Poor conditions in prisons are frequently used as an impetus to build new and better facilities, often without closing the old prisons and subsequently leading to an increase in the number of people incarcerated. In early America, the famous Eastern Penitentiary "failed to accomplish its mission of silent, separate confinement almost from the beginning" according to Kali Gross, due to overcrowding with over 1,400 people incarcerated in space built for 740 (132). Kelly Lytle Hernandez tells a similar story in 19th century California. The Los Angeles City Jail in 1881 had a maximum occupancy of forty people, but held "several hundred men" during that decade (54). Due to overcrowding, they decided to construct a new jail in 1896 that could hold 125 people, but by the end of the century it was holding more than double capacity in the winter, with the chief of police requesting a new jail again in 1903; this request was denied, but incarceration practices were not adjusted and the old jail remained overcrowded (54).

punishment are justifiable or beneficial. The satisfactory nature of nineteenth century prisons that Ainsworth implies is undercut by the persistent reality of prisons as unsalutary places.

Although Ainsworth could not fully control which aspects of his novel most resonated with nineteenth-century readers, in writing a historical novel, part of his purpose was surely to make history come alive. Billie Melman contends that history was utilized in the nineteenth century to create multitudinous "live" experiences, as literature was connected to monuments, stage productions, Madame Tussaud's, and reconstructed dungeons (21). She points to Ainsworth's *Tower of London* as an example of literature's embeddedness with nineteenth-century historical entertainment, showing how it was used as a guidebook when people visited the real historical location. With *Jack Sheppard*, S. M. Ellis similarly shows how the novel led to new tourist destinations. In his novel, Ainsworth invented Jack's connection to Willesden, and subsequently "the locality became known everywhere as 'The Jack Sheppard Country'" (Ellis 357). It even resulted in a gravestone that did not belong to Jack being regularly visited: "When the book was at the height of its success and fame, half London came out to see the simple wooden monument—two posts supporting a plank—which Ainsworth had described as marking the robber's grave; and the old sexton made quite a small fortune by selling little pieces of the wood to curiosity collectors" (Ellis 357). Jack Sheppard's story became "live" for its readers, especially when adapted to the stage and when readers felt resonances to the carceral forces in their lives.

Multiple reception-focused critics have shown that readers did, in fact, relate to Jack's eighteenth-century carceral context through the novel and its adaptations. Elizabeth Stearns suggests that nineteenth-century readers were attuned to the parallel situation of legal changes in Jack's time and their own. In her 2013 essay "A 'Darling of the Mob': The Antidisciplinarity of

the Jack Sheppard Texts," she first examines the Waltham Black Act of 1723 which "criminalized many practices held by the early-eighteenth-century lower classes as customary rights" (435). Then she shifts to consider the establishment of the Metropolitan Police, whose jurisdiction and power expanded in 1839 to include many infractions about disturbing the peace in public, which significantly impacted lower class life and entertainment. In both cases, laws targeted ordinary people's ability to exist according to their own desires and previous ways of being. Changes in the law newly labeled harmless activities as "crime" as a way to control the daily habits of working class people. She notes that some adaptations of Ainsworth's novel highlighted this instability of the "law" through time. For instance, the ballad "The Life of Jack Sheppard" claims that Ainsworth invented the murder of Mrs. Wood, when in fact Jack was hanged only for petty crime, or "hanged by an unjust law in 1724 that would have spared his life in 1839" (Stearns 451). Simon Joyce similarly argues how adaptations often increased the sense of connectivity between the novel's and viewer's eras. He points to the novel's popular theatrical productions as bridging two distinct time periods: "the text's readers—and more particularly, the millions at the popular theaters—were able to enact a form of synthesis or dialogue between the politics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which would considerably complicate Foucauldian notions of historical closure or cleavage" (317).[11] Jack's excarceral feats could not be contained by Ainsworth's more conservative framing of carceral practices, as other writers adapted the story to align it closer to the present moment.

[11] The relationship between Ainsworth's text and theatrical productions have been well studied. Jonathan Hill has written about Cruikshank's artwork and its easy adaptability to the stage. Derek Forbes further looks at the way the art proliferates in playbills, music-covers, and plays' frontispieces. Abigail Droge looks at the transference of Jack Sheppard from a middle-class publication to productions that were viewed by lower classes and the subsequent pattern of blaming lower class individuals for their crimes by pointing out their reading habits.

This chapter will build upon Stearns's and Joyce's work to examine another key way in which Jack's excarceral potential was realized for nineteenth century readers: balladry. While balladry only occupies a passing interest in Stearns's essay, this chapter will focus on the form in order to interrogate how it facilitates a continuity of excarceral ideas across time. In this chapter, the term "ballads" will refer to poetry that is intended to be sung, has an overarching narrative, and has repeated rhyming structure across multiple stanzas. I will use this term regardless of whether the ballads in question appear in print, were sung aloud, or had set musical accompaniment. Ballads occupy a paradoxical relationship to time, as they are associated with a primitive past as well as a particular type of present, constant, English identity. Curators and vendors could frame ballads to appeal to different access points in time. Ballad collectors often "suppress[ed]…the conditions of circulation of traditional ballads [which] conferred on them a kind of timelessness" while those selling street ballads presented their wares as timely, even if they were commemorating disasters that had occurred years ago (McGill 163-4). And while ballad collectors liked to draw fixed lines between what they considered more worthy older ballads and ephemeral contemporary pieces (McDowell 72), new ballads were often entangled with older ballads, revived versions made to fit new circumstances. For instance, a popular transportation ballad was refigured to be included in an 1885 performance of the Jack Sheppard tale called *Little Jack Sheppard* (Palmer 148).[12] Readers encountering ballads in Ainsworth's novel—or his ballad anthology, subsequent theatrical productions, or in cheap broadside printings—would not treat ballads simply as imagined relics of the past, but as a form able to move from the past into the present, changing and proliferating as the moment demanded. In works of historical fiction, ballads were a prime locus for melding the two times.

[12] The song "Farewell" in *Little Jack Sheppard* is not precisely the same as the original ballad; while some sections are lifted directly from the ballad others are adjusted (Stephens and Yardley 53).

Ultimately, I hope to show how the personal and political nature of ballads are an important means by which the story of Jack Sheppard was assimilated by nineteenth-century readers and viewers. Ainsworth uses the ballads within his novel to create a sense of a continual community of criminals, who are fated to become the next verses of their own songs, with only fissures of opportunity to break from the continual refrain of imprisonment and hanging. These songs allow readers access to this feeling of collectivity and to imagine themselves as continuing in the characters' musical lineage. This effect is amplified as Ainsworth's ballads circulated beyond the novel. They were anthologized in *Ballads: Romantic, Fantastical, and Humorous* in 1855 and sold in broadsides, with names like *Jack Sheppard's Garland, Jack Sheppard's Glory,* and *Jack Sheppard's Delight*. They also appeared within theatrical productions, and after discussing Ainsworth's ballads within his novel, this chapter will focus specifically on one descendent of Ainsworth's novel: J. B. Buckstone's 1839 *Jack Sheppard* melodrama. Buckstone's adaptation closely follows Ainsworth's novel, yet it amplifies Jack's connection with balladeering and increases the use of refrain and repetition to further create a sense of contemporaneity of Jack's story. Balladry may have been associated with an older time, or with different—criminal—people, but as presented on the page and enacted in the theater, balladry revives the ghost of Jack Sheppard in a new moment, with a new need for excarceration.

Historical Sources & New Creations

In order to understand the role of Jack Sheppard ballads, we will first consider the role of ballads more generally in nineteenth-century literature. A ballad revival was sparked by

historical interest and antiquarian activity at the end of the eighteenth century.[13] Thomas Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765, establishing ballads as poems worth collecting, printing, and anthologizing. Percy's book included multiple forms of poetry, but ballads were at the core of the project. Percy's approach was historical, documenting "ancient" English ballads, even as they were still being sung during his own time. Locating these ballads in the past rather than in the present was a means of glorifying them, taking them outside the realm of the ordinary or every day, while also glorifying their creators as picturesque English country folk. Additionally, by calling them relics, these ballads took on the significance of being "quasi-sacral" (Manning 53). The ballad revival thus framed ballads as valuable remains from a past time, worth preserving, honoring, and reprinting in the present.

Some scholars have posed balladic fluidity as a cause for caution or concern. In *Crimes of Writing,* Susan Stewart discusses how collected and written ballads are a "distressed genre" (69) as "the *writing* of oral genres always results in a residue of lost context and lost presence that literary culture, as we have seen, imbues with a sense of nostalgia and even regret" (104). Written ballads, like the ones Percy wrote in his *Reliques*, present themselves without their original cultural context. Indeed, the authenticity of *Reliques* has been questioned since its publication.[14] Even when contextualized, ballads could problematically distort time. C.M. Jackson-Houlston suggests that ballads quoted within nineteenth-century literary texts tended to alter the context of ballads negatively. He explains, "Ballad quotations in realist texts almost

[13] Groom explains the making of the *Reliques*, including the popularity and satirization of antiquarians in Chapter 2: The Ballad and Literary Antiquarianism in *The Making of Percy's Reliques.* For more on antiquarianism, see Susan Manning's chapter "Antiquarianism, balladry and the rehabilitation of romance."

[14] Groom summarizes some of the scholars who decried Percy, saying that he received "scathing attacks on the accuracy of his work by scholars such as Joseph Ritson, echoed by Hales and Furnivall and present-day commentators like G. Legman" (8). He cites Ritson's 1783 *Select Collection of English Songs* and Legman's 1970 *The Horn Book.* These attacks are based on the unmarked revisions he made and compilations of ballads from multiple different versions (8-9).

always represent a displacement of the culture that create them into the 'past' of the fiction, even if the 'past' the ballads come from is actually the chronological future in terms of the novel's setting" (177). Ballads were consistently considered as things of the past even when the novel was set earlier than the ballad was created, distorting the reality of ballad historicity.

Yet the new ballad craze proved advantageous for writers, inspiring not only collection, but also invention and experimentation. This propelled the form into a new era while maintaining associations with the past. In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, a few decades after Percy published his *Reliques*, Wordsworth emphasized that what his ballads were noteworthy for their subject matter and language, which drew from "incidents and situations from common life" and foregrounded diction "really used by men" (241). While these traits were long associated with the ballad form, Wordsworth saw his use of the form as "an experiment," producing something *new* by invoking what Percy presented as an older form (238). Likewise, Sir Walter Scott leaned into the historicity and folk-nature of ballads in his historical novels, but generally created new ballads to suit his work (Jackson-Houlston 13). As a major writer of historical novels in the nineteenth-century, Scott's use of ballads within these texts—new creations posing as something old—establishes an important precedent for other authors like Ainsworth.[15]

Ainsworth's ballad usage was also inspired by the ballad tradition of John Gay, who established powerful associations between the ballad form, national pride, and illegal activity. Ainsworth acknowledges his indebtedness to John Gay by including the author in his novel. John Gay visits Jack in Newgate with other esteemed members of the public. He says he wants to

[15] Ainsworth has often been discussed in the shadow of Scott, deemed a lesser version of the famous historical fiction writer. In the Broadview introduction to Jack Sheppard, the editors cover the debate over Ainsworth's historicity, noting that Lukacs, Sanders, and Shaw all dismiss Ainsworth (23). See Ligocki's "The Imitators and the Imitated" on how a pattern was established of calling Ainsworth an imitator of Scott. Like Scott, Ainsworth chose to invent new ballads rather than use historical materials (Jackson-Houlston 63).

write a play with "no music except the good old ballad tunes," as a response to Italian opera of the day (408). Hogarth replies, "You'll do a national service, then" (409). This scene implies that Jack Sheppard serves as a key motivator for Gay's subsequent 1728 play *The Beggar's Opera*, which stars a character named Macheath who successfully escapes from Newgate. It also claims ballads to be of national importance. The scene justifies Ainsworth's inclusion of ballads as nationalistic form with the content of criminal. Ainsworth's use of ballads in fiction may follow Scott, but perhaps more importantly, they validate the excarceral spirit of an older ballad tradition.

Gay provided a literary prehistory that valorized the ballad and questioned the legitimacy of the law. In his play *The Beggar's Opera* and in his ballad "Newgate Garland," Gay pointed to corruption in prison systems and policing by professional thief-takers like Jonathan Wild. Both works were still read at the time Ainsworth's novel was published, as Ruth Baldwin explains: *The Beggar's Opera* "remained popular well into the nineteenth century" and "[b]allads like Gay's 'Newgate Garland,' which celebrates Sheppard's friend Blueskin's attempt to assassinate Jonathan Wild, were continually reprinted in penny journals" (240). "Newgate Garland," as Gay says in his preface to the poem, is about "how Mr. Jonathan Wild's throat was cut from ear to ear with a penknife by Mr. Blake, alias Blueskin, the bold highwayman, as he stood at his trial in the Old-Bailey, 1725. To the tune of The Cut-purse" (118). The ballad moves quickly from the specifics of Blueskin to the general concept of criminality. After two stanzas about Blueskin and Wild, Gay comments on the courtiers, physicians, lawyers, and church-wardens who will benefit from Wild being dead. The final line of the ballad which is repeated each stanza reads, "And ev'ry man round me may rob if he please." The line sounds similar to the utopic vision of Ainsworth's Master of the Mint, but here it clearly satirizes the immoral activity already

imbedded in daily life. The stanzas show that "ev'ry man" extends beyond the "Gallants of Newgate" that the poem addresses in its opening line. All men steal, but punishment, as the first stanza suggests, is based on "who can buy off the noose." A world without Jonathan Wild is a world without punishment for crimes, but rather than being a bad thing, it levels the playing field, so that the pickpockets and thieves are not punished as the lawyers and courtiers go free. The ballad constructs criminality as a class-based phenomenon, not because criminality is inherent in a group of people, but because thief-takers focus their efforts on less wealthy individuals. In this "Newgate" garland, the people who inhabit Newgate do not seem any worse in character than those who walk freely beyond its gates on a regular basis. The solution does not seem to be to lock everyone up in Newgate, but to recognize the injustice of some people being locked up at all. By relying upon the ballad tradition in his novel, Ainsworth partially validates the excarceral spirit of Gay's ballads. Ainsworth "legitimized as sources" the fictional accounts of Sheppard's life, as he put these representations alongside direct citations of historical sources about London such as William Maitland and John Strype (Baldwin 249, 246).

Yet Ainsworth uses ballads not only for linking to the past—and to sympathetic excarceral material—but to reach towards the future. Ainsworth was writing *Jack Sheppard*, and potentially the ballads themselves, in anticipation of his book becoming a play, another *Beggar's Opera*. Jonathan Hill explains how Ainsworth and his illustrator, George Cruikshank, collaborated on the novel with an eye to how the text would be theatrically adapted. Hill focuses on Cruikshank primarily, noting that his illustrations are influenced by dramatic tableau, a popular device in the theater at the time in which players froze on stage to create a living image. This style differs from how Cruikshank illustrated *Rookwood*, a previous collaboration with Ainsworth. Hill suggests that after "Cruikshank saw his illustrations openly used for the purposes

of staging and scenery" during a production of *Oliver Twist* in 1838, he adjusted his style to anticipate how they might be used for theater (443). Hill even claims that Cruikshank's illustrations in *Sheppard* "were never really designed to be viewed buried within the covers of an Ainsworth novel but rather to be resurrected on the stage and 'mysteriously made to breathe'" (459).

Hill might take the argument a little too far, as the images do function in the text itself, but knowing Cruikshank's orientation towards potential adaptations prompts us to consider how his collaborator, Ainsworth, likely considered his work in a similar light. Play adaptations were useful for authors, as "the free publicity a stage version gave to [a] work could boost its sales and so increase, if not their immediate share of the profits, at least their bargaining power in future negotiations with publishers" (Hill 445). The novel includes discussion of the theater, not only in championing Gay's work, but also in the characterization of Jack, who is a "capital mimic" (290).[16] Importantly for our discussion, the inclusion of ballads—songs for the stage—would make the text a desirable candidate for theatrical adaptation. As we turn now to look in depth at the ballads as they work within the text of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, we will not only consider how they work in context, but remember them in connection to a larger ballad tradition and look forward to how they are used to propel Jack's excarceral story to even wider audience in dramatic adaptation.

Ainsworth's Ballads and Class-Based Predetermination

Despite *The Morning Post* praising ballads in its reviews of the first two installments of *Jack Sheppard*, this poetic form was not a regular feature evenly distributed throughout

[16] Sheppard successfully imitates Quilt Arnold, Edgeworth Bess, and Shotbolt for both comedic effect and more serious business, such as escaping prison (290, 345, 382).

Ainsworth's text. Instead, the ballads were concentrated early in the novel to draw the readers into a historical past and a "criminal" community, and foreclose the fulfillment of the excarceral potential of balladry by associating it with Jack's prison escapes. In frontloading his ballads, with six in the first 160 pages and only one later in the book (see Figure I.1, Table I.1), Ainsworth signals that balladry is important for establishing the environment of his novel. The early songs create a connected milieu of caroling and carousing, separate from the true heart of the novel, Jack's escape from prisons. In his heroic excarceration, Jack leaves behind his tuneful past to become a hero apart. Yet even in these restricted conditions, the ballads of the novel demonstrate their prowess in creating a historically connected community of struggle and in allowing readers access to that world.

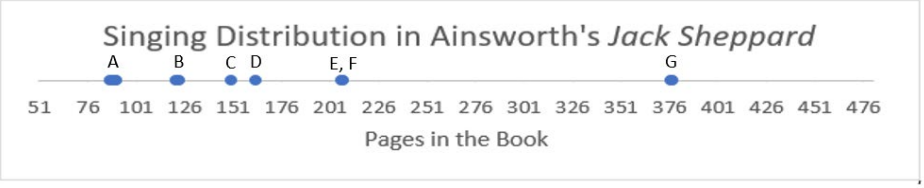


Figure I.1. Distribution of ballads in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*. Each blue dot represents a page on which singing occurs, as indicated by a titled song or by indented lines and contextual evidence of singing. Some songs span multiple pages. The page range here is 51-476, which corresponds to the range of the text in the Broadview edition. The footnotes in the Broadview edition slightly skew the spread of songs as compared to what readers would encounter in a three-volume collection. Dots A through G correspond with the songs in Table I.1.

Table I.1. Singing distribution in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*. Song titles are designated by the tiles in the book, if given, or titles they appear under in later printings.

Song Title	**Singer**	**Page Numbers**
"Saint Giles's Bowl"	Blueskin	88-91
"The Newgate Stone"	Jack Sheppard	122-123
"Drinking Song"	Blueskin	150
"The Carpenter's Daughter"	Jack Sheppard	163
"With Neither a Chisel, A Knife, Nor a File"	Jack Sheppard	207
"Saint Giles's Roundhouse"	Blueskin	208
"Owen Wood"	Blueskin	377-378

Before looking at the individual ballads, it is worth considering how these songs would have been processed by readers. While clearly signally a connection with an older past, were the ballads merely ornamental or did they play a larger role in the reading experience? Writers in the Romantic era expressed some anxiety about how poetic forms would register within novels. Coleridge desired to "protect the fragile 'beauty' [of poetry] from the 'adventures' of fiction and circulation," fearing poetry would not withstand the demands or readerly expectations of novels (Favret 282). Anna Laetitia Barbauld similarly worried that people would not appreciate the poems in Radcliffe's novels (Horrocks 507). Mary Favret suggests these fears were justified as poetry could appear as "a detachable extra," that was less essential to the novel (291). According to Favret, poetry was less important for its content than its plentiful presence. The quantity of poetry in novels established a world in which poetry is folded into everyday life: "[o]ne is led to believe that poetry is an entirely common occurrence in the world of the novel, practiced by nearly anyone upon nearly any premise" (Favret 290). Ingrid Horrocks similarly expresses the value of the world-building aspect of poetry, showing how poetry is a touchpoint of connection among characters: "Quotations and poems within Radcliffe's novels, and perhaps in all novels, engage with an idea of sociability or community. In them the one voice of character or text inevitably joins other voices—finds accompaniments" (513). Poems within novels build up the fabric of the novel's world, not in a seamless way, but quilted into the fabric of the text. Ainsworth could use ballads to establish his criminal underworld as rich in shared song.

Ballads and other poems in novels contribute to the sense of the novel not by blending in but by standing out. They do not produce what Barthes calls the "reality effect," when concrete details, seemingly insignificant, help construct a sense of the world through nothing more than their inclusion. Rather, the poems in novels frame the world by calling attention to themselves,

often by "typographical isolation" as "inserted lyrics hang suspended in otherwise unmarked prose" (Favret 293-4). For Favret, this makes the poems more like images, claiming that nineteenth century readers would "easily separate[e] the two-dimensional 'image' of poetry from the 'reality' of the novel" (295). However, the ballads in *Jack Sheppard* function as more than just images as ballads are meant to be sung aloud and could have been sung by the novel's readers. As Leah Price's *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* shows, there are far more things that people do with books than just read them silently.[17] Henry Mayhew mentions in *London Labour and the London Poor* that *Jack Sheppard* was "read aloud in the low lodging-houses in the evening by those who have a little education, to their companions who have none" (532).[18] Would the ballads have been sung aloud, too? This seems highly possible, particularly because the novel's first ballad was printed with its musical arrangement (see figure I.2).[19] This inclusion makes the ballad stand out even more and indicates that Ainsworth anticipated readers wanting to sing the song aloud. These ballads could be extracted from the text and integrated into the lives of the readers.

[17] Price does not note the reading practices of *Jack Sheppard,* but she does note that the "book itself might occasion antisocial behavior. Copies of *Jack Sheppard* led boys not to imitate Jack Sheppard in stealing silver spoons, but to steal copies of *Jack Sheppard*" (55).
[18] My references to Mayhew in this dissertation come from two different sources. Unless the reference includes Vol. III in the in-text citation, the quotations derive from the version edited by Rosemary O'Day and David Englander.
[19] The editors of the Broadview version of *Jack Sheppard* note that the 1839 three-volume first edition by Bentley was "the only version that includes the music to the song 'St. Giles's Bowl,'" yet it was also "the most historically influential version of the novel," partially because it served as the basis for the theatrical publications(45).

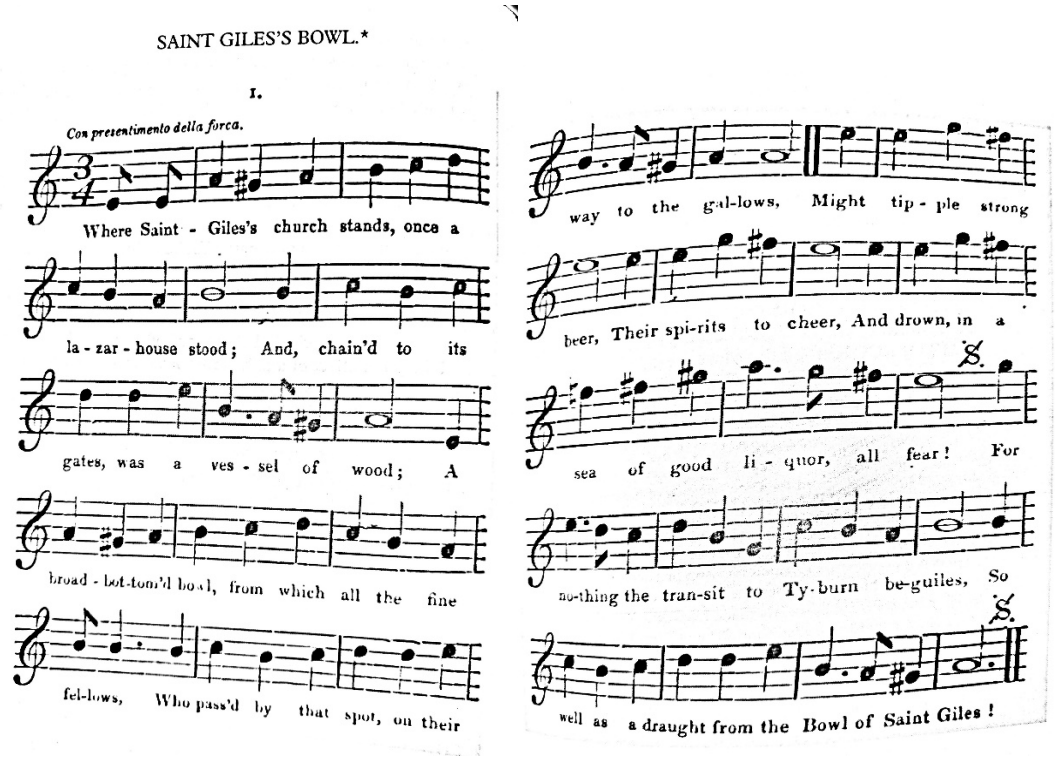


Figure I.2. First verse of "Saint Giles's Bowl." As it appears in the Broadview edition of *Jack Sheppard* (pg. 88-89). The Italian translates to "with the foreboding of the gallows." All following verses appear without music.

While singing realized ballads within readers' communities, the ballads also pulled readers into Ainsworth's crafted community of ballad-singing criminals. Metalepsis works both ways. The figure most connected to balladry in the novel is Blueskin, Jack Sheppard's older companion, who sings the majority of the songs in the novel, including the first ballad (see Table I.2). Singing is a cornerstone of his character, and one of the first traits readers learn about him. In the first chapter of the February 1839 installment of *Jack Sheppard*, (Epoch 1, Chapter 5), readers find Blueskin at Mrs. Sheppard's home named only as "a rough voice from below" and "the speaker" (86-87). It is not until after the ballad concludes and he enters Mrs. Sheppard's room that the readers learn the name of the singer, who they had been introduced to in a previous scene. The text teaches readers to identify Blueskin by his song. Foregrounding the ballad, as more important than a single named individual, also allows the ballad to transcend the importance of a single balladeer and stand for a general character type or a representative of a

wider community. This wider community could be viewed negatively, a sort of "criminal class," as eighteenth century elite fears of the state shifted towards fears of the urban working class (Gatrell 255).[20] Yet this community can also be read as a voice of the undercommons. Simon Joyce encourages us to read the Mint in this second light, as an excarceral collective, "a mobile pocket of resistance and voluntary criminal association," with their own government, privileges, and fees (318-19). The ballad that Blueskin sings further solidifies this position of excarceration.

The content of Blueskin's first ballad further entrenches the value of balladry as part of a purportedly criminal community. While Blueskin's outward reason for singing is to draw out Mrs. Sheppard and propose to her, this action establishes for the reader a long lineage of balladry through the history of crime in London. He sings in the first stanza:

> Where Saint-Giles church stands, once a lazar-house stood;
> And chain'd to its gates was a vessel of wood;
> A broad-bottom'd bowl, from which all the fine fellows,
> Who pass'd by that spot, on their way to the gallows,
> Might tipple strong beer,
> Their spirits to cheer,
> And drown, in a sea of good liquor, all fear!
> For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles,
> So well as a draught from the Bowl of Saint Giles! (88-89)

It is hard to imagine that this verse would encourage matrimony, as Blueskin intends, but it does create a storied sense of place for the novel's main characters. Blueskin evokes a sense of history

[20] V. A. C. Gatrell demonstrates that "crime" was not a major social concern before the 1780s, but gradually became a concern, fueled by questionable statistics, as there was a shift in values from "liberty" to "order." The term "criminal class" itself did not emerge until the 1850s, according to Victor Bailey, but the concept itself was established at the time of *Jack Sheppard*'s publication.

through a well-remembered lazar-house, or home for people with leprosy, that has since disappeared. Its past form is worthy of remembrance because it served as a ritual site for prisoners awaiting their execution. This refuge was a final chance for the condemned to wash away negative emotions before their death. The alcohol is beguiling, a trick or falsehood, masking what will come, but it is also a joyous diversion, which ironically gets its job done "so well." The last three lines of the verse form the refrain, the main point that is emphasized in the subsequent two verses and links the ballad together. With each passing verse, beer reduces the fear of one man after another, each choosing to ignore the reality of the noose, accepting their fate in the criminal justice process. The saint of the disabled reduces these men to a state of inability, a nonthinking drunkenness, to allow them peaceful passage to death.

The ballad moves from general highwaymen of the past in the second verse to very specific individuals in the third, reaffirming the sad truth of the refrain while growing increasingly personal. All the men drink from the bowl the same way, reiterating the tradition and depicting a dark fatedness for the balladeer's community:

> By many a highwayman many a draught
> Of nutty-brown ale at Saint Giles's was quaft,
> Until the old lazar-house chanced to fall down,
> And the broad-bottom'd bowl was removed to the Crown.
>
> Where the robber may cheer
> His spirit with beer,
> And drown in a sea of good liquor all fear!
> For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
> So well as a draught from the Bowl of Guiles

There MULSACK and SWIFTNECK, both prigs from their birth,
OLD MOB and TOM COX took their last draught on earth:
There RANDAL, and SHORTER, and WHITNEY pulled up,
And jolly JACK JOYCE drank his finishing cup!

For a can of ale calms,
A highwayman's qualms,
And makes him sing blithely his dolorous psalms!
And nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of Saint Giles! (90-91)

Though the lazar-house falls down, in the second stanza, the refrain continues in the present tense in both verses. Even as time has moved on and structures have shifted, the ritual remains. It carries a specific lineage, as is made clear by the densely referential third stanza. This stanza does not concern itself with the stories of these individuals, but rather focuses on name recognition and a distinctive chronological order. The editors of the Broadview Press edition note that these individuals were executed towards the end of the seventeenth century: Mulsack 1685, Swiftneck not dated, Old Mob 1690, Tom Cox 1691, Thomas Randal 1695, Shorter 1697, Whitney 1694, Jack Joyce not dated (90n-91n). Although a couple of the execution dates are unknown and Whitney's is later than the two before it, generally the individuals are presented chronologically in terms of their executions. Balladry thus marks the transit from community to the gallows, again and again, repeating itself unchanged in time. Balladry even physically accompanies this process; the third verse witnesses the first alteration of the refrain, as the men do not drown their fear but rather "sing blithely [their] dolorous psalms!" Music, enhanced by

drink, helps pave a sweeter way to death, be it by psalm or the ballad Blueskin sings, marking time from the past to the present moment. By the end of the third stanza, the pattern of the ballad and its place in a criminal past are clear.

In the next stanza, Blueskin reaches the time of Jack's father and Ainsworth uses this moment to signal a possible break from an endless cycle of executions. Up until this point, there has been no interruption in the ballad—all three stanzas are printed one after another on the page—but after the third verse, Blueskin does what the song suggests, and takes a drink. This moment is marked in prose, and creates a moment of anticipation for the verse that follows:

> Then gallant TOM SHEPPARD to Tyburn was led,--
> "Stop the cart at the Crown—stop a moment," he said.
> He was offered the Bowl, but he left it and smiled,
> Crying, "Keep it till call'd for by JONATHAN WILD!
>
> "The rascal one day,
>
> "Will pass by this way,
>
> "And drink a full measure to moisten his clay!
> "And never will Bowl of Saint Giles have beguiled
> "Such a thorough-paced scoundrel as JONATHAN WILD!" (91)

This verse establishes the history of the main character's father, Tom Sheppard, as part of common history. Tom becomes the most recent iteration of a series of executed men, but, significantly, he differs from them in his refusal to drink from the bowl. He gestures to the tradition—he asks for the procession to stop—and then rises above it, claiming the bowl is not meant for him but rather for Jonathan Wild, the corrupt thief-taker who brought Tom Sheppard to the authorities. While Tom is not an excarceral hero, in this moment he breaks from the

regular procedure of these hangings to exert some power over the proceedings. His verse creates a curse on Wild, calling for his execution. The refrain is significantly changed, hoping for a different outcome for the community of "criminals," even if it still resorts to execution as the main means of handling a foe. This verse presents a possible rift, a chance for difference, an excarceral potential in upending the corrupt system of policing.

Rather than ending on this hopeful, if ominous, note, the ballad has one last verse. Written in the first person, future tense, the final verse recedes from revolutionary potential, at the same time that it invites readers to imagine themselves as part of the community in question:

> Should it e'er be *my* lot to ride backwards that way,
> At the door of the Crown I will certainly stay;
> I'll summon the landlord—I'll call for the Bowl,
> And drink a deep draught to the health of my soul!
>
> Whatever may hap,
> I'll taste of the tap,
>
> To keep up my spirits when brought to the crap!
> For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles,
> So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles! (91)

In the first person, this verse leaves readers wondering what will become of the singer, Blueskin, as the novel progresses, but it also allows them to imagine themselves as the first person speaker of this song. Anyone encountering the ballad can imagine themselves in the position of the people who came before, both real and fictional, even if the lazar-house no longer stands with a bowl chained to its gates. This verse includes a refrain similar to those preceding Tom Sheppard's heroic refusal, so that the reader finds themselves in a moment still confined by a

fatedness for the gallows, rather than the possibility of escape. Readers may be able to join in with the frivolity of drinking, but it comes with a twinge, knowing that the present moment has not resolved issues of the past, but continues with the same spirit and spirits, towards a gloomy end. This is the verse that *The Morning Post* excerpted in its review—the one most likely to entice a readerly connection.

With the novel's next ballad, "The Newgate Stone," the pattern of the first ballad is repeated, with a list of previous criminals partaking in a ritual action; this time, carving their names into prison stone. However, as Jack sings the song, he begins to enact his future, demonstrating the potential for balladry to leap out of song and into action. He assumes the position of the reader in "Saint Giles's Bowl," and the possibility of vicariousness through history and song is expounded. The ballad precedes him, introduces him, and sets the stage for his adventures, similar to how "Saint Giles's Bowl" frames Blueskin's character. As Jack carves his name into a beam, he sings:

> When CLAUDE DU VAL was in Newgate thrown,
> He carved his name on the dungeon stone;
> Quoth a dubsman, who gazed on the shattered wall,
> "You have carved your epitaph, CLAUDE DU VAL,
> With your chisel so fine, tra la!"
>
> DU VAL was hang'd and the next who came
> On the selfsame stone inscribed his name:
> "Aha!" quoth the dubsman, with devilish glee,
> "TOM WATERS, *your* doom is the triple tree!

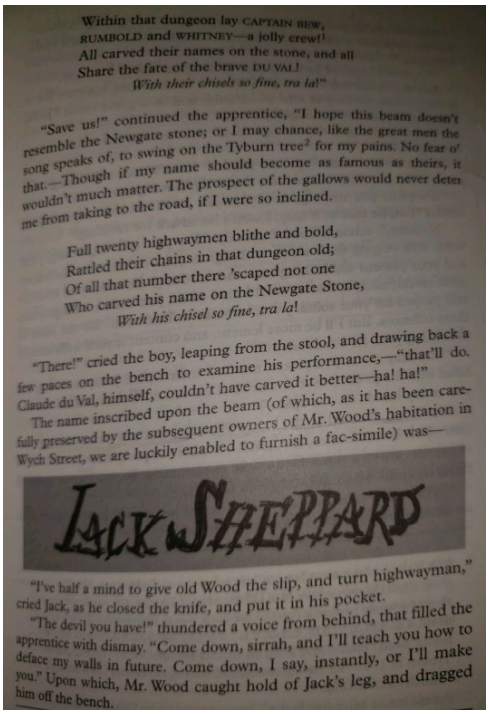
With your chisel so fine, tra la!"

Within the dungeon lay CAPTAIN BEW,
RUMBOLD and WHITNEY—a jolly crew!
All carved their names on the stone, and all
Share the fate of the brave DU VAL!
With their chisels so fine, tra la!

Full twenty highwaymen blithe and bold,
Rattled their chains in that dungeon old;
Of all that number there 'scaped not one
Who carved his name on the Newgate Stone,
With his chisel so fine, tra la!

As with "Saint Giles's Bowl," the stories of these highwaymen are not elaborated. The text gives only their names, prioritizing the celebrity of name over the specificity of story. Jack embodies the belief in the importance of names as he sings this song while carving his name into a wooden beam. Jack is hoping to make his name, to have his name taken up in song like Du Val, Bew, Rumbold, or Whitney. And Ainsworth plays into this fascination too, having Jack's identity, his name, only be revealed as he finishes the song, presenting the carved name in a fac-simile image of the beam (123, see figure I.3). In fac-simile, his name stands out from the text with the same sort of "typographical isolation" Favret claims is typical of poetry. Ainsworth even uses this moment to give the ballad a life beyond the text, as he comments that the beam in the story has been "carefully preserved by the subsequent owners of Mr. Wood's habitation" (123). History is

further foreshadowed by the lyrics of the ballad as Jack sings that "there 'scaped not one" from Newgate (123). The reader, on the verge of confirming their suspicions that this singer is Jack, is aware that Jack will escape Newgate not once but twice. Jack's future will set him apart from these highwaymen but in the moment Jack's singing and his actions connect him to du Val and other historical figures. Although this song does not move towards the same sort of first-person identification as "Saint Giles's Bowl," in Jack's embodiment of the past, with his promise of excarceral feats, Jack demonstrates for the reader how balladry might be realized in their own lives.



Within that dungeon lay CAPTAIN BEW,
RUMBOLD and WHITNEY—a jolly crew!
All carved their names on the stone, and all
Share the fate of the brave DU VAL!
With their chisels so fine, tra la!"

"Save us!" continued the apprentice, "I hope this beam doesn't resemble the Newgate stone; or I may chance, like the great men the song speaks of, to swing on the Tyburn tree[2] for my pains. No fear of that.—Though if my name should become as famous as theirs, it wouldn't much matter. The prospect of the gallows would never deter me from taking to the road, if I were so inclined.

Full twenty highwaymen blithe and bold,
Rattled their chains in that dungeon old;
Of all that number there 'scaped not one
Who carved his name on the Newgate Stone,
With his chisel so fine, tra la!

"There!" cried the boy, leaping from the stool, and drawing back a few paces on the bench to examine his performance,—"that'll do. Claude du Val, himself, couldn't have carved it better—ha! ha!"

The name inscribed upon the beam (of which, as it has been carefully preserved by the subsequent owners of Mr. Wood's habitation in Wych Street, we are luckily enabled to furnish a fac-simile) was—

JACK SHEPPARD

"I've half a mind to give old Wood the slip, and turn highwayman," cried Jack, as he closed the knife, and put it in his pocket.

"The devil you have!" thundered a voice from behind, that filled the apprentice with dismay. "Come down, sirrah, and I'll teach you how to deface my walls in future. Come down, I say, instantly, or I'll make you." Upon which, Mr. Wood caught hold of Jack's leg, and dragged him off the bench.

Figure I.3. Page 123 in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*. Including the text for "The Newgate Stone" and Jack's inscription on the beam.

The validity of these connections through song is compounded when Mr. Wood hears Jack's singing and decries the action. The potential danger of the ballad feels so real to Mr. Wood that he goes so far as to threaten Jack with solitary confinement: "Do you call neglecting your work, and singing flash songs nothing?...Zounds! you incorrigible rascal, many a master

would have taken you before a magistrate and prayed for your solitary confinement in Bridewell for the least of these offences" (124). The song itself, with its associations of criminality, warrant incarceration according to Mr. Wood's pronouncements. Joining in ballad culture and associating with the class of people who sing the songs makes Jack guilty, even without committing any serious offense. Yet Wood's ideas about the dangerousness of the song are partially validated by the text, as Jack claims the ballad provided the inspiration for his misdeed of graffiti: "It was that song that put it into my head to cut my name on the beam" (125). The text plays into a cultural conception of criminality, that certain groups of people are collectively criminal, with shared ballads of community enough to signify group membership and deserve incarceration.

Yet is at the very cusp of Jack's entry into criminal and excarceral life that he sings his last ballad of the novel. The opportunity for embodiment presented in "The Newgate Stone" is not realized when Jack later finds himself in Newgate, where he neither carves nor sings.[21] He similarly fails to sing "Saint Giles's Bowl" when he later declines to drink on his way to the gallows. In his last singing scene, Jack experiences his first incarceration and escape attempt. On his way to Saint Giles's Roundhouse, the narrator comments that Jack "did nothing but whistle and sing the whole way" (199). Jack seems to be taking his criminal activity and subsequent punishment lightly, although Ainsworth does not mark this moment with an inset song. He withholds lyrics until a more important moment: escape. Jack sings, "Oh! give me a chisel…" as he undoes his and Thames's handcuffs. The singing has a clear function in the text, to distract attention from the noise of "the operation" (206). It is situated for maximum drama as the song

[21] This exclusion seems purposeful given the fact that Ainsworth alludes to the protagonist of the song during the scene; Mrs. Spurling comments, "There haven't been so many ladies in the Lodge since the days of Claude Du Val, the gentleman highwayman" (338).

finishes with a bang: the door of "the Little-Ease" in which they are imprisoned "flew open with a crash" at the very moment "Jack concluded his ditty" (207). The ballad not only accentuates the moment of excarceration through its timing, but its content involves breaking out of handcuffs specifically. It begins in the present tense, as the singer asks to be given a chisel, knife or file, before moving forward in time, to when the prisoner has broken out, presenting the story in the past tense:

> When the turnkey, next morning, stepp'd into his room,
> The sight of the hole in the wall struck him dumb;
> The sheriff's black bracelets lay strewn on the ground,
> But the lad that had worn 'em could nowhere be found. (207)

With this shift in tense, Jack moves from singing in the moment about what is happening to projecting a future as if it has already happened, that his future might be like ballads of the past. Jack's actions connect him to a preordained future of the ballad's prediction, even though in this particular escape he does not get away. Instead, as he attempts to get out of the building, he hears and joins in with "a deep, manly voice…heard chanting" about the roundhouse (208). Ainsworth includes inset lyrics from this balladeer and then allows Jack, in the text of the novel to join in with the song, crying "The jolly, jolly, roundhouse!" as he removes the last bar in his escape attempt (208). Rather than following his own ballad to its freeing conclusion, he falls in line with the larger ballad—and purportedly criminal—community. The original singer is never officially identified as Blueskin, but as he and Wild shortly thereafter enter the room, who else could it be? Jack's own balladry is eclipsed in this moment by Blueskin and his escape is also prevented.

After this ballad and failed escape attempt, balladry is not integrated into Jack's excarceral feats. Where Ainsworth early on leaned into the historical connection of Jack

Sheppard to balladry, he later sought to distance his hero from these roots. The only ballad that follows is by Blueskin, singing about Owen Wood, to the great annoyance of Jack (377-8).[22] Ballads have been associated with Blueskin from the beginning, but fall out of association with Jack, who shifts from a playful, singing youth, desiring to be part of a criminal community, to a more serious contemplative character who wants to separate himself from his former actions. The major moments of excarceration in the novel, Jack's escapes from Newgate, are serious and melancholy affairs, moments entirely justifiable and seemingly just, something separate and apart from the joyous, ballad-filled activity of Jack's youth. Ballads remain associated with a particular criminal culture and a connection to the past, and are not associated with the dapper adult hero.

In this way, criminality is not only a label applied to a poorer class of people, but it is associated with youthfulness or immaturity. For Ainsworth's Jack, criminality and balladry are youthful states that can be outgrown. Youth is inherently future-oriented, as a period looking forward to adulthood. Anxieties around youth both portend to their current state and the adults they will grow into. [23] Martin Wiener suggests that despite the growing sentimentalization of childhood in the nineteenth century, "during the first half of the century, juveniles were treated as being even *more* liable to criminal sanctions than earlier" (51). Youth were not necessarily viewed as innocent, but needing of correction. Some middle and upper class readers saw Ainsworth's novel as encouraging impressionable youth to become and remain "criminal."[24]

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[22] Additionally, Ainsworth includes a scene in which balladry is mentioned, as John Gay visits Jack while he is imprisoned in Newgate. He says he is excited to write a play with "no music except the good old ballad tunes," referencing *The Beggar's Opera* (408). Even here, when talking about a contemporary figure, Ainsworth leans into the "old" associations of balladry.

[23] In *Carceral Capitalism,* Jackie Wang details the problems of viewing youth as "*a calculable risk that must be preemptively managed*" (197), working through the problematic use of future-oriented language in the labeling of Black youth as "super-predators" in the 1990s.

[24] Twenty-first century researchers have found that when age is correlated with criminality, and that criminality tends to peak in late adolescence and decline in age, as in a "criminal menopause" (Gottschalk 177).

Harriet Martineau said penny dreadfuls, cheap reproductions of stories like *Jack Sheppard*, were "preparing the young for convict life" (quoted in Springhall, 328). Abigail Droge demonstrates how social responsibility for youth crime was transferred to Ainsworth's novel and subsequent plays, with youth in police reports called "another" Jack Sheppard. Although Ainsworth aimed to limit Jack's criminality and balladry to his youth, these associations were powerfully taken up in the world beyond his novel.

When Ainsworth stopped including ballads in the novel, the critics did not revolt, even those who had been anticipating and enjoying the ballads. *The Morning Post*'s monthly reports on *Jack Sheppard* simply stop talking about balladry, even as they continue to praise the story. While Ainsworth might have been separating Jack from ballad culture in the end of his novel, this does not hold true in his later publication of the ballads in *Ballads: Romantic, Fantastical, and Humorous* in 1855. Here Jack loses his distinction and slips into the general culture of highway thievery and flash songs, perhaps because Ainsworth wanted to dissociate the volume from the infamy later connected with his novel. The Jack Sheppard ballads are not grouped as a unit in the collection nor do they retain any mention of the text from which they derive.[25] The Sheppard ballads do not even occur in the section of the volume entitled "Legendary and Romantic Ballads," which would elevate their character and associate them with serious, epic romance. Indeed, ballads about Jack's predecessor in Ainsworth's oeuvre—Dick Turpin—appear in this category. Instead, the Sheppard ballads are scattered throughout the section of "Humorous Ballads."

[25] The most popular piece from Buckstone's play "Nix My Dolly Pals, Fake Away," originally titled "Jerry Juniper's Chant" in Ainsworth's *Rookwood*, loses the context of both texts in this anthology as it is titled "A Romany Chant." The song must have been deemed important enough to earn an illustration, but its original context is not noted in any of the 35 footnotes it has.

The Sheppard ballads appear alongside ballads such as "A Chapter of Highwayman," which, like "The Newgate Stone" or "Saint Giles's Bowl," list a slew of historic highwaymen. But, unlike those two ballads, "A Chapter of Highwaymen" includes a section about Jack himself. In this ballad, each verse features a different highwayman and receives a complementary footnote. The piece is sung to the air "Which nobody can deny!" and each stanza repeats that final refrain. Sheppard's verse reads:

> Nor could any so handily break a lock
>
> As SHEPPARD, who stood on the Newgate dock,
>
> And nicknamed the jailers around him, '*his flock!'*
>
> *Which nobody can deny*

Jack, here, appears as one of many "good fellows," truly integrated with the figures he sang about. Jack is made company with the likes of Claude Du Val, a figure Ainsworth's Jack sang about as a child, but he is not given any sort of distinguishing role amongst these men. By putting Jack in the midst of others, he becomes one of the strings of the past rather than a current contemporary person. He is not a singer of ballads, but someone who is sung about. Yet even as Jack is here subsumed into a larger line of history, his difference remains as his verse emphasizes not his criminality, but his excarcerality. Whereas the reader hears of Old Mob being best at robbing coaches and Tom Cox "deal[ing] harder knocks," Jack earns a place among the jolly criminals for breaking out of jail and holding sway over the jailers (186). Ainsworth's ballads, both in the text and in his anthology, primarily emphasize balladry as a connection to the past, but provide glimpses of how they figure in Jack's creation as an excarceral figure, creating a potential path for Buckstone's theatrical adaptation to follow.

Buckstone's Remixing of Ainsworth's Ballads

When J.B. Buckstone's 1839 play *Jack Sheppard* premiered, ballads were again a major selling point for *The Morning Post,* particularly when it came to the character of Jack himself:

> The snatches of song, soliloquizing bits of flash balladry, which lend a dash to the mischief of Jack from the time of his first beam-carving to his last escape, were thrown in with so much expression, relish, and emphasis as to be quite irresistible in their point and cleverness. ("Adelphi Theatre")

The ballads, set to music by George H. Buonaparte Rodwell (Hollingsworth 1839), were not seen as something that simply set the scene but as a creator of continuity throughout the play, including the key moments of prison escape. One means of creating continuity was through encores; *The Morning Post*'s review lists multiple songs as "parting ballads," making music the last thing audience members heard before leaving. However, this section of Chapter I will focus on a different method of connection, endemic to ballad culture: the repetition, sampling, and refracting of balladry throughout the play. In this section, I will argue that the core of balladic culture—repurposing—also facilitated temporal-crossing connections between the eighteenth-century characters and nineteenth-century viewers. Although Ainsworth's novel limited the full potential of ballads to make excarceration resonate in the nineteenth century, Buckstone represents a reader who, in his reinterpretation of the novel, places greater emphasis on the connectivity of balladry and excarceration.[26]

[26] Buckstone's play very closely follows Ainsworth's novel with entire scenes of dialogue appearing exactly the same. While Jack Sheppard plays existed before Ainsworth's novel, playwrights were highly impacted by this text. Jonathan Hill shows how Haines, for instance, made tableaux vivants from Cruikshank's drawings, and Derek Forbes notes that W. T. Moncrieff had an 1825 play about Jack Sheppard that he updated in accordance with Ainsworth's novel.

While ballads can be long, their verses tend to be short and self-contained, allowing for ease of transport into new contexts, whether excerpted in periodicals or printed on cheap broadsides.[27] This possibility of transference increases when we consider the musical component of ballads. Sir Theodor Martin reflects upon the ubiquity of the play's most popular song, "Nix My Dolly Pals, Fake Away," with the unique exasperation that overplayed music produces:

> *Nix my dolly…*travelled everywhere, and made the patter of thieves and burglars 'familiar in our mouths as household words.' It deafened us in the streets, where it was as popular with the organ-grinders and German bands as Sullivan's brightest melodies ever were in a later day. It clanged at midday from the steeple of St. Giles, the Edinburgh Cathedral (A fact. That such a subject for cathedral chimes, and in Scotland, too, could ever have been chosen will scarcely be believed. But my astonished ears often heard it.); it was whistled by every dirty guttersnipe, and chanted in drawing-rooms by fair lips, little knowing the meaning of the words they sang. (quoted in Ellis 366)

In Martin's description, the song is in excess, in sentence after sentence, location after location. He reaffirms the popularity of the play's balladry, but he also demonstrates the reach of the music, beyond what the printed text could accomplish. At times the tune travelled without its lyrics—through church bells and whistles—but even without words, the music would recall its associations with Jack and his prison-breaking abilities. The ballads became infused into people's lives, even those youths who Martin believed could only partially grasp the meaning of what they sang.

[27] Ballads were often sung by street vendors so printed ballads "reached purchasers and non-purchasers alike both inside and outside their homes" (Elliott 237).

The popularity of "Nix My Dolly" did not derive from Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard,* as the ballad did not appear in that text. Rather, it was extracted from Ainsworth's *Rookwood* and resituated in Buckstone's play. When *The Morning Post* hoped to see the likeness of *Rookwood* ballads in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard,* they could hardly have predicted that one of that novel's originals would surface in Buckstone's *Jack*. However, repurposing of entire ballads was commonplace in ballad creation and printing. Dorice Williams Elliott, writing on convict broadsides about Australia, shows how frequently ballads were slightly altered to suit a new context: "The transportation broadsides, for instance, sometimes reuse older ballads about transportation to the American colonies with only slightly changed dates and descriptive details" (237). In her work, Elliott shows how transportation ballads about Australia actually contained very little information about Australia, which remained a "blank space" to the British working class (255), but this point about reuse is helpful for our purposes in order to establish an ongoing trend in the ballad world. Writers, publishers, and readers alike would have been accustomed to finding an old ballad in a new guise. Rather than out of place, such a relocation would have felt utterly appropriate.

Ballad recontextualization was not without political implications. Any textual relocation has the potential to produce an altered meaning, given the new context. Speaking of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* as a whole, Abigail Droge explains that "[t]he de-contextualized text was a promiscuous free radical" whose meaning changed beyond the original middle-class periodical context, as critics worried that lower class people would be corrupted by the text (43). Droge briefly mentions the potential of both Cruikshank's drawings and the novel's balladry as easy to excerpt sections of the text (46). Though Droge focuses on the way excerpted material changes meaning, the new setting into which the excerpt is placed can also be altered by the transference

process, as we can see through tracing the "free radical" of "Nix My Dolly" from *Rookwood* into Buckstone's *Jack Sheppard.*

The song originally appeared in *Rookwood* as one of many songs at a drinking gathering in a chapter entitled "The Inauguration." "Nix My Dolly" receives almost no commentary in the text, except this brief note: "Much laughter and applause rewarded Jerry's attempt to please; and though the meaning of his chant, even with the aid of the numerous notes appended to it, may not be quite obvious to our readers, we can assure them that it was perfectly intelligible to the canting crew" (26). The text disavows the importance of legibility to the readers, claiming what matters is its appropriateness to the singers in their moment and cultural milieu. The offering of footnotes to decipher the ballad, however, points to something different. Knowing flash, criminal language, was appealing to readers because, as Gary Dyer explains, it made people feel safer, as if they could be protected against the criminals who spoke it (142). It also meant that they could feel connected, and in the know, because they could "use flash just like the criminals" (142). In Buckstone's play, as Sir Martin remarked above, "the patter of thieves and burglars" suddenly became "familiar" to all the viewers. No ballad in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* contained flash language, but suddenly, in Buckstone's version, theatergoers could see Jack as speaking a unique language and part of a particular culture. This communal aspect is heightened by the context of the song in the play: it is the only ballad sung as a duet of the two main balladeers, Jack and Blueskin, and the only one to occur in a communal setting. By incorporating this *Rookwood* ballad, Buckstone created a way for audience members to feel connected to Jack, and provided a way for them to be more like Jack, wherever they went. In song, they could bring memories of his excarceral feats into their own drawing rooms and even their places of worship.

The majority of the songs in Buckstone's *Jack Sheppard* do originate in Ainsworth's *Jack*, but they are not carbon copies. Rather, they are examples of repurposing on the scale of the line rather than the ballad. As with the novel, there are more songs at the beginning of the play, and then there is a considerable gap in which songs are not as heavily featured (see Figure 4 and Table 2). While Jack sings slightly more songs that Blueskin in the play, just glancing at the song distribution might lead one to suspect that ballads in the play, as in the novel, are used as a connection primarily with the past and less with Jack's excarceral heroism. Yet a second look at these figures reveal a key difference in the repetition of songs. Both "The Newgate Stone" and "With Neither a Chisel, A Knife, Nor a File" occur on multiple occasions. The theatrical performance created a sense of continuity within the play—and a sense of pervasiveness for the audience—by the way ballads were excerpted and shifted in relation to the novel.

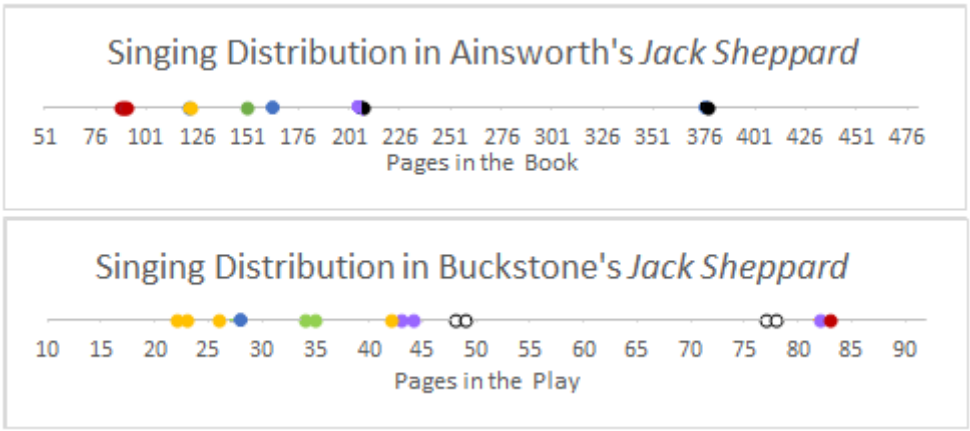

Figure I.4. Comparison of song distribution between Jack Sheppard novel and play. Songs appearing in both contexts have their own color, while songs in Ainsworth but not in Buckstone's *Sheppard* are black, and those in Buckstone but not in Ainsworth's *Sheppard* are white. More information about the songs and their singers can be found in Table I.2. As the text of Buckstone's play does not note the "parting ballads" mentioned in the reviews, they are not accounted for in this chart

.

Table I.2. Comparison of singing distribution in Ainsworth and Buckstone versions of Jack Sheppard. The singer of each song is emphasized by cell shading: blue for Blueskin, yellow for Jack, and green for both.

Song Title	Singer in Book	Page Numbers in Book	Singer in Play	Page Numbers in Play
"Saint Giles's Bowl"	Blueskin	88-91	Jack Sheppard	83
"The Newgate Stone"	Jack Sheppard	122-123	Jack Sheppard	22-23, 26, 42
"Drinking Song"	Blueskin	150	Blueskin	34-35
"The Carpenter's Daughter"	Jack Sheppard	163	Jack Sheppard	28
"With Neither a Chisel, A Knife, Nor a File"	Jack Sheppard	207	Jack Sheppard	43, 44, 82
"Saint Giles's Roundhouse"	Blueskin	208	---	---
"Owen Wood"	Blueskin	377-378	---	---
"Nix my dolly pals, fake away"	---	---	Blueskin and Jack Sheppard	48-49
"Farewell, my Scamps & Tories"	---	---	Blueskin	77-78

Take for instance, "The Newgate Stone," the second ballad in Ainsworth's novel. Although it had a prominent position in the text, it only occurred once, to establish Jack's character. In Buckstone's play, "The Newgate Stone" becomes the first ballad and a repeated tune. With the former adjustment, the viewer's introduction to balladry does not occur through "Saint Giles's Bowl" or Blueskin, a figure for generational and cultural criminality. When "The Newgate Stone" is sung in the play, Blueskin has not been represented as the figurehead and human repository of ballads. In later versions of the play, viewers would not have been introduced to Blueskin at all, because the start of Act II, which opens with "The Newgate Stone" is the revised beginning of the play, as noted by the editors in the 1853 print edition of the script (22). For early audiences, "The Newgate Stone" served as the introduction to balladry and to Jack, but for those attending later productions, this ballad became the framing element for the entire performance. The lyrics are the same in both the novel and the play, even including the

same intervening dialogue and Jack's action of carving his name into a wooden frame. But in its new context, viewers would be primed to think of Jack as a singer and to connect balladry with the present moment of his singing without the primer of Blueskin's "The Saint Giles Bowl" to create a longer sense of lineage and history. The physical presence of Jack carving creates an immediacy and reality in the contemporary moment, even as the figures of the ballad, like Claude Du Val, link him to the past.

In addition to occurring first in the sequence of ballads, "The Newgate Stone" has multiple short refrains in the play that do not occur in the novel. As Jack leaves his work, he sings the same tune on his way out: "Of all that number there escaped not one / Who carved his name on the Newgate-stone! / With chisel so fine, tra la!" (26). While this line foreshadows Jack's escapes in the book, excerpting this particular line for repetition here creates an even stronger emphasis on Jack's ties to the ballad. Jack continues to sing the same song as he goes to Saint Giles's Roundhouse, although this time a section about du Val (42). With each recapitulation, the ballad seems further stuck in Jack's head, his own personal theme song, if not a clear indication of his future.

The play continues its emphasis of Jack as a balladeer by giving him songs for each of his escapes, not only the failed Saint Giles's Roundhouse attempt in the novel.[28] Even this escape functions differently than in the book. In escaping from the Roundhouse in Buckstone's version, Jack sings "Oh! give me a chisel, a knife or a file, / And the dubsmen shall find that I'll do it in style! / Tol-de-rol!" just as he sang in the book (43). Yet in this scene he does not join in singing with Blueskin, as Blueskin and Wild never appear. The playwright leaves the scene as a successful escape attempt, accentuated by song, rather than an escaped failure marked by

[28] These are the only two escapes that playgoers encountered, as the other escapes in the book (from Willesden and Newgate a previous time) both occur offstage in the production.

Blueskin's ballad eclipsing Jack's own. This absence of Blueskin singing means Jack and his balladry are at the heart of the play, and it associates balladry with prison escape.

Balladry plays an even more vital role in Jack's Newgate imprisonment, where he seems to compose a song as he devises his means of escape. The stage direction demonstrates the simultaneity of music and spectacle:

> (Leaping up) Now for an achievement, compared with which all I have *yet* done shall be as nothing.
>
> [Music. —Jack holds the chain of his handcuffs fast by one hand, and draws his fingers of the other through the manacle; when one hand is so released he in the same manner sets the other at liberty. While he is doing this, he sings
>
> Tho' with neither a chisel, a knife nor a file,
>
> Yet the dubsman shall see that I'll do it in style!
>
> Fal lal, &c.

Here, the variation from the text is clear. Jack is rewriting the ballad tune from the Saint Giles's Roundhouse escape to fit his current situation. Rather than asking for a chisel, knife or file, he is happy to do so without any, so as to do something especially remarkable. He projects a future where the dubsman finds him escaped. Jack continues to sing, with language not present in the novel:

> Now my forks are so fairly released from quod,
>
> If I don't queer my darbies it is very odd!
>
> Fal lal, &c.
>
> [He takes off his shoes
>
> I'll kick off my shoes before my time,

For the barefoot monkey best can climb.

Fal lal, &c.

[He dances his fetters without his shoes. He suddenly stops, as if in pain, holds up his foot and exclaims

A nail!

[He surveys the floor, and extracts a large nail from a crevice in it—looks at it. Laughs, and sings

Oh! Fortune near played me so pleasant a trick

As to drop me a nail, my lock to pick!

Fal lal, &c.

Jack's balladry directly follows on the heels of his actions. He takes off his shoes and then sings about its use in his escape. He finds a nail, then incorporates it, both into his lyrics and his escape strategy. He seemingly composes the words to match each step of his excarceral act. His balladry draws upon established tunes and refrains of words he has learned, past balladry, but his lyrics are not located in a far-off time. Instead, he produces new lyrics in the present moment, just as he breaks from the prison—creation linked with dismantlement. The fused ballad and prison-break are witnessed on the stage, as excarceration is enacted anew night after night.

After finishing this song, Jack tops off his prison break by singing a ballad verse from "St Giles's Bowl." He chooses a verse that emphasizes his contemporary moment, unlike the full ballad in the novel which describes a linked history. After removing his chains, Jack sings the last verse of the ballad:

Should it e'r be my lot to ride backwards—some day

At the Crown, in St. Giles's, I'll most certainly stay;

I'll summon the landlord, I'll call for the bowl,

And drink a deep draught to the health for my soul.

Whatever may hap,

I'll taste of the tap,

To keep up my spirits when brought to the crap;

For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles

So well as a draught from the bowl of St. Giles.

By including only this verse, Buckstone does not give viewers access to the long history of the bowl or Jack's community. Perhaps a playgoer who had read the book *might* remember the original and feel as if Jack is enacting his destiny by uniting himself to the people who came before him. But for those less familiar with the book, confronting the ballad for the first time in the Adelphi Theatre, they would not know about Jack's father's connection to the bowl. Jack never goes by Saint Giles at the end of the play, so they will not see him, like his father, refuse to drink as well. Instead of a song of potential foreboding, he can sing with irony about execution, in this moment that he escapes the hangman, triumphant and tempting fate to trap him again. He only sings the first-person section of "Saint Giles's Bowl" as if he too has created this melody out of thin air. Jack is powerful in himself, regardless of his background or connections, and the song, only in the first person, is imminently more transferrable for viewers to sing as themselves. Without changing any words of Ainsworth's ballad, Buckstone alters the natures of Jack's escape, making the ballads both instruments of power, part and parcel of excarceration, and making excarceration as accessible to viewers as singing a song.

The excarceral power of the play's balladry was enhanced by casting choices. Unlike the novel, the play associates balladry with Jack's excarceral feats, but—like the novel—it associates

balladry with Jack's youth. Buckstone's play particularly emphasizes Jack's youth both in noting his age as "one-and-twenty" in the cast-list and casting a woman, Mary Anne Keeley, to play him for the entire course of the play, rather than have a woman play the young Jack and a man play Jack after time has passed (Forbes 103).[29] Jack's continual singing and lack of realizing consequences emphasizes a child-like nature, increasing audience sympathy with him and decreasing the legitimacy of his incarceration or eventual hanging. When Keeley as a young Jack sings "Saint Giles's Bowl," it mocks the hangman, but it also casts Jack as not fully grasping the seriousness of his situation, a child who does not understand what death is. Where Jack seems to have a change of heart and become more refined once he knows his family lineage in Ainsworth's novel (373), Buckstone's Jack does not seem to ever really appreciate the consequences of his actions or learn a lesson. While he is caught at the end, the play itself ends before he is hung, leaving it up to speculation whether he can miraculously free himself again. Jack's excarceral potential grows with his fate undecided and his youth pointing to unknown future developments.

Keeley's casting not only increases sympathy for the character by making him youthful, but her acting practice helped bridge the play to the contemporary moment in terms of realism. Keeley's efforts to make her role as realistic as possible are documented in Walter Goodman's 1895 *The Keeleys on the Stage and at Home.* Keeley went to great lengths to maximize the intensity of the jailbreak scene:

> …the scrupulously particular actress used from first to last a pair of genuine manacles, the exact facsimile of those worn by the real Jack Sheppard, and they were not placed in orthodox fashion upon her slender wrists, but properly locked into the bargain. All the

[29] Keeley, in fact was, often known for playing children (Meer 201).

same, Mrs. Keeley contrived every night to squeeze her flexible fingers and palm clear of them. (25)

This process was apparently exhausting, and comedian Tom Thorne remembers having to catch Keeley off-stage after she finished an on-stage escape: "Mrs. Keeley staggered off completely exhausted after the escape from Newgate, or some such scene. In coming off there was usually a man in readiness to catch the actress as she threw herself exhausted into his arms. But on this occasion, he was not at his post, so I came forward and she fell into my arms instead" (Goodman 211). While Jack in the novel is seen as an actor, an outstanding mimic, these moments of disguise were eliminated from the play. Jack, in Buckstone's version, is no longer peripheral to the world of balladry or prison escape, trying on a part that he ultimately rejects, but at the very heart of the culture. Instead, a sense of authenticity and reality are foregrounded. Yet even as the historical reality was attempted to be preserved, a connection with the present-day was part of this escape process: viewers were not entranced just by the historical acts of Jack but by the miraculous feats of Keeley herself. Keeley's performance, too, was powered not just by the past, but by her own partial sympathy with contemporary prisoners. During a visit to Newgate to prepare for the role, she found herself questioning why the jail's governor "so severely reprimanded on unfortunate man for sitting upon his cap" (quoted in Goodman 61). Though only a minor moment of critique, such fissures in public confidence in the prison system are the very sparks of excarceral belief and action.

The amount of realism invested into the play's excarceral scene stands in stark contrast to the play's depiction of incarceration. Buckstone's version divests itself from most of the shocking details of imprisonment in the novel.[30] The only moments characters spend time in the

[30] Every place Jack is imprisoned is lengthily described in the book, but particularly Old Newgate, which has a full chapter dedicated to its description and multiple additional descriptions when Jack is suffering in the space. On his

prison are when Jack is having his portrait taken—a celebratory moment of balladry and excarceration—and when he is breaking out. The play does not dwell on mistreatment in the prisons, but it also does not show Jack committing crimes. Viewers miss the most damning scene of Ainsworth's story: when Jack is robbing the Woods and Blueskin kills Mrs. Wood. While Mr. Wood mentions Jack has stolen from him in the play (60), audiences never see Jack commit any crimes, except, perhaps, when he hits a hawker who is selling Jack's supposed "last dying speech and confession" with a bar, tampering with Jack's autonomy over balladic production (89). In the play, prisons are robbed of all their power over Jack and there is even less evidence that Jack deserves any punishment he receives. The audience can stand with Jack and the ballad-singing, lower-class culture with which he continues to identify. This culture, as we will see in the next section, was very much alive for the audiences who saw the play. As Jack identified with their world of ballads, audiences claimed him as their own.

Jack in Public Life

The flexibility of the ballad structure and the repurposing of ballad cultures allowed Jack Sheppard to be taken up by people beyond their reading and viewing experiences. Jack Sheppard's character was embraced by many young men, proudly and purposefully, albeit at times condemned by the periodical press. Often a young boy would be written off in an article as another or a second Jack Sheppard, and his misdeeds were blamed on the literature he read and plays he viewed.[31] The influence of Jack Sheppard was even central to a murder case involving

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second stay in Newgate, Jack cannot be hung until it is confirmed he is the same person as the one previously convicted, but no one informs him of this fact so he "languished in his horrible dungeon" for weeks (394). Wild allows him to suffer in terrible conditions until his health is on the point of collapse, and after a brief convalescence forces him back on the hard regime (395).

[31] For instance, Droge mentions a November 1839 police report that calls a 14-year-old boy "Another Jack Sheppard" and mentions that "he was apprehended in the City Theatre (where *Jack Sheppard* is played every night…)" (47-48). Droge tracks this pattern, believing that as the Sheppard story transferred from a middle class

F. B. Courvoisier, whose own story would play out in ballad form. While newspaper coverage of this case associated the excarceral celebration of Jack Sheppard as condoning crime, Jack Sheppard balladry continued to emphasize Jack's valor. The world of popular broadsides, which included reprinted and new Sheppard ballads, allowed Jack's excarceral feats to resonate with excarceration in a wider sense. Through this form, Jack Sheppard valorized the smaller excarceral feats of the working class, from non-prison institutions.

Broadsides, whether or not they contained ballads, were popular purchases for a wide range of customers. David Vincent demonstrates how gallows broadsides spoke to various levels of literacy:

> The fluent reader could enjoy a compact and plainly written 250-word account of the crime…those less certain of their abilities could commit to memory or have recited to them five four-line verses on the subject, and the wholly illiterate could still gain some impression of the story from the crude woodcut which adorned the page. (quoted in Elliott 249)

Having the same material repeated in multiple ways increased the accessibility of the broadsides. The woodcuts on the page were not only helpful for people with lower literacy but also as a means of decorating one's home: "many working-class people may have bought the ballads and broadsides primarily for the illustrations, which were the only kind of art they could afford to decorate the walls of their homes" (Elliott 246). Indeed, this seems to be the case in Ainsworth's novel where handbills decorate Mrs. Sheppard's home in the first scene, including Tom Sheppard's supposed last speech and confession hung over the chimney (53).Additionally, the

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periodical to lower class theater viewers, journalists fretted that the material would lead to boys wanting to become thieves. This reified a belief that thieves were thieves by choice—because they had seen and valued inflammatory theatrical material—in effect "hiding the faults of society behind the faults of the individual" (48).

walls of the boys' workroom and playroom at the Woods contain broadsides (123, 160-1). Broadsides were not necessarily purchased specifically for the ballad they contained, but they had a good chance of being preserved in a home if accompanied by imagery.

If the ballads were not always read, they were still often heard on the streets. Dorice Williams Elliott explains that the music was everywhere: "'chaunters' and other street vendors to sing or recite them in the public thoroughfares" so that these songs "reached purchasers and non-purchasers alike both inside and outside their homes" (237). The tunes themselves, according to Elliott often

> …combine a catchy and memorable melody with an undertone of melancholy. The singer or musician can emphasize either the bounciness or the sadness, depending on the speed and musical dynamics or the particular quality of the voice or instruments. As they are written, however, many of the tunes do have a sing-song quality that reinforces the obligatory rhymes – often feminine or double rhymes – of the lyrics and makes them easy to commit to memory, thus subtly inculcating the "moral" of the ballads. (243)

The ballad's tone could be shifted based on the tune and of paramount importance was the easiness to remember them. These were songs that wanted to be reproduced, sung by new voices and in new contexts, perhaps for new purposes.

Many broadsides specifically dealt with material related to criminality, incarceration, and excarceration. In Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, he talks to a ballad singer who writes Newgate ballads for Seven Dials press: "I write most of the Newgate ballads now for the printers in the Dials, and indeed, anything that turns up. I get a shilling for a 'copy of verses written by the wretched culprit the night previous to his execution'" (Vol III., 196).[32] Writers

[32] Throughout this dissertation, I generally take Mayhew's interviewer's words at face value despite his suspect interviewing methodology. E. B. Smith traced one of the convicts which Mayhew interviewed and demonstrated that

could make money by ventriloquizing condemned men and women. Roy Palmer also singles out the influence of Thomas Willey, a Chartist printer, in the world of broadsides: "Twenty of Willey's titles, just under 10 per cent, involve social comment of this kind or political material of some sort" (Palmer 15). Some of these ballads, such as "The County Livery," about treadmills, dealt with prison reform topics. Willey was not the only printer to focus on treadmills specifically. In his summary of ballads on crime, Palmer includes ballads such as "A New Song on the Times" in 1819 responding to the new use of treadmills and "Nae Luck About the House" which was written in response to the new mill at the Manchester gaol in 1824 (154). Some representations of prisoners were less progressive, as Elliott suggests that few of the transportation ballads about Australia were political; rather, she notes that they generally were meant to "inculcate respectable values and prevent crime by warning working-class consumers about the dire punishment of exile to Australia" (238). Regardless of the political slant, ballads were a standard site for figuring the criminal justice system.

Ballads were not only produced in response to social concerns, but often as a way of supporting social and political movements. Palmer explains that "[g]roups of unemployed or striking workers frequently had sheets printed, and sold them to raise money," and he quotes Dickens in *Household Words* writing about ballads sung and sold for the Ten Per Cent strike (18). While striking workers were not primarily concerned with criminal justice matters, their balladry helps us understand a ballad context in which these songs are not only written to address topics of social change but accompany other forms of embodied action. As a person read a ballad

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Mayhew asked leading questions and did not look up material that would be easy to corroborate. Smith finds that the interviewee greatly exaggerated. A. L. Beier, more recently, confirms that Mayhew may have been orchestrating this interview, but argues for a certain power to be given to the interviewee who chose to narrate his story in its exaggerated fashion with excess cant and to claim a certain identity related with a criminal class. For Beier, this shows that the punishment received through the criminal justice system clearly did not work as the man ends up wanting to heighten his association with criminality rather than the opposite.

relating to a criminal justice topic, they would potentially think of it as a living text, connected with action not dissociated from the potential for change.

One way in which crime-oriented ballads created space for potential changes in social attitudes is through provocative gallows poetry. Ellen O'Brien demonstrates the way in which gallows poetry opened a space for political resistance. People accused of crimes could not testify in their trials, but they were written about in first-person narrative ballads (O'Brien 321). Although the accused were not writing their own ballads, the "ballad writers could interrogate specific crimes, judicial proceedings, and punishments" (322). Not only did these ballads offer another perspective to the law's one-sided story—a new side, more sympathetic to the accused—but they also suggested criminal identity was not so fixed, but potentially "performative and transferable" (322). Multiple writers could assume the position of the accused and imagine the story from their side.

O'Brien discusses F. B. Courvoisier as one important subject of gallows balladry, pointing to the way his execution inspired capital punishment abolitionists. Viewing his execution impacted influential writers, and ballads written in his name, and from his supposed point of view, stressed his economic position. She explains,

> An estimated forty thousand people, including Thackeray and Dickens, attended the execution, and the hanging body of Courvoisier inspired both writers' abolitionist impulses. The popularity of Courvoisier's case led publishers to print many versions of his 'affecting verses.' Though divergent in detail and emphasis, they consistently highlighted the same motive for the killing: Courvoisier's employment was to be terminated when he was caught stealing from Lord Russell. (322)

Courvoisier is also famous enough that the balladeer that Mayhew interviewed for *London Labour and the London Poor* listed Courvoisier among many of the famous hanged men whose voice he impersonated in a ballad (Vol. III, 196).[33] What O'Brien, Mayhew and many of these verses do not mention is the purported connection between the Courvoisier case and the Jack Sheppard phenomenon. Comparing three Courvoisier ballads from different broadsides, only one mentions Sheppard.[34] But this case is incredibly important in the history of Ainsworth's text as it was a turning point for the reception of Ainsworth. According to Hollingsworth, Courvoisier said that the book itself had been his inspiration for killing his master.[35] The ballad "The Lament of Francois Courvoisier" depicts this direct blame:

> To the Surrey for to see Jack Sheppard,
>
> To beguile the time I went one night;
>
> But I little thought, that fatal evening,
>
> That it would all my fair prospects blight.
>
> Alas! that night has proved my ruin;
>
> In innocent blood I have my hands imbrued.
>
> I was unworthy of such a master,

[33] The balladeer claims he wrote the "sorrowful lamentation…[and] called it, 'A Voice from the Gaol'" (196). I have been unable to locate this ballad.

[34] Sheppard is not mentioned in the broadsides "Life Trial Confession and Execution of F. B. Courvoisier, for the Murder of Lord William Russell" or "A Copy of Verses on F. B. Courvoisier, Now lying under Sentence of Death for the Murder of his Master, Lord W. Russell."

[35] Hollingsworth includes an excerpt from *The Examiner* on June 28, 1840, almost two months after the murder, but a week after Courvoisier was sentenced to death: "In Courvoisier's second confession, which we are more disposed to believe than the first, he ascribes his crimes to the perusal of that detestable book, 'Jack Sheppard'; and certainly it is a publication calculated to familiarize the mind with cruelties and to serve as the cut-throat's manual, or the midnight assassin's *vade-mecum*, in which character we now expect to see it advertised" (145-6). Ainsworth replied to these assertions to contradict them on July 7 but a sheriff named William Evans wrote on July 9 that "I think it my duty to state distinctly that Courvoisier did assert to me that the idea of murdering his master was first suggested to him by a perusal of the book called 'Jack Sheppard,' and that the said book was lent him by a valet of the Duke of Bedford" (146-7).

Who to me was always kind and good.

Here, the balladeer blames the production at the Surrey—neither Ainsworth, nor Buckstone—but Ainsworth still faced public scrutiny. Is this association fair or should we, like multiple balladeers, place emphasis elsewhere?

Different literary scholars have tried to account for Courvoisier's actions in murdering his seventy-two-year-old employer, Lord William Russell, on May 5, 1840. These reasons range in how much blame they place on the book and on Courvoisier. Matthew Buckley's position suggests that the book is central in understanding Courvoisier's actions. As he explains it, B. F. Courvoisier was propelled to murder by "a kind of impulsive, unreflective mimicry, as if [the book's] solicitations were functioning not at the political level at all, but at the levels of sensation and apprehension" ("Sensations" 432). Buckley suggests that the text created a type of modernity in which celebrity takes the centerstage in melodrama instead of the family, such that the audience functions as an "alienated spectator, isolated in practice and perspective, but bonded imaginatively to all fellow enthusiasts" (457). It is through this "imagined community," that Courvoisier feels like he can become another Jack Sheppard.

Other critics locate the problem more in the process of reading than something unique about the book. For Simon Joyce, this incident is a "momentary confusion," and he notes that Courvoisier later reversed his claim about being inspired by Sheppard, although too late for the book's reputation (323). Joyce reiterates that "Courvoisier's actions…may well be apocryphal and certainly don't seem to have been directly authorized by any of the texts of *Jack Sheppard*" (328) The problem, for Joyce, is not in the text but the interpretation. Courvoisier can be read alongside many figures across time whose "fault…is presumably one of over-identification, a failure to observe the requirements of disinterestedness, distance and detachment valorized by

classical aesthetics" (330). Even more skeptical of the book's role in this murder, Cassandra Falke suggests *Jack Sheppard* was less the instigator than a convenient scapegoat. She writes that Courvoisier "cut the throat of his employer, Lord William Russell, in order to cover up his earlier theft of some silver" (187). The connection to *Jack Sheppard* in her account feels akin to how Droge writes about how apprehended youths were connected to the phenomenon by the press.

The impact of any Sheppard material on Courvoisier's actions might have been tenuous, but the connection, once established, had a clear impact on the Sheppard phenomenon. Not only was Ainsworth called out in the press, but new plays were halted. J. R. Stephens talks in detail about how the plays were blocked, suggesting that after 1840, there was "some kind of interdiction, probably unofficial" and "the first formal record of any such ban does not occur until 1848" ("*Jack Sheppard*" 5). The Buckstone version had special permission to continue its run, having the precedent of being performed before, but the examiner of plays for decades afterwards was overly sensitive to the name of Jack Sheppard, even more so than other Newgate heroes (6-7). Similar narratives were allowed on the stage "so long as the hero was not called Jack Sheppard" (7). The notoriety of the name mattered to censors more than the acts of the person himself. According to Stearns, not only were plays limited, but prints, songs and ballads were blocked as well (456). The name, given such power in the book and play by its inscription on a beam, continued to wield a strong power, and Jack Sheppard would continue to be blamed for the illegal actions of boys for decades to come. Mayhew, for instance, in *London Labour and the London Poor*, blames Jack Sheppard as an ill-chosen ideal for young boys, claiming, "Of all books, perhaps none has ever had so baneful an effect upon the young mind, taste, and principles as this" (532). He continues that no amount of education can overcome these stories, and bad

books are one of the several factors that he sees as leading to vagabondism. Similarly, a chaplain at Pentonville Prison cared so deeply about the evils of Jack Sheppard and its ilk that he attached a special appendix to his report about it for an 1852 prison inspection. In it, he claims, "The young people of both sexes in the families of the mechanic and the shopkeeper are now habituated to a course of reading in which felony, murder, and violation, forgery, adultery, and all other crimes are treated of as the common occurrences of life" (United Kingdom, Parliament, "Reports" 30). Yet the boys' utter joy in storytelling is evident in the chaplain's report: "Although naturally restless in their habits, they will sit for six or eight hours together, relating and hearing tales of criminal heroes. A boy expert at telling these stories will exact and obtain half the food from the others to gratify this passion" (31). The story remained popular despite the indictments against it.

Given the impact of this case on the Jack Sheppard phenomenon, it seems surprising that not all of the Courvoisier ballads capitalized on the middle-class panic present in periodicals. Perhaps these ballad writers did not find Courvoisier's connection believable or did not want to connect an excarceral hero with a murderer, and so they wrote a song for Courvoisier in a different light. We can consider these gallows ballads as something akin to the "songs of the contraband" that Michael Cohen discusses in *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America*: "detachable and reusable commodities" that "no one could rightfully own" (106). Just as Cohen links the songs of runaway slaves with the freedom of movement of their songs, so too can we think about how the continuation and movement of criminal-centric ballads celebrates the spirit of excarceration. While the ballads were unlikely to help the lives of criminals tangibly, as compared to say ballads written to support strikes, they delegitimized the state's and middle-class culture's official version of events. Middle-class presses might figure Courvoisier as a dark

copy of Jack Sheppard's excarceral heroics, but despite this association, there continued to be a public desire for Jack Sheppard works. The press figures Courvoisier as a horror story of abolitionist or excarceral mentality, but the public continues to desire a heroic version of possibility and potentiality in prison escape.

Some balladeers, focusing on Sheppard material, particularly emphasized righteous excarceration. Stearns demonstrates that some balladeers wrote about Jack Sheppard in a way to emphasize the injustice he faced. She highlights one such ballad entitled "The Life of Jack Sheppard," which demonstrates the unique adaptation of the Sheppard story in materials beyond Ainsworth and Buckstone. One important shift is that Sheppard decides to stop breaking out of prison because he was "tired of escaping" (450). This change alters the legitimacy of the law as Sheppard decides when he dies and not the authorities: "The ballad then completely strips the law of its own agency by enabling Sheppard to be the arbiter of his own destruction" (451). Additionally, as mentioned above, Stearns shows that the ballad, in its final lines, calls out Ainsworth for inserting the fictional murder of Mrs. Wood into his book. For Stearns, "The final lines in the ballad imply that without the murder [of Mrs. Wood], Ainsworth's story offers no moral except, perhaps, that Sheppard was hanged by an unjust law in 1724 that would have spared his life in 1839" (451). This ballad delegitimizes the law and brings the Sheppard story into a contemporary frame rather than leaving it in the eighteenth century.

Yet even when Ainsworth's ballads were not rewritten, his popular songs signified differently in their new broadside context. In the Broadview introduction to *Jack Sheppard*, Jacobs and Mourão stress the "emblematiziation" of the text: the story circulates not as a text itself, but as a "reservoir of emblematic scenes, characters, figures, phrases, or songs that metonymically condensed the pleasures and meanings they found in, and took from, their

variously situated experiences of the text" (34). They suggest that the recontextualization of songs lead to their depoliticization (36). However, Droge convincingly shows how transference from one location to another can have important political consequences. She briefly mentions the ballads of the texts: "The songs of *Jack Sheppard,* once just another set of verses in an already verse-heavy periodical, could go it alone or be excerpted, as could Cruikshank's illustrations" (46). For Droge, the transference of Jack Sheppard from a middle-class reading environment to working class activity has political implications as "[t]he de-contextualized text was a promiscuous free radical" beyond the control of middle class propriety (43). *Jack Sheppard*, and its ballads, in a new context could lead to "a *cognitive* transfer of skills (like pickpocketing)" which in turn led middle class journalists to "facilitat[e] *agential* transfer, as issues of social responsibility…were individuated onto the shoulders of the poor" who were labelled as criminals from their associations with reading Sheppard (46). Droge concludes that although the novel itself might have a message about society's responsibilities, *Jack Sheppard* was "used in the world as a method for accomplishing exactly the opposite: hiding the faults of society behind the faults of the individual" (48).The presence of celebratory excarceral ballads in the hands of working class people was a fearful reality for the middle class presses, who saw these texts as dangerously radical.

Yet many of the broadsides containing Ainsworth's songs did an entirely different type of political work. They decriminalized rather than criminalized the poor. In this new context, the ballads figured Jack Sheppard as a common, relatable person, whose life was not so unlike any other working citizen. His excarceral abilities were spectacular, but in a way that encouraged pushing back against authority beyond just the setting of the prison. Take for instance the broadside *Jack Sheppard's Garland* contains multiple ballads from the play, beginning with

"Nix my Dolly, Pals, Fake Away," and then "Newgate Stone," "The Carpenter's Daughter," and "Farewell, my Scamps & Tories." The songs appear under two images of a young man and older man, one raises a drink and the other a gun, one presumably Jack Sheppard and the other perhaps Jonathan Wild or Blueskin (see Figure I.5). Jack here is youthful and jolly, drinking, not violent. He looks to have a chisel in his right hand, and there is a sword attached to his person, but he is toasting, not threatening. Jack appears to be someone undeserving of persecution or imprisonment by a violent, older policing force.

Figure I.5. The image at the top of *Jack Sheppard's Garland.* From the Madden Ballad Collection. Jack Sheppard is presumably the figure on the left as he is always depicted with short hair and he appears to have a chisel in his hand, his famed tool of choice.

While these images do some work to refigure Jack's character, other ballad collections significantly altered how people viewed Jack via their placement among other ballads. Two ballad collections entitled *Jack Sheppard's Glory* and *Jack Sheppard's Delight*, contain songs from Buckstone's play, but also include ballads not written by Ainsworth or seemingly related to Jack's tale. In *Jack Sheppard's Glory*, the ballads from the play are "Jolly Nose," "St Giles's Roundhouse," and "Newgate Stone," all Ainsworth originals. Yet it appears beside "The Life of Jack Sheppard," discussed by Stearns, which directly calls out Ainsworth and presents Jack especially sympathetically. Additionally, there are ballads about sweethearts like "Don't Tell My

Mother for She Don't Know I'm Out," a love story called "Peter Pepercorn," and a piece about ships sailing the world called "The Wonder." Above the ballads there is an image of a man in uniform courting a lady, taking off his hat and bowing to her, which, combined with the ballads, paint a different version of Jack indeed: one that foregrounds romance and adventure (see Figure I.6). Jack's story is made less extravagant, historical, or foreign, couched in terms of the familiar and ordinary stories of love. This refiguring of Jack draws upon associations with his name as a common man. In considering a song called "Jack Upon the Green," Vic Gammon notes that Jack is a particularly common and multivalenced name. In a long paragraph, Gammon lists all of the ways the name Jack signifies, including a worker ("cheap jack"), sailor ("Jack Tar"), fool ("Jack Pudding"), and hangman ("Jack Ketch") (69). Jack Sheppard, resituated in the world of broadsides, can be read as just another Jack and as applicable to readers as any of the other light-hearted ballads.

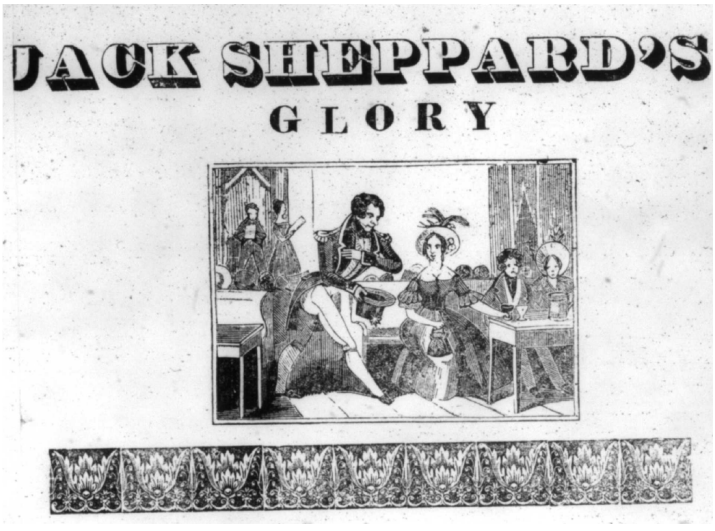

Figure I.6. The image at the top of *Jack Sheppard's Glory.* From the Madden Ballad collection. Unlike Figure I.5, this image does not appear to specifically denote Jack Sheppard, but seems to be a stock image the publisher found appropriate to associate with the songs.

Jack Sheppard's Delight, like *Jack Sheppard's Glory*, finds the Ainsworth/Buckstone ballads in new company, in some ways reducing Jack to a common figure, but in others raising him to the rank of a literary hero. The ballads found in *Delight* from Buckstone's play include "Nix my Dolly, Pals, Fake Away," "St. Giles's Bowl," "Farewell My Scamps and Tories," "The Carpenter's Daughter' and "With Neither a Chisel, a Knife, nor a File."[36] Alongside these are "O Brave Shilling," "Dear Creatures," "Moll in the Wad," and even a ballad about the famous literary figure, "Robinson Crusoe." The Robinson Crusoe ballad is particularly interesting as the singer takes the position of Crusoe's grandson speaking about his grandfather:

When I was a lad,

I had to be sad,

My grandfather I did lose, O,

I'll bet you a can,

You have heard of the man,

His name was Robinson Crusoe

…

Perhaps you've read in a book,

Of a voyage he took…

In introducing the titular character in *Robinson Crusoe* this ballad only fleetingly considers the realm of literary books. Crusoe is largely taken out of his literary context and imagined to be real, the balladeer's grandfather, on the same sheet that a historical person, Jack Sheppard, is

[36] This last song curiously combines lyrics unique to both the novel and the play to create a new amalgamation. After the four verses that occur when Jack is escaping Newgate in the play (Buckstone 82), this version prints the lines Jack sings when escaping Saint Giles's Roundhouse in the novel (Ainsworth *Jack Sheppard* 207), only substituting the specific name "Jack" for what was "the lad" in the novel. The flexibility of the ballad form allows writers to pick and choose what they want to include, regardless of the source.

fictionalized. Crossing between the real and the fictional seems part and parcel of the broadside ballads, where imagination and reality swirl together. This comparison says something about who Jack is imagined to be: a hero comparable to Crusoe, up against the odds, fighting for survival, but also someone that a balladeer might call kin. His excarcerality becomes normalized, familiar, and possible in this new setting. The broadsides embed Jack into a wider community, depicting excarceration not just on the individual level of a single hero, but on the communal level. Ballads may have a certain national pride, a sense of collective history, but they can also be a place of collective futurity for working class people.

This resurrection of Jack Sheppard in new forms occurs in ballads like "Jack Sheppard the Second or the Sweep's Escape from Newgate." This ballad tells the story of a chimney sweep put in Newgate and "condemned to die" for stealing an old man's watch. The poem opens by comparing the boy to Jack Sheppard, drawing the reader in with a familiar name. Before the boy can be executed, "over Newgate walls he climb'd, / Just like a cat or monkey" and was caught later in the country. At this point, his sentence was altered, perhaps reflecting shifting views about execution. Now he is set for transportation "for life, / To visit Botany Bay," the outcome Jack Sheppard himself had pleaded for but was not granted. The ballad suggests the boy might "get free" in Australia and continue his tricks. The ballad does not paint the sweep, and thus by comparison, Sheppard, as an evil person but as a boy having fun. The emphasis is not on the trouble he causes but his excarceration. The ballad ends by calling him Sheppard's "ghost," a spirit whose excarceral feats can be revived or a figure who can be reembodied by a contemporary person. Like a ballad refrain, he can return again and again.

Through Jack Sheppard balladry, we can see the mechanisms by which an eighteenth-century person became normalized as a nineteenth-century hero. The form of the ballad proved

especially fruitful in making history feel "live," as it emerges from the page through the vocal cords. The embodiment of these ballads on stage and their subsequent resituating among common broadside ballads made the character of Jack and his excarceral feats appear not only positive but attainable and possible. The more real that the ballads made Jack seem, however, the more threatened was the sense of his historicity. In one of Henry Mayhew's many interviews, he quoted a London workhouse boy proclaiming proudly his dislike of the Sheppard story, in preference for novels by Ainsworth he considers more historical: "I never read *Jack Sheppard*…for such books as them—that's as *Jack* – I haven't a partiality. I've read *Windsor Castle,* and *The Tower*—they're by the same man. I liked *Windsor Castle*…It's a book that's connected with history, and that's a good thing in it…I know very little about theaters. As I was never in one" (551). As the boy distances himself from Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* and subsequent theater productions, he also demonstrates how much Jack Sheppard has become a symbol of the present moment rather than someone historical. For the nineteenth-century readers, Jack Sheppard moves beyond a historical reality to a mythical figure, a fact of their present, and a potential for their future. Young boys who idolized Sheppard inherited excarceral dreams despite the backward looking nature of Ainsworth's novel. The power of a ballad lies less in an individual text than its openness to excerption and recombination, its invitation for readers to reimagine it anew.

Throughout this chapter, we've seen how the excarceral possibilities of the ballad form, particularly when dealing with excarceral material. The ballad form encourages singing aloud and singing along, facilitating membership into a larger community and connectivity across time. Additionally, its modular, repetitive structure allowed iterative recombination, pushing back against the idea of a singular authority and offering a multitude of ways for people to see

themselves within Jack Sheppard's excarceral story. In moving across media—novels, plays, cheap broadsides—the ballad retained its recognizable structure, though shifting how it functioned based on the generic possibilities of the given form. In the next chapter, we'll continue to think about the multiplicity of instantiations, but within one text rather than across many. As we'll see, the form of the novel allows us to explore multiple, parallel stories within a single form. Whereas the ballad asks readers to join in an established tradition, the novel turns reader's attentions to understand narratives of the self and how these are shaped by and within communities.

CHAPTER II

Little Dorrit's Life Stories, or Fairy Tale Dreams of Reentry

Like Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, Dickens's 1855-57 novel *Little Dorrit* frames the problems of incarceration as existing beyond the bounds of prison walls. Yet where Jack personified the potential of excarceration, the Dorrit family shows the long-lasting power of prisons on personal character. Unlike the excarceral hero of Ainsworth's novel, Dickens's patriarch William Dorrit does not actively work to dismantle or escape the debtors' prison in which he resides; instead, he tries to exploit the system for himself. He leaves prison through deus ex machina, receiving surprise funds that not only fulfill his pre-existing debts, but also establish him as a gentleman in the free world. Though not the spectacle of excarceration, William Dorrit's life story is told among the highest echelons of British society as a miraculous fairy tale. Mr. Tite Barnacle, Dorrit's creditor, relays the story to Lord Decimus as follows:

> Oh, it's a good story, as a story…as good a thing of its kind, as need be. This Mr. Dorrit (his name is Dorrit) had incurred a responsibility to us, ages before the fairy came out of the Bank and gave him his fortune, under a bond he had signed for the performance of a contract which was not at all performed. (554)

Despite being financially involved in William Dorrit's life, Tite Barnacle conveys that life with what the narrator calls an "airy" character (554). Barnacle deemphasizes the seriousness and reality of the events for Mr. Dorrit. He frames Mr. Dorrit's sudden prison release and ascension to wealth as a "story" more than facts of life. His good fortune is precipitated by magical means

rather than the hard work of Pancks and his enlisted crew of investigators. Yet Barnacle fairly assesses that the monetary discovery which catapulted the Dorrit family from the Marshalsea to fashionable life abroad is not typical for nineteenth-century debtors. Dickens could have ended his novel at this moment of release, at the close of the novel's first book. In this complete story arc, as told by Barnacle, the Dorrit family would appear to be on their way toward happily ever after. Such an ending would be as rare an outcome for a nineteenth century prisoner as a successful prison escape.

But the story does not end there. "Riches," the second half of *Little Dorrit*, shows how prison experiences continue to play an important role long after people leave prison, even when a person has such exceptional opportunities as the Dorrit family. With this second book, Dickens complicates the often tidy endings of both fairy tales and life writing. The dual part structure of *Little Dorrit* provides readers the opportunity to think beyond the seeming happy ending of the novel's first half, to imagine what happens beyond the traditional story arcs of rags to riches and prison to freedom narratives. Dickens suggests that early peripeteia define a person's character. His characters continue to live shadowed lives even after their main difficulties are removed. Rather than encourage readers to celebrate in excarceral potential, like the Jack Sheppard phenomenon, Dickens's novel shows the power of carceral circumstances in shaping life stories.

While it might sound trite to suggest that prison has a long lasting impact on its inhabitants, this novel directly intervenes into an ongoing conversation among nineteenth-century prison reformers who believed in the positive power of prisons. They believed that prisons should produce positive character transformation, and they hoped prison would be the turning point in full-fledged character development arcs. Advocates of separate system prisons, in particular, used life narratives of prisoners to demonstrate the success of their regime. Scholars

like Anna Schur and Sean Grass have documented that Dickens was highly suspicious of these constructed narratives. Reading *Little Dorrit* within this framework, we can consider how Dickens thoroughly rebukes prison regimens and structures for creating isolation, stigmatization, and institutionalization. Together, these forces negatively affect prisoner personalities and create traumatic legacies that followed prisoners beyond the prison walls. *Little Dorrit* shows that there can be no fairy tale end to a prison story when the prison does not cease to intrude upon the lives of the heroes and heroines, even when granted the most desirable and fortuitous of situations.

This abolitionist reading stretches beyond Dickens's own politics. Dickens had a more reformist orientation to prison systems, working within existing modes to remedy the problems he depicted in many of his novels. Philip Collins has thoroughly documented Dickens's literary and journalistic work on prison systems, and his long-standing friendships with prison administrators. Despite this, some scholars, like Adam Hansen, have read Dickens in terms of excarceration, drawing upon the same theoretical framework developed by Linebaugh, which I deployed in Chapter I. Hansen reads Dickens's novel *Barnaby Rudge* alongside nonfiction articles on prison systems and *American Notes.* He shows that Dickens pushed back against both older and newer forms of prison system, ultimately pointing to an unfulfilled desire for societal improvement based on human connections, in contrast to the carceral logics of separation, isolation, and individualization. Like Hansen, I will draw upon Dickens's larger oeuvre to make sense of the carceral forces at work in one of his novels, and I will point to Dickens's frustrations with eighteenth- and nineteenth century prisons. Dickens does not articulate his disapproval of both prison forms as anti-prison more broadly, but this dual disapproval allows twenty-first century readers to question whether any prison form would produce more good than harm.

In addressing questions of prison form, this chapter will also grapple with the overarching category of "life story." If we consider life stories as a continuum between untethered fantasy and autobiography, the realist novel falls somewhere in between. Dickens actively borrows from both extremes in *Little Dorrit*, including in his text multiple fairy tales spun by his eponymous heroine and an autobiography by Miss Wade. Dickens purposefully muddles the relative truth and utility values of these forms. The prison environment is miasmic upon the bodies of its prisoners, but on their identities as well. The stories that Dickens's characters tell about themselves are the very matter which make up who they are and how they operate in the world. At stake in prison debates is not simply the possibility of happy endings, but the means of building their character to have fruitful middles.

This chapter will first consider the conditions of prison that affect character change before tracing how these changes play out after characters have left the prison. I will compare the conditions that Dickens represents in the Marshalsea with the realities of nineteenth-century prisons. The particular qualities of debtors' prisons that Dickens highlights, open structure and lack of work, were key topics in contemporary prison debates. I will also look at the leading ideas for prison reform at the time, particularly using separation and self-reflection as means of positive character transformation. While these new prison forms are not depicted in *Little Dorrit*, the novel still pushes back against them by showing the mentally damaging effects of isolation within a prison with minimal isolationist practices and by framing self-reflection as susceptible to egotism and distortion. For Dickens, prisoner-told and reformer-circulated tales of redemption are no better, and perhaps worse, than fairy tales. Although Dickens values and relies upon imagined stories, this novel shows the danger of treating reverie as reality. While fairy tales have their benefit in entertaining children and teaching basic moral lessons, the belief in a fairy tale

mold and ending can distort experiences of reality and alter pathways for advocacy. Finally, the chapter will conclude by looking at Dickens's stories of reentry, contrasting the way divergent institutionalization plays out in reentry narratives.

Open, Yet Stagnant: Conditions in Dickens's Marshalsea

When Arthur Clennam first sees the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison, he does not know what the building is. Having followed Little Dorrit to this location, he waits outside before stopping an old man and enquiring about the edifice. The following conversation ensues:

> "Aye! This place?" returned the old man, staying his pinch of snuff on its road, and pointing at the place without looking at it. "This is the Marshalsea, sir."
>
> "The debtors' prison?"
>
> "Sir," said the old man, with the air of deeming it not quite necessary to insist upon that designation, "the debtors' prison." (89)

In this short exchange, Dickens shows how the Marshalsea registers differently for men of different classes. The poor, old man, who is revealed to be Frederick Dorrit, Little Dorrit's uncle, is accustomed to the Marshalsea. He calls it by its name (the Marshalsea), marking the building as a place rather than a formal institution (i.e. the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison). This familiar designation withholds the function of the location, allowing Frederick to avoid the embarrassing reality of the building's raison d'être. On the other hand, Clennam, a wealthy, curious, interloper, has a general familiarity with the name of the prison, but he has no real knowledge of the place. He knows to associate the name Marshalsea with debtors but has no knowledge of the building, its inhabitants or their activities. After learning what the building is, Clennam asks Frederick Dorrit a follow-up question—whether or not he can go in to find out more.

Clennam pursues the Marshalsea with a particular reason—to investigate whether his family has unjustly treated the Dorrits—yet this moment exemplifies the potential problems of outsider curiosity about internal prison affairs. As we saw briefly in Chapter I with Jack Sheppard's paying and famous visitors, eighteenth-century prisons could function as voyeuristic spaces, and nineteenth-century media and literature continued this tradition of treating prisons as spectacles. Nineteenth-century prisons were also accessible to actors, like *Jack Sheppard*'s Mary Anne Keeley, journalists, visitors, and even tourists.[37] Media coverage and visiting experiences might make a prison feel like a knowable entity to the general public, but an outsider's impression of a prison is necessarily different from the way the prison affects those who live within its walls or those with close connections to its inhabitants, like Frederick. As twenty-first century readers, even further removed from prison spaces than the likes of Clennam, it is important for us to be critical of a nineteenth-century prison's knowability. To minimize the real potential of treating these spaces voyeuristically, we will approach these spaces purposefully. Like Clennam, we turn to consider the specific conditions of the Marshalsea prison not as a journey into a titillating unknown, but in order to get some sense of how these spaces affected families like the Dorrits. This investigation will allow us to better understand what features of debtors' prisons were commonly discussed in the mid-nineteenth century and how Dickens' representations reflect and respond to these ideas. We will see how Dickens complicates the idea of malignant association amongst debtors in an open prison structure, which reformers of the time considered a significant obstacle to altering prisoners' character. In comparison to this more

[37] While in the twenty-first century we often think of prisons as cordoned off from society, there was a large prison tourism industry in the nineteenth century. Janet Miron examines this industry in the US and Canada, discussing the problems of tourism, as prisoners resented intrusion and voyeurism, but also its opportunities: for the public to become more knowledgeable about criminal justice policies, to hold the institutions accountable, and for prisoners to exert some authority over how they were viewed. The notorious Auburn Penitentiary, a silent system, for instance, "purportedly attracted 12,916 visitors in one year" (17).

ambivalent stance on prison openness, Dickens take a caustic view of the lack of work in debtors' prisons. Together, these two features demonstrate Dickens' commitment to justice and character reformation through individual action in a communal context.

Dickens's reading public, like Clennam, would have had some passing familiarity with the idea of debtors' prisons either from their own experiences or from earlier literature. Margot Finn explains in *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914*, that debtors' prisons were frequent literary tropes because many writers were lawyers, had been lawyers, or had been afflicted with financial difficulties (52).[38] Authors did not uniformly write about debtors' prisons, but took two distinct literary approaches. Finn categorizes literary depictions of debtors' prisons as either unhealthy, exploitative, unreformed places or economic safe havens (57). In the first tradition, debtors themselves were viewed quite sympathetically. These fictional pieces emphasized how debtors were imprisoned under a system that favored creditors. Creditors did not have to fully prove their claims in court, at times leading to misuse of the law.[39] Even if the claim of debt was legitimate, debtors were often viewed as good people experiencing temporary misfortune, particularly debtors residing in poorer prisons like the Marshalsea. [40] Debt relief was a common item in wills, as a final act of charity to a group seen as worthy of assistance (Finn 126). Additionally, organizations like the Thatched House Society helped release prisoners with small debts.[41] While the real Marshalsea had a history of

[38] Finn establishes that this tradition starts with Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and includes texts such as Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1791), Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) and Trollope's *Three Clerks* (1858).

[39] Most debtors in the beginning of the century were imprisoned through the mesne process; if the debt was big enough, which in 1827 meant over 20 pounds, then a collector could swear an affidavit and a debtor would find themselves arrested without the collector having to prove the debt (White 7, 189).

[40] The Marshalsea was known for having the poorest of debtors of London's three primary debtors' prisons (White 71).

[41] The Thatched House Society paid for the release of 51,250 debtors between 1772-1831, each of which was less than 3 pounds (Finn 162). These numbers reveal not only the small amounts of funds that could detain people within prisons, but also the sympathy that the debtors received, in contrast to other prisoners. This is not to claim that all

corruption scandals in the eighteenth century that Dickens could have drawn upon to increase the sympathy of his debtors, *Little Dorrit* does not include any torturous, money-grubbing administrators or wrongfully imprisoned debtors in the spirit of this first tradition.[42]

Instead, *Little Dorrit* follows the path of the second tradition that Finn demarcates: depicting debtors' prisons as economic havens. In fact, Finn sees *Little Dorrit* as the peak of this tradition (59). Dickens makes his Marshalsea a society apart from the rest of the world, where debtors find some reprieve from the pressures of creditors and professional pursuits. This mode allows Dickens to focus on the overall structure of the debtors' prison rather than on corrupt individual administrators. This structure is not beneficial, despite its apparent sanctuary status. Dickens focuses on two distinct features of debtors' prisons that were commonly questioned by contemporary reformers: porous membranes and lack of prisoner labor requirements. Dickens depicts the former as potentially positive, creating a pathway for positive character growth. Yet he shows this potential stymied by the work-averse environment of the prison, which is damning for his characters.

Unlike other nineteenth-century prisons, debtors' prisons had a significant degree of openness to their layout. Inhabitants had a relatively high degree of freedom within the prison, and outsiders could enter with ease. In fact, some outsiders were inhabitants themselves. Little Dorrit is an anomaly for being born in a debtors' prison, but many wives and children

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debtors were viewed equally. As with other charities in the nineteenth century, debt relief charities operated under a dichotomy of deserving and undeserving debtors (163).

[42]In *Mansions of Misery*, Jerry White documents scandals in the Marshalsea, such as those relating to William Acton, a turnkey in the late 1720s, who was accused of misusing funds from charities and allowing prisoners to starve to death (101). He was also known to brutally mistreat prisoners, and he was arrested for four counts of murder of prisoners in his care in 1729 (112). He was acquitted of all charges and returned to be deputy keeper at the Marshalsea (121). After a fifth unsuccessful trial against him for murder in 1730, he left the Marshalsea (123).

historically cohabited with debtors in the nineteenth century.[43] In other families, the wives and children lived outside of the prison but were still able to pass in and out of the prison freely, often gathering in prison for meals.[44] The options for cohabitation and frequent visits stood in direct contrast to other prison facilities, which sparingly allowed family visits. Debtors' prisons not only allowed free passage to family members but also opened their doors to a wide variety of merchants and messengers, who sold food, clothing, furniture, and other wares (Finn 129).[45] The scale of traffic in debtors' prisons was significant. One Gaol Committee Minute Books estimated that around 1,500 people came to Whitecross Street prison, another debtors' prison, every Sunday in 1832 (Finn 129). The entangled nature of prison social and economic ecosystems were daily on display. The gates of debtors' prisons functioned as selective membranes, letting in and out passing pilgrims, while the debtors themselves remained within.

Twenty-first century eyes might view this open structure as a potentially progressive mechanism,[46] but most nineteenth century critics saw the openness of debtors' prisons as a backwards measure. Reformers desired isolation as a necessary prerequisite to self-reflection and growth. They were worried not only about outside forces, but about the comingling of prisoners themselves. These reformers dreaded the evils of "association," or the negative influence that

[43] A physician in 1818 noted that he only remembered seeing one child born in debtors' prison in the previous five years (White 192). When Howard was surveying Kings Bench in 1776, he found that there were 395 debtors, with about 600 family members, specifically wives and children, living in prison as well (Finn 133).
[44] Charles Dickens himself did not live in the prison but showed up for breakfast at 8am and then was locked out in the evening at 10pm (White 190). Dickens fictionalizes this practice in *David Copperfield* as the Micawber family resides within debtors' prison, but David often joins them for meals.
[45] Of the people moving throughout the prison, women were often important in coordinating networks for supplying provisions (Finn 132). In *Little Dorrit* this role is originally filled by Mrs. Bangham, who was important enough in the lives of the debtors for Little Dorrit to model her dolls after Mrs. Bangham's accoutrement (Dickens 79).
[46] An open structure might seem more beneficial to 21st century reformers as it would allow prisoners to maintain strong family bonds and connection with the world, which might make for a smoother transition to the world after their incarceration. Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul discuss, of late 20th and early 21st century US prisoners, how families "provide an important anchor to life in the community while inmates are in prison and offer a source of stability, support, and encouragement during the difficult transition from prison to home" (*Prisoners* 10). They note that studies looking at prisoners who maintained family ties while inside were less likely to be recommitted upon release and advocate for lowering some of the existing barriers to familial communication (11).

prisoners could have on each other. Usually, this term was used in the context of criminal prisoners rather than debtors, as people feared that intimacy amongst criminals might spring new plots and corrupt first-time offenders. Prison administrators further feared that open prisons would serve as hotspots for disease. In 1832, administrators wanted to limit access to King's Bench, another debtors' prison, for fear of cholera spreading, but prison keeper William Jones explained it would be unfeasible, noting the possibility of "a very serious disturbance" if traffic was limited (Finn 129). The circulation of ideas and disease amongst prisoners and the incoming public were both considered serious risks in debtors' prisons. As we will consider more deeply in the following section, separation was one of the main characteristics deemed necessary for prisoner reform; for Foucault, isolation is the first of three primary principles defining modern prisons (236).[47]

Dickens does not make the prison's openness a winning characteristic of debtors' prisons, but he does push back against contemporary views of the evils of an open structure. Dickens presents the prison's openness as a neutral quality, allowing for some benefits when properly leveraged and not necessarily an inhibitory factor towards character development. The openness of the prison may allow for greater opportunities of solidarity and mutual learning among prisoners. Yet characters rarely capitalize on these opportunities as Dickens's Marshalsea does not encourage growth, but a stymied present with a lack of emphasis on productive labor.

The positive potential of the prison's selective membranes is clear when Clennam first stands outside the Marshalsea. When Clennam asks if he can enter the prison, Frederick Dorrit explains, "Any one can *go* in…but it is not every one who can go out" (89). While the debtors

[47] Foucault is focused on more punitive prison spaces and the geographic context of France, yet prison debate was international and the effects of new theorization about prisons extended to even spaces, like debtors' prison, which served slightly different purposes.

are limited from leaving, anyone could potentially come in to meet them: their family, their friends, the wealthy, the poor, artists, statesmen, etc. An open structure hypothetically could prevent prisoners from becoming too detached from reality and to allow them to continue contact with positive outside influences. This would ideally allow for a smoother reentry process by minimizing the potential disintegration of a person's identity.[48] Yet we soon find out not *everyone* does go in to the prison.

In *Little Dorrit*, the Marshalsea's selective membranes primarily let in poor Londoners. Frederick himself is described as appearing worse off than his incarcerated brother when the two walk in the College yard: "Frederick the free, was so humbled, bowed, withered, and faded; William the bond, was so courtly, condescending, and benevolently conscious of a position" (224). Dickens does not present continued contact with family members as helpful for a smoother reentry process. Instead, he shows how Frederick is in no position to substantially assist his brother emotionally or economically while William is in prison; how could he be able to help afterwards? In addition to family members like Frederick, Dickens describes at length economic agents who enter the open prison, the "nondescript messengers, go-betweeners, and errand-bearers of the place" (100). While they bring in basic necessities, like bread and eggs, their description is more pitiful than improving. These people inhabit an outside world seemingly as dismal as that of their indebted brethren: "The shabbiness of these attendants upon shabbiness, the poverty of these insolvent waiters upon insolvency, was a sight to see" (100). This account, of the poor waiting upon the poor, suggests that the openness of this prison is not bringing in people of all types, but merely people barely better off than the debtors themselves. Dickens

[48] Keramet Reiter and Susan Bibler Coutin talk about the social disintegration that can happens in solitary confinement or upon deportation where people are not disciplined by the justice system but administratively removed from their primary social ties. Although they focus on extreme situations, I'd argue that even this smaller form of isolation can lead to disintegration, albeit of a different degree.

ungraciously denounces these poor people as "[m]endicity on commission" (100).[49] Yet he suggests this beggarly disposition arises from their situation, not necessarily inherent character flaws. They are just as overlooked by society as the debtors they interact with in the Marshalsea: "they coughed like people accustomed to be forgotten on draughty door-steps and in draughty passages, waiting for answers to letters in faded ink, which gave the recipients of those manuscripts great mental disturbance, and no satisfaction" (100). Most people of the world are as wont to ignore these messengers as they are to ignore the begging letters of the people of the Marshalsea. The open passages of the Marshalsea may allow some joy in, with the coming of family members, but the messengers and merchants bring only their wares and their needs.[50] In purchasing goods and seeing loved ones, the Marshalsea prisoners maintain some basic connection to the outside world and control over their lives. But they are given no real opportunities to improve their situations. The "attendants upon shabbiness" seem proof that the society the prisoners will reenter may be as dreary as the prison itself, with the same sort of limited economic opportunities that might have led them to prison in the first place.

Dickens does not present prisoner interactions as any more beneficial than outside contact. The prisoners seem good-natured and willing to help each other, not inclined to harm or corrupt others. The internal openness of the Marshalsea may provide a general feeling of collectivity, yet mutual growth and benefit are far from a guarantee. Personal improvement only occurs when motivated individuals, like Little Dorrit, actively seek it out.[51] Among the

[49] William Burgan goes as far as to suggest that Dickens sees these people as "puppets, manipulated by the Spirit of Mendicity," but I do not think Dickens is as harsh as to completely evaporate their sense of being people (119).
[50] The power of family members' joy to overcome the negative emotions of the prison space is even in dispute. When Little Dorrit says she feels guilty for enjoying the river, sky, and motion of the real world when her father cannot, he insists that "going back, you must remember that you take with you the spirit and influence of such things, to cheer him" (262). She in turn is skeptical that she has such a power.
[51] When Mrs. Dorrit is giving birth there is a doctor to deliver Little Dorrit and many women in the prison who help out (72). Yet after this instance, the only moments of mutual support occur when initiated by Little Dorrit.

Marshalsea prisoners, Little Dorrit finds a dancing master to teach her sister Fanny and, after months of waiting, a seamstress to teach herself (83). The prisoners do have a wealth of individual knowledge, which is clear when she seeks out a job for her brother Tip. Through her help, he got

> into a warehouse, into a market garden, into the hop trade, into the law again, into an auctioneer's, into a brewery, into a stockbroker's, into the law again, into a coach office, into a wagon office, into the law again, into a general dealer's, into a distillery into the law again, into a wool house, into a dry good house, into the Billingsgate trade, into the foreign fruit trade, and into the docks. (86)

This list is notable for the wide range of people who end up in the prison. The Marshalsea inhabitants are already aware of what hard work looks like, in a variety of fields. Additionally, we see their supportive spirit, as a vast number of people are willing to help out Tip, on behalf of Little Dorrit, even into repeat attempts at the law after earlier failures.[52] The prison is not a place of natural learning, but learning can be had by those that seek it out, and only if lucky enough, or waiting long enough, for the right instructors to come by.

Little Dorrit uses the prison to create work opportunities for herself and her siblings, and the porous nature of the prison allows her to go out and work while residing with her father to lend him emotional support. Yet Little Dorrit is the only figure who champions work within the space of the debtors' prison. The prison does not seem to inherently encourage her level of motivation among inmates, limiting the potential benefits of an open prison structure. Dickens stringently attacks debtors' prisons for the lack of work that occurs there. Work, in fact, is the

[52] Ultimately, Tip learns a profession on the inside, selling horses, that results in him being a prisoner of the Marshalsea himself (86-87). While this is a minor comment about the potential for negative effects from prisoner interaction, this falls short of the evils of association deplored by reformers.

second of Foucault's primary principles of modern prisons, and its clear absence from debtors' prisons set these spaces apart from other nineteenth century prisons (239).[53] Compulsory work was not a feature of debtors' prisons for the much of the nineteenth century (Finn 161). This contributed to the idea of debtors' prisons as backwards economic havens because committed capitalists viewed them as a "form of internal barbarism" and "a special ritual sanctuary" (Peebles 703, 704). This capitalist ideology aligned with a religious disdain for idleness.[54] In this light, reformers wanted to turn debtors into successful, working capitalists, and the "enforced leisure" of the debtors' prisons did not work towards those ends (711, 712). Part of the desired reform was reorienting debtors from living in the moment toward saving for the future (705). This orientation misses the nature of life for the working poor, like those who pass through the Marshalsea as free people; they have barely enough to simply get by, let alone save or invest. *Little Dorrit* does not go to the farthest extremes of celebrating the wonders of the future-oriented capitalist market, blind to the realities of the poor. The novel does see Merdle's empire crash, dragging down everyone with him.[55] If Dickens does not believe reform means a complete reorientation towards capitalist futures, his novel still embraces a capitalistic and Christian work ethic as the base for good character. This becomes particularly apparent when contrasting Little Dorrit's work and her father's sinecure.

Mr. Dorrit, as the Father and symbol of the Marshalsea, embodies idleness. In choosing to make William Dorrit a glorified beggar, Dickens aligns himself with his contemporaries'

[53] The third principle, modulation of penalty, is not as central of a topic within *Little Dorrit*.
[54] Walter Houghton shows that "a religion of work, with or without a supernatural context, came to be, in fact, the actual faith of many Victorians" (251).
[55] Jacob Jewusiak pushes the line of this argument even further, claiming that the novel challenges the frenzy of the capitalist speculative market by emphasizing waiting in both its novel structure and in spaces like the prison. Ruth Bernard Yeazell also contests the degree to which Dickens valorizes work in *Little Dorrit*, emphasizing Clennam's lack of will and the potential for work to inflict harm upon others. While not denying these stances, my emphasis focuses on work specifically within the space of the prison, where waiting is not viewed as beneficial, and what seems, in Yeazell's words, like a "peaceful alternative to restless doing" turns out to be malignant for Clennam.

arguments about laziness in debtors' prisons. He does not complicate this story with any examples of work occurring within the Marshalsea. In his Marshalsea, there is a mock form of government, with Mr. Dorrit a sort of lord, though titled religiously as the "Father." He performs ceremonies of entrance and departure, and collects tithes from his subjects. In this role, the Father of the Marshalsea collects money without performing any work on behalf of the Collegians. They pay respects to him for his position and his authority in the space. Dickens sets William Dorrit up as a sham leader, far from a symbol of work or industry. This seems particularly surprising since Dickens's own father served as a chairman at the Marshalsea during his 14-week stay there for a 40 pound debt, a position meant to advocate on behalf of other prisoners (White 183, 199, 210). Perhaps this form of self-advocacy was less admirable than other forms of work in Dickens's eyes, as his father continued to rely on him for money later in life.[56]

Dickens's dismissal of the legitimacy of the debtors' self-government aligns with other artistic representations of his time, which downplayed the value of organizing within prisons. For instance, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846) created two oil paintings, *The Mock Election* (1827) and *Chairing the Member* (1828), which depict prison elections as moments of frivolity with minimal democratic potential (Figure II.1).[57] Haydon, like Dickens, had personal familiarity with debtors' prisons. He was arrested seven times for debt-related charges, imprisoned four times, and his financial troubles were the impetus for his eventual suicide (Finn 67). Both of his

[56] While his father was alive, Charles Dickens had to tread carefully around his father's spending, as his father had continuous legal issues. In 1841, for instance, Charles Dickens ran an advertisement in London claiming he would not honor his father's debts (White 217). Dickens also kept the knowledge of his father's former imprisonment secret; this information about his childhood did not become present until Forster's biography of him in 1872 (285).
[57] Both were well received, selling for 500 guineas and 300 pounds, respectively, to King George IV and a country gentleman (Finn 71). In his autobiography and journals, compiled by Tom Taylor, Haydon notes that Haydon valued the Chairing at closer to £525, but accepted the price because of financial necessity (Taylor *Life* 205). In addition to Haydon, Robert Cruikshank painted a mock election at Fleet Prison in 1835, featuring an internal scene with plenty of drinking (Finn 136).

prison election paintings of King's Bench were completed after his confinement there, although he returned to the prison to sketch. Despite these close ties, Haydon represents himself on the outskirt of the election rather than taking part. Finn notes that in *Chairing the Member*, Haydon paints himself in the upper window, overlooking the riotous scene (71). Haydon's separation from the election proceedings suggests some personal distance from the affair. In writing about the prison elections which he saw while imprisoned, Haydon explains that he "laughed and wept by turns," considering the event a "farce," although he understood why people would "prefer forgetting their afflictions in the temporary gayety of innocent frolic" (Taylor *Life* 164-165). He was sympathetic towards those imprisoned, identifying half as "victims of villainy" and another quarter as "victims of malignity" (164). Yet this sympathy did not mean he viewed the democratic proceedings as legitimate. His second painting does take a more political stance. The presence of the well-armed guards appears at odds with the ill-defended debtors. Taken in conjunction with the signs that debtors carry, such as "Freedom of Election," Haydon appears sympathetic of the debtors' rights to organize. Still, the tragedy for Haydon does not suggest that the debtors' election will accomplish much, and viewers responded more with pity towards the debtors than outrage against the guards. For instance, Sir Walter Scott, on viewing the painting during a visit with Haydon, apparently "laughed heartily at the subject" and said, "The Marshall should have let the poor fellows finish it [the chairing]" (187).[58] Finn notes that these debtor governments were primarily administrative rather than revolutionary.[59] Positions included an elected secretary whose administrative duties earned him seven shillings a week and a scavenger,

[58] Similarly, Charles Lamb, on writing to Haydon, called the painting "true, broad Hogarthian fun" (Taylor *Life* 202). This artistic style was also the influence for Cruikshank's illustrations in *Jack Sheppard.*

[59] Prisoner self-government is not necessarily limited to only these two options (radical and administrative). As Lynne Haney shows in her study of women incarcerated in an alternative-to-prison center in the early 2000s, prisoners can exert negative control over others through replicating the systems of power imposed upon them (138).

who cleaned the walks, privies, and cisterns for five shillings a week (Finn 144). Finn paints these administrators not as excarceral or subversive forces, but as trying to maintain and care for the spaces they inhabit (145). Work was neither completely vacated from debtors' prisons nor transformed into drunken extravaganza, yet Dickens chose to dramatize the listlessness of prison without any hint of hard work. A prison abolitionist might suggest that people would be able to work if not enclosed in a prison, but Dickens and other reformers wanted to have work be part of prison life.

Figure II.1. Two Benjamin Robert Haydon paintings. His 1827 "The Mock Election" (left) and his 1828 "Chairing the Member" (right).

Although *Little Dorrit* draws upon the historic Marshalsea of Dickens's youth, the issues Dickens features were still prominent concerns in prison discourse of the 1850s. *Prison Reminiscences or Whitecross Street*, an 1859 memoir by a prisoner called "H.", deals with the same two issues Dickens spotlights: association and work. In contrast to Dickens, H. is more suspicious of prisoner association and more generous regarding debtors' relationship to work. For the former, H. uses the language of contamination, describing an "infected herd of confined

debtors" (5). He does not see a problem with the prison's openness to outsiders—in fact, he bemoans that visiting privileges have decreased in recent years—but he dislikes the mixing of people from different backgrounds within prison. For the latter, H. discusses a fair amount of work that occurs in the prisons, explaining that the warden is also a prisoner (14) and that the prisoners celebrate democracy with electing people to positions (28, 29).[60] Additionally he talks about the internal economy of the prison. He describes a "shaver and hair-cutter…who was benevolently permitted by the governor to exercise his calling among the prisoners" (63) and "certain number of the poor debtors who are employed by the magistrates, and paid from the city or county rates, to clean the yards, dormitories, and avenues of the prison" for a shilling a day (64). There is also a man giving lessons in "Oriental languages," but mainly H. regrets the lack of opportunity for work requiring skill in Whitecross. He notes that "mechanics of almost every known trade or handicraft" are in a "state of enforced idleness" (67). Additionally, he claims, "we have men of erudition, and high artistic talent, who, for a small consideration, a shilling or eighteenpence a week, make your bed, cook your victuals, clean your boots, and perform all the duties of a devoted menial attendant" (55). This description is not celebrating the work that occurs inside, but claiming it beneath the talents and abilities of the imprisoned men. If there is a lack of work within the prison, it is not because the men are incapable or unwilling. It is because the structure of the prison disallows it. Prisons, by their nature, take people out of the regular economy, incapacitating them. In this sense, H. confirms Dickens's belief that prisons restrict people's ability to form positive relationships with work, but he places the blame on the

[60] Many prisoner-led movements have called for prisoners to have greater say in the systems they are subject to (see Berger and Losier), but it is important to note that prison-run spaces are not inherently more just. Robert T. Chase, for instance, describes how American prisoners in Texas litigated as late as the 1970s about the violence they experienced because of the racial labor hierarchy in prison. Considering H.'s disdain of other prisoners as being "infected," one might expect to see racial or class-based problems in prisoner-run spaces.

structure, not the individual. In telling a story about his experiences in debtors' prison, H. writes himself into the debates around prison administration and design while preserving his own sense of personal potential. This type of productive character is not found in the pages of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*.

Although England was moving away from debtor-specific prisons in the mid-nineteenth century, the qualities that Dickens features in his Marshalsea—its openness and its idleness—were important concepts in ongoing contemporary debates about prisons more broadly. Debtors' prisons represented an older style of prison in direct contrast to the newer prisons, which foregrounded both isolation and work, to varying degrees. As multiple critics have noted, most of Dickens's fictional writing about prisons is more concerned with eighteenth-century prisons, like Newgate, than new nineteenth-century ones. Neil Davie has stressed the importance of avoiding what he calls a "Dickens's England" approach to history, that assumes that Dickens's descriptions give us accurate depictions of his time period. In this section, I showed that Dickens's concerns about debtors' prisons and character were still relevant to debtors in his time, like H. In the next section, I will suggest that we can make a larger leap, from considering *Little Dorrit* in relation to the Marshalsea to contextualizing it with more modern nineteenth-century prisons. In doing so, I will not claim verisimilitude between the two forms, but rather note the interconnectedness of debates about prison structure within reform circles. We'll think about how the conditions of Dickens's Marshalsea not only comments upon the reality of debtors' prisons but also enters conversations about prison reform and separate system prisons. Dickens's engagement with contemporary theorists and practitioners furthers his argument that a lack of interaction and work affect personality for prisoners during and after their sentence. The types of

stories they tell about themselves and the potential paths their stories can take are shaped by the forces within the prison itself.

Dream Endings from Nightmares of Isolation?

Little Dorrit is in conversation with nineteenth-century prison reformers, despite containing no reformers in the text. After all, how could real reform occur in a novel world containing the Circumlocution Office? Instead, the text depicts the next closest thing: prison administrators. The novel has two turnkeys and one romantic turnkey-in-training. While the old turnkey, Bob, and the current turnkey, Mr. Chivery, have some key scenes within the novel, the most pivotal of the novel's prison administrators is the future turnkey, John Chivery, who figures prominently as a prospective suitor for Little Dorrit. Early on, Dickens gives us access to Chivery's thoughts about prison. John Chivery imagines a life for himself and Little Dorrit in the Marshalsea "[w]ith the world shut out (except the part of it which would be shut in); with its troubles and disturbances only known to them by hearsay, as they would be described by the pilgrims tarrying with them on their way to the Insolvent Shrine" (216). Chivery envisions the prison of his future life as a small paradise of "pastoral domestic happiness," defined by its separation from the "troubles and disturbances" of the world, with no troubles of its own (216). The imprisonment that his livelihood depends upon serves as an afterthought, a passing parenthesis. Composing a mental autobiography in the optative mode,[61] Chivery may initially seem more inward-looking, self-concerned, and interested in perpetuating the past than the

[61] I draw here on Andrew Miller's work on the optative mode, when characters imagine other possible lives, which he claims as an intrinsic feature of realism (122). The mode surfaces at moments when characters' lives seem both "determinate, bounded (as by a body), separate from others" and yet, simultaneously, "comparable, perhaps in some sense exchangeable" (123). Miller focuses on the optative mode in relation to progeny, but for John Chivery, his final end and his own tombstone trigger self-representations of the lives he could lead.

average forward-thinking nineteenth-century prison reformer. Yet Chivery's fairy tale dreams of isolation can be read as a subtle mockery of reformers' missions, which Dickens elsewhere wrote about as naive and self-congratulatory.

Chivery's daydreams reveal the extent to which he imagines the future replicating the present, with a continued emphasis on isolation in prison systems. He repeatedly imagines his future by focusing on its end, with a tombstone. Though tombstones are somber objects, and have served as serious figures for autobiography in critical thought,[62] Dickens makes Chivery's epitaphs comical, moments of delusion rather than statements of truth. In these autobiographic musings, Chivery overrepresents his emotions and forgets the autonomy or value of other people in his environment. Chivery's first optative daydream occurs shortly after Dickens introduces him. He moves from thoughts of marital bliss to "after" his happily ever after:

> Young John drew tears from his eyes by finishing the picture with a tombstone in the adjoining churchyard, close against the prison wall, bearing the following touching inscription: "Sacred to the Memory of JOHN CHIVERY, Sixty years Turnkey, and fifty years Head Turnkey, Of the neighboring Marshalsea, Who departed this life, universally respected, on the thirty-first of December, One thousand eight hundred and eighty-six, Aged eighty-three years. Also of his truly beloved and truly loving wife, AMY, Whose maiden name was DORRIT, Who survived his loss not quite forty-eight hours, And who breathed her last in the Marshalsea aforesaid. There she was born, There she lived, There she died." (217)

[62] Paul de Man uses Wordsworth's essay on epitaphs as a case for thinking about autobiography as a mode, rather than a genre, and for claiming its vitality as a type of prosopopoeia, centering on the object and producing a separate sort of life, in the process defacing the author themselves.

In his imagined inscription, Chivery adheres to key elements of the form of epitaphs by providing his, and his imagined wife's, names and moments of death. The material he adds beyond these base expectations reveals what Chivery considers important in life, namely his work and her containment. This power dynamic, building his livelihood on her imprisonment, was also clear in his optative play as a child: he would pretend to lock up Little Dorrit and demand kisses for her release (215).[63] In Chivery's imagined happily-ever-after, the future continues like the present, perhaps even more entangled with the prison system, with his livelihood dependent upon it, just as his father's livelihood before him, and his marriage uniting him to a girl who has known no other home. The continuity of the present appears childish and fanciful, like the mysticism David Richter notes in fairy tale endings: "'And they all lived happily ever after'—so goes the conventional ending to many a fairy tale or romance. It is a powerful ending, for with those words 'ever after' any lingering curiosity we might have about the prince and his lady is dispelled; they are in eternal bliss and we need not look far into our imagination to picture their never-ending summer's day" (1). Such an ending imagines a static non-changing world, the very world that Chivery originally wished for himself, an ending more grounded in a feeling than in any day to day living. This first imagined epitaph is helpful in understanding how the prison, in the eyes of administrators, is viewed as a closed circuit, a world apart. In creating a fairy tale ending for himself, he ignores the traumatic confinement of his would-be wife and projects the prison forever forward, a thing unto itself.

By mocking Chivery's dreams, Dickens also presents the possibility that other prison administrators fancy themselves heroes to their own stories, or perhaps the fairy godmothers who

[63] While Dickens does not lean into the potential problematic power relations that prisons can create for women particularly, this scene is a seemingly innocent shorthand for a world of problems that women experienced. For instance, Finn notes that debtors' wives were often placed in precarious positions in relation to their husbands' creditors (318).

will improve the lives of prisoners. In mocking Chivery's fairy tale ending, Dickens is not disparaging the form of fairy tales. Instead, he shows the problems of projecting the form upon real life. Dickens was himself highly invested in fairy tales.[64] Many fairy tales appeared in *Household Words*, with a series called "The Thousand and One Humbugs" appearing during the time that *Little Dorrit* was serialized.[65] Often, he combined fairy tale elements with a strong degree of irony in his novels. Elaine Ostry explains how this combination shows the distance between the reality of Victorian society and the "social dreams" of where people wanted to be (xii). In granting Chivery self-centered dreams, ignorant of the potential harm in his childish vision, Dickens suggests that some purportedly social dreams are worth questioning. Particularly, the novel seems to question the dreams of one group of reformers, separate system prison administrators. It does so by attacking isolation and autobiography. We'll look first, in this section, at the personality-deranging and reality-warping effects of isolation. Despite reformers' dreams, Dickens shows isolation to be a continual nightmare for those inflicted by it.

The separate system was a new prison form that was introduced in the early nineteenth-century and saw its heyday in the 1840's, the decade prior to *Little Dorrit*'s publication (Henriques 78). This prison form came to prominence as one of two competing options to counter the sociality and openness of older prisons like the Marshalsea (Collins *Dickens* 58). The

[64] Dickens's interest in fairy tales was not unique. Fairy tales proliferated in the nineteenth century, often sold in cheap chapbooks (Ostry 8). The press, including Dickens's publications like *Household Words,* played a central role in the dissemination of fairy tales (Sumpter).

[65]Shirley Grob discusses the fairy tale elements in novels such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations.* For "The Thousand and One Humbugs," see *Household Words* volume XI. Additionally, a decade after *Little Dorrit,* Dickens repeated many of the tropes of Little Dorrit's story in his fairy tale about a magic wishbone that can grant one wish. In "The Magic Fishbone," a young girl who saves the wishbone despite facing many hardships. While her father is incredulous that she doesn't use the wishbone when each new misfortune arises, she keeps working hard to help her family, only using the wishbone at the end to help her father. The piece reads like a realistic tale, with the mere terms of fairy tales superimposed, so that the father is called a King, despite also working a normal life and struggling to pay his debts. In this tale, the fairies do not solve everything, hard work seems to do so, but the frame of a fairy tale, for instance, the realness of connection the girl finds in her doll, provides a structure for hope and a faith that with perseverance, all will end well.

separate system and its main competing form, the silent system, were both formed on a general principle of isolating prisoners from each other; however, the differences between the approaches caused major debate at the time.[66] The systems were associated with two frequently visited and theorized United States prisons. In Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, and in other separate systems, prisoners spent almost all of their day in isolation from other prisoners with perhaps occasional one-on-one interaction with prison chaplains or religious visitors (58). In New York's Auburn Prison, and in other silent systems, people lived in separate cells but worked together during the day in silence, often on unproductive hard labor and always with extensive oversight (58). Advocates of either party were driven by competing economic and moral ideals. In terms of expenses, separate systems required more startup costs for new cell-filled buildings but would require less money to pay staff over the long term (59). Philosophically, the two systems were divided between evangelicals and utilitarians, where evangelicals were in favor of the separate system and utilitarians, the silent system. The separate system placed a greater emphasis on individual reflection while the silent system valued communal work. The separate system was not devoid of labor, as prisoners would often have hand cranks in their rooms, yet this work was seen as quite different from the communal work of the silent system (Henriques 84). Both systems faced serious charges by opponents with the silent system being decried for its reliance on harsh physical punishment (Collins 59)[67] and the separate system being charged with fostering mental instability.

[66] As many, including Foucault, have pointed out, the major differences between these systems seemed momentous to reformers at the time, but both of them did in fact use isolation as a primary technique; the difference in policy was more subtle about how it was being used (Foucault 238).

[67] Pain was not universally viewed as a negative feature. Some believed that pain might be a productive feature in reform. Martin Wiener talks about how doctors at the time believed some pain was beneficial for the body, noting the hesitation of some doctors to use anesthesia when it was discovered (123).

Between these two approaches, Dickens was strongly associated with the silent system. As we saw in his description of the Marshalsea, Dickens was less concerned about the contaminating effects of prisoner interaction than he was insistent upon work as key to reformation. Beyond the novel, Dickens was friends with practitioners in silent systems, and he wrote repeatedly about what he saw as the negative effects of the extreme isolation in separate system prisons.[68] Most famously, Dickens wrote a rebuke of the Philadelphia system after his visit to the United States; separate system advocates were still reeling from his attack in *American Notes* (1842) decades later.[69] In his novel after *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), Dickens would dive more thoroughly into the extreme mental effects of isolation in the character of Doctor Manette, whose time as a political prisoner in the Bastille warps his sense of self. He comes to believe that he is a shoemaker, and he struggles with normal human interactions. Even after his daughter nurses him to recovery, he still reverts back to this persona when reminded of the past. *A Tale of Two Cities* suggests the long-term effects of prison isolation while simultaneously affirming the value of work in identity formation. Doctor Manette may unhealthily cling to the occupation of shoemaker, but he explains that the work is not to blame; rather, it was the one thing he could cling to in an otherwise debilitating space (206).[70] Despite describing a historical, old-fashioned, and foreign prison, the novel clearly shows

[68] He was friends with George Laval Chesterton, who ran Coldbath Fields in the silent system from 1829-1854, and Lieutenant Tracey at Tothill Fields (Collins *Dickens* 52, 65). Dickens was additionally interested in other systems beyond what currently existed in the UK, particularly the point system developed by Alexander Maconochie as the prison governor of Norfolk Island in Australia in 1838 (Henriques 87). Dickens used a version of this system in his management of Urania Cottage, a reformatory home for women (Hartley "Undertexts" 64).

[69] In 1895, William Tallack wrote that Dickens's *American Notes* was a "still lingering influence upon the popular mind" despite it being written over fifty years ago, and Tallack feels the need to write against the accuracy of Dickens's descriptions to support the use of isolation in prisons.

[70] Manette explains, talking about himself in the third person, "He once yearned so frightfully for that occupation, and it was so welcome when it came; no doubt it relieved his pain so much, by substituting the perplexity of the fingers for the perplexity of the brain, and by substituting, as he became more practiced, the ingenuity of the hands, for the ingenuity of the mental torture; that he has never been able to bear the thought of putting it quite out of his reach…the idea that he might need that old employment, and not find it, gives him a sudden sense of terror" (206).

Dickens's rejection of idolizing isolation in favor of on work. This preference for work over isolation is apparent in *Little Dorrit* as well, despite isolation not being a key feature of debtors' prisons. While debtors' prisons were not designed to isolate debtors from each other, Clennam nonetheless finds himself falling into a deep, unhealthy isolation when imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Doctor Manette's mental break is more dramatic and developed over the course of *A Tale of Two Cities*, but Clennam's short-lived mental lapse in *Little Dorrit* demonstrates that even comparably open prison structures can produce substantial mental effects.

By nature of being a prison, even if not a separate system prison, the Marshalsea relies on isolation. It isolates debtors from their daily lives in the outside world. This separation is not as cheery and idyllic for prisoners as John Chivery imagines it will be for himself as an administrator. The fullest effect of this isolation is clear when Clennam finds himself imprisoned for debt towards the end of the novel, enduring a degree of separation far beyond what the Dorrit family experienced. Though visited by various people from the outside world, Clennam deteriorates in his isolation.[71] Clennam does have some moments of self-reflection, akin to what separate system proponents advocated, but these are brief moments of semi-clarity before a slide into total delusion. Shortly after Clennam is imprisoned, the narrator notes some good may come out of his adversity: "None of us clearly know to whom or to what we are indebted in this wise, until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings the right perception with it. It comes with sickness, it comes with sorrow, it comes with the loss of the dearly loved, it is one of the most frequent uses of adversity" (705). Clennam's adversity, imprisonment, seems to have some initial use: helping him pause and reflect on the salutary benefits of his friendship with Little

[71] William Burgan notes that the Collegians do not take to Clennam and that this makes the Collegians appear less generous and warm than earlier in the novel (125), but I think Dickens is making less a statement here about the Collegians than the prison itself. It is not the Collegians that make Clennam isolated but his own feelings compounded by his circumstances, despite the warmness of those he knows well.

Dorrit. Even in this early, supposedly beneficial, mental state, Clennam's thought process is distorted as he loses his sense of time. When John Chivery rouses him, he realizes he has been "thinking for hours" (706). It is Chivery, after all, not self-reflection, that actually makes Clennam recognize his love for Little Dorrit.

Clennam's mental journey moves quickly from an initial state of appreciation for Little Dorrit to a dark, destructive place. Despite visits from friends and the potential for sociality in the Marshalsea,[72] Clennam keeps to himself until "[i]mprisonment began to tell upon him" (720). He begins "shrinking" from both himself and others (720). Dickens explains that, "Anybody might see that the shadow of the wall was dark upon him" (720). This shadow is not the taint of a prison stigma, but the influence of imprisonment on his own mental state and subsequently his actions (720). Clennam interacts with more people than the average separate system prisoner could expect, but his mind begins to warp into its own reality. Some ten or twelve weeks into his prison sentence, when visited on the same day by Barnacle and Rugg, he finds himself struggling to communicate:

> So errant had the prisoner's attention already grown in solitude and dejection, and so accustomed had it become to commune with only one silent figure within the ever-frowning walls, that Clennam had to shake off a kind of stupor before he could look at Mr. Rugg, recall the thread of his talk, and hurriedly say, 'I am unchanged, and unchangeable in my decision. Pray, let it be; let it be!' (725)

Solitude and dejection wear upon Clennam's mental processes and his ability to have even basic conversations with people. Within the ever-frowning walls of the Marshalsea, Clennam is losing his grip on everyday human interactions. While he is able to maintain his mental sharpness

[72] Clennam additionally receives particular attention from the prison administration. Chivery goes out of his way to help Clennam, providing him with choice housing, furniture, food, and conversation.

enough to affirm his original decision to stay in the Marshalsea (rather than another prison), Clennam's character certainly has been changed by the carceral environment. Dickens describes the effect as "a sombre veil which almost always dimmed [Clennam's mind] now," such that Clennam almost forgets Rugg's visit immediately upon his departure (726). Dickens does not suggest Clennam is suffering from short term memory loss. Rather, Clennam's mind blocks out the outside world, heightening the effects of prison's natural isolation. This is not a case of greater self-clarity, awakened from self-reflection by separation. It is a case of losing oneself as the outer world dims beyond comprehension. This mental delusion has a cyclical effect, as Clennam's self-consciousness of his situation leads him to further separate himself from the beneficial forces of human connection. Although the Plornishes want to visit him, Clennam decides he should not see them: "in the morbid state of his nerves, he sought to be left alone, and spare the being seen so subdued and weak" (739). He goes so far as to write Mrs. Plornish a note, telling her not to visit, staving off contact with the real world that he seems to desperately need.

The utter delusion of Clennam's state becomes clear later on the same page, as he finds himself hallucinating, and unable to make sense of external stimuli:

> Light of head with want of sleep and want of food (his appetite, and even his sense of taste, having forsaken him), he had been two or three times conscious, in the night, of going astray. He had heard fragments of tunes and songs, in the warm wind, which he knew had no existence. Now that he began to doze in exhaustion, he heard them again; and voices seemed to address him, and he answered, and started. (739)

This is Clennam in his worst state, teetering on the edge of mental collapse into utter fantasy. The isolation that separate system advocates hoped would create fairy tale endings instead produce a warped, inescapable fairy world, within the minds of prisoners. Luckily for Clennam,

this low point is precisely when Little Dorrit arrives to shepherd him back towards reality. Dickens does not moralize on the sickening impacts of prison, but the case of Clennam's decline, for no clear reason beside his new locale, speaks for itself.

Because Clennam's mental deterioration occurs towards the end of the novel, Dickens does not explore how Clennam's temporary imprisonment affects the rest of his life, in the way that Dickens would later draw out Dr. Manette's long recovery from isolation. Yet Dickens convincingly shows the inner-workings of isolation on the mind. Clennam's isolation is not strictly enforced, as it would be in separate system prisons, but Dickens implies that the prison itself causes Clennam to fold inwards. The institution, rather than the inhabitants of the prison, is contaminating. Clennam, after all, has done his best to keep away from others. Although Clennam's version of institution-influenced isolation has not received much critical interest, institution-required isolation has been well-studied for its deleterious mental effects.[73] Consider Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland's retrospective study of chaplain notes in the 1840s at Pentonville, a separate system prison. They found multiple notes about mental instability; however, these instances were not frequently reported out. When they were, blame was often placed on an individual's family history rather than the institution itself. The chaplains seemed more concerned about people faking their mental states as a way to escape punishment than about the health of the prisoners. While Dickens would sympathize with the chaplains that prisons can foster sham emotions, he does take seriously the mental problems of solitude, having Clennam seriously deranged by his isolation from the world.

[73] In addition to the retrospective study that follows, twenty-first century research into isolation in US supermax prisons has shown the mentally deleterious effects of isolation, as well as the ineffectiveness of this form of containment. Most notably and comprehensively, Lorna Rhodes's 2004 *Total Confinement* documents the daily life inside control units in Washington state.

In this morbid condition, what sort of an autobiography might Clennam produce? He makes claims about being unchanged and sure of his mind, but Dickens clearly shows that his senses are warped. Clennam does not write about his life while in the Marshalsea, but if he were in a separate system prison, as we'll explore in the next section, he would have been encouraged to write his life story, with prison featuring as a beneficial turning point. The absurdity of self-realization in the context of isolation is the second main concept that Dickens derided in the fairy tale dreams of separate system advocates. If separation induced prisoners to visit the world of fairies in an echo chamber of the self, life writing validated an inward-looking focus, producing a different type of identity warping.

The Fictional Autobiographical Self

Dickens dismissed the authenticity of prisoner autobiographies from separate system prisons, observing sarcastically that in such narratives, "[t]here would seem to be a pattern penitence, of a particular form, shape, limits, and dimensions, like the cells" (*Household Words* Volume I, p. 101). This disparagement is not merely about the form of these tales, but the state of the character and systems which produced them. His complaint about prisoner autobiographies appeared among many criticisms of separate system prisons in *Household Words*'s lead article on April 27, 1850 (101). Titled "Pet Prisoners," this article railed against the separate system for its cost, for the comparable amount of food given to prisoners compared to people in workhouses, for its reliance on isolation, and for how it measured its success: self-authored accounts of penitent prisoners.[74] In this section, I will focus on this final objection. In the

[74] While I am focusing on the article's concern with isolation and autobiography, "Pet Prisoners" was particularly important in fostering public belief that prisoners were being treated too well. The article spends a considerable amount of time contrasting the food and lodging in the prison (based on quantity and expense) and the title "Pet Prisoners" furthers this concept. The enthusiasm for the separate system was apparently on the decline by 1850

separate system, chaplains encouraged prisoners to write their life stories, and they published these memoirs to advocate for their preferred form of prison managerialism (Schur 138). These reflective texts positioned the separate system, with its emphasis on self-discovery, as the key to prisoners' fairy tale endings. However, as "Pet Prisoners" suggests, the shared rhetorical situation of prisoners led to autobiographical pieces of a uniform nature. While no prisoner in *Little Dorrit* is forced to write their autobiography, the prison shapes how many of the characters choose to present their life narratives. The constrained and stagnant nature of the prison setting prompts tales closer to fantasy than reality. These fantastical turns in *Little Dorrit* serve as a warning about the constructedness of autobiography and its limits in making prison policy.

Dickens has two main complaints in "Pet Prisoners" about the value of prisoner memoirs: 1) the texts do not prove reformation since they are compelled documents and 2) they are not a useful exercise for prisoners because they encourage egotistical thinking. In the first case, these texts were authored under what Carolyn Steedman calls the "autobiographical injunction" (28). In her work, Steedman uses this term to understand life stories that were collected when people applied for poor relief or assistance from philanthropic organizations. The giving organizations required applicants to explain their financial situation in story form. To be successful, these stories needed to demonstrate the applicant's worthy, English character. Similarly, prisoners in separate system prisons knew their autobiographies were being judged by the prison chaplains who influenced their prison conditions and chance of early release.[75] These same chaplains were regularly preaching Christian stories of reformation and redemption, setting the horizon of

when this was written, partially because separate system propaganda was successful in branding itself as being gentle to prisoners (Henriques 84).

[75] The process of encouraging prisoner self-reflection through writing is not unique to the nineteenth century. In Lynne Haney's ethnography of a women's alternative-to-prison program in the early 2000s, she found that incarcerated mothers were forced to share publicly a confessional autobiography before they were able to gain full house privileges (133).

expectations for the prisoners' autobiographies. In many cases, prison administrators took an even more hands-on approach, prompting each prisoner's story with specific questions (Schur 139). The strong hand of the chaplain can be seen in the format and content of "The Prisoner Set Free," a prisoner memoir by J.G., published in 1846 by John Clay, the chaplain of Preston House of Corrections. Clay had collected over 300 folio pages of prisoner memoirs by 1846, and he believed that "the native strong sense of the Anglo-Saxon character shines through almost every tale of temptation and sin" (Clay *The Prison Chaplain* 274). Clay sermonizes on J.G.'s life both before and after the heart of J.G.'s memoir. Clay's writing takes up five pages of the eighteen page document. The story itself is formatted to capitalize and italicize the Christian lessons against drinking and lying, and it ends with J.G. unironically thanking God for his time in prison.[76] While all autobiographical texts are shaped by their rhetorical situation, the high stakes and heavy involvement of chaplains resulted in particularly strained forms of writing.[77]

Dickens criticizes the lack of true penitence created in separate system prisons in his only fictional account of these prison forms. David Copperfield, of the eponymous novel, visits Mr.

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[76] J.G. ends his memoir saying, "But this I *do* know, that there cannot be a better place built than this in all the world for bringing a man to his senses; for if he'll only think and see,--and he's plenty time for it—he must see that he has need of repentance; and, therefore, it does him all the good in the world. It has done me good, and I thank God for it!" (13-14).

[77] As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson inform us, truth status in autobiography lies not in the text itself, but in the relationship between the narrator and reader: "If indeed intersubjective truth, always tentative and provisional, emerges in autobiographical acts, its nurturance is a project requiring the care and active engagement of both readers and writers" (18). The autobiographic text is shaped by multiple forces, including writing conventions of a time period and intended audience of the text. Additionally, the idea and value of truth are both contested by Victorian society and *Little Dorrit* itself. John Kucich's *The Power of Lies* shows that Victorians understood the power of deceit: "Lying was seen, variously, as a fundamental form of resistance to social control, as a way to deepen norms of subjective development, as a way to recognize the presence and the force of desire, and—most important for purposes of this study—as a way to rethink the distribution of power across lines of social or sexual difference" (15). Within the novel, Dickens pushes back against the straightforward goodness of knowing the truth by Clennam's unsuccessful attempts to get "the truth" in terms of his family history and the Circumlocution office. Jenny Hartley has noted the immensity of secrets in the novel, connecting it to Dickens's contemporary project of interviewing members of a house for fallen women ("Undertexts"). In collecting stories through his own autobiographical injunction, Dickens might have been left with a similar feeling as to reading memoirs by separate system prisoners, that he cannot quite trust autobiographical narratives to produce truth as he understands the way systems encourage lying.

Creakle's model prison and hears the dishonest autobiographical claims of the falsely penitent Uriah Heep and Littimer. In this scene, the prisoners cater their stories to the prison visitors, crafting stories to get emotive responses and position themselves as being wronged. Despite facilitating Em'ly's downfall, Littimer claims that he "endeavoured to save" Em'ly and even takes a magnanimous position when stating, "I forgive her her bad conduct towards myself" (699).[78] Although not strictly demanded of the prisoners, these autobiographical remarks are fashioned within a coercive system with clearly structured rewards.

The separate systems environment prompted formulaic memoirs that were distorted to maximize potential reward. In the process, these pieces were often self-aggrandizing. Dickens notes multiple cases of egoism in these memoirs, as prisoners often preached to others about how they should act and focused more on their own lives than on the people they hurt. This preaching nature might be because of the intended audiences for their pieces, as chaplains hoped prisoner autobiographies would lead to positive character growth in the poor and the "criminal." For instance, in "The Prisoner Set Free," Clay hopes "[t]his narrative may fall into the hands of some such persons, who will see in parts of it a description of their own sinful conduct. If so, may it lead them to serious reflection on the course they are running, and induce them to leave it while yet there is time" (16). In "Pet Prisoners," Dickens does not blame chaplains for the prisoner self-aggrandizement, but rather attacks the larger separate systems structure.[79] Critics such as Hansen and Schur have read "Pet Prisoners" as indicating Dickens's belief that prisons should

[78] David Copperfield also complains of the prisoners being treated tenderly by Mr. Creakle and being given comforts at any expense, the other main complaints in *Pet Prisoners* (696). Before meeting Littimer and Uriah, David comments that he "found a vast amount of profession, varying very little in character: varying very little (which I thought exceedingly suspicious), even in words. I found a great many foxes, disparaging whole vineyards of inaccessible grapes; but I found very few foxes whom I would have trusted within reach of a bunch" (697).
[79] Dickens writes, "In using the term 'pattern penitence' we beg it to be understood that we do not apply it to Mr. Field, or to any other chaplain, but to the system; which appears to us to make these doubtful converts all alike" (102).

increase prisoner's understanding of their embeddedness in society, instead of encouraging a self-centered approach.[80] Dickens describes how the solitary nature of the separate system goes further than simply encouraging self-reflection, by compelling unhealthy self-obsession:

> The state of mind into which a man is brought who is the lonely inhabitant of his own small world, and who is only visited by certain regular visitors, all addressing themselves to him individually and personally, as the object of their particular solicitude—we believe in most cases to have very little promise in it, and very little of solid foundation. A strange absorbing selfishness—a spiritual egotism and vanity, real or assumed—is the first result. ("Pet Prisoners" 99)

By being isolated and only interacting in one-on-one situations, Dickens believes that prisoners in the separate system shift in character, gaining a certain type of self-importance. Dickens goes on to say that in isolation, a prisoner's "whole sphere of view" is filled "with a diseased dilation of himself" (102). This description echoes the depiction of Clennam's isolation within the Marshalsea. Encouraging prisoners to write about their lives only amplifies this perception and results in what Dickens considers to be self-centered writing. Prison structure not only impacts the conditions that prisoners live within but can shape the way people think about themselves and tell their stories. Sean Grass argues that prison-distorted narrative is at the heart of Dickens's later novel, *Great Expectation*s. Grass claims that Pip is compelled by prison forces to self-narrate and that in this process, Pip's narrative becomes distorted. Grass believes that *Little Dorrit* has more concrete realities of prisons, compared to the metaphoric capacity of prison in

[80] Hansen reads "Pet Prisoners" alongside the excarceration of *Barnaby Rudge* (both breaking out of prison and creation of familial bonds in prison settings) and scenes from *American Notes* to argue that Dickens believes that people reform based on an increased understanding of their connections to others. Schur's reading of "Pet Prisoners" claims, in a similar light, that Dickens believes that reformation is recognition of self-determination and a sense of social embeddedness (143).

Great Expectations. Yet the same concerns about distorted self-narrative can be found in *Little Dorrit*, in relation to characters who, unlike Pip, have experienced incarceration.

William Dorrit is the character in *Little Dorrit* most prone to waxing poetic, if not always about himself, then always *for* himself.[81] As the Father of the Marshalsea, he acts out a certain persona when welcoming newcomers to the prison, generating not only stories about the prison but a new identity for himself. These welcome speeches, spoken mini autobiographies, are not mandated by any authorities, but their content is shaped by the context and potential benefits inherent in the debtors' prison. Mr. Dorrit did not invent this position out of self-interest; rather the role was generated by the prison itself. The old turnkey before Mr. Chivery granted him the title of "Father of the Marshalsea," and over time William Dorrit took on the mantle as his own, adding mannerisms, formalities and stories to the assumed character (76). Playing up this character allows Mr. Dorrit to maximize both earnings and respect in the prison.

Although Mr. Dorrit's spoken self-presentations are described generally in the sixth chapter, the readers experience his staged interactions in real time when Clennam first visits the Marshalsea. Mr. Dorrit begins by telling Clennam about his role before launching into a story to encourage monetary tribute. Unlike the stories produced by prisoners within separate systems prisons, this story is not about the prisoner's past, his troubles, or his coming to God. Mr. Dorrit does not seek sympathy, like a poor, compelled, prisoner. Instead, he talks about a casual interaction he had within the prison, akin to the style of autobiography by higher status former prisoners. Such texts respond to a different rhetorical situation as their audience is not a redemption-focused chaplain, but a curious, middle-class reading public. These writers also

[81] Mr. Dorrit never writes a formal autobiography, but he tells stories verbally in order to shape the public's understanding of his personality. The only formal autobiography in *Little Dorrit* is equally untrustworthy as Miss Wade writes a memoir which she believes to be true, but she constantly assumes the thoughts and feelings of others in ways they protest against.

asserted their worthy character, but they did so by contrasting themselves with other imprisoned people (Lauterbach). These higher-status formerly-imprisoned writers often assumed middle class morals, favored prison discipline that emphasized cleanliness and hard work, and noted abuse happening to others rather than themselves; this posturing allowed for a greater sense of identification between the reader and writer (Fludernik 153, 157). In directly appealing to Clennam, Mr. Dorrit similarly presents himself as maintaining middle class values, while also accomplishing his immediate task of earning his audience's discrete generosity. Mr. Dorrit explains to Clennam how a man presented him with geraniums encircled with a note, that itself contained two guineas. The man asked Mr. Dorrit not to open the note for a half hour, so that Mr. Dorrit discovered the money after he had left. The story is formulaic, not in terms of fitting a conventional confessional mode, but because Mr. Dorrit seems to have told many stories in this vein, if not this same story many times. When prompted by her father, Little Dorrit denies remembering the name of this real or fictional visitor; still, she seems to know where the conversation is headed, as her head droops and her face becomes anxious (93). Mr. Dorrit's autobiographical story here maintain the fiction of his propriety and his status above the general problems of the debtors' prison. He narrates not only a moment in his life, but a model for Clennam to replicate. While the stories Mr. Dorrit tells are not obviously fabricated, they distort reality to promote behavior beneficial to his own self-interest.[82]

Distorted autobiography further occurs in the case of Little Dorrit herself; however, her autobiography is motivated more by self-negation than self-interest. Little Dorrit narrates her life story as a fairy tale in Chapter 24. Her chosen form allows her to consider her true feelings in a constructed situation, yet it inhibits her ability to act on these dreams in the real world. In

[82] Dickens's view on begging letters suggests that this begging story is a fiction. Daniel Hack shows how Dickens considered fraudulence to be the "defining characteristic" of begging letters (125).

contrast to her father, the carceral forces in her life have reduced her ability to act for herself or even imagine self-interested actions. Little Dorrit's autobiography occurs as a reward for Maggy. She launches into a fairy tale about a Princess who happens upon "a poor little tiny woman, who lived all alone by herself" (294). Little Dorrit has been called a tiny woman throughout the novel, and she seems to be projecting herself into this fairy tale, making it an alternative autobiography. In Little Dorrit's story, the tiny woman remains alone to watch over the shadow of "Some one" who had gone away. She imagines that when she dies the shadow will disappear with her. Little Dorrit tells the story of her life and her secret love for Clennam by figuring it into a fairy world. She sees her life story as something secretive, not to be shared outright. The prison has induced her to hide away all aspects of her life and to barely imagine a real life for herself beyond its constraints. Telling her life story as a fairy tale allows Little Dorrit to divulge truths that she might not have shared in another form. Indeed, Little Dorrit has not indulged in any autobiographical writing or speech up until this moment as she is fearful to divulge any information about her family or herself.

The dreariness of the prison even conditions Little Dorrit to end her fairy tale in unrealistic despair. As the story's primary audience, Maggy responds with disapproval to the lack of practicality exhibited by the tiny woman. She interjects when the woman dies, "They ought to have took her to the Hospital…and then she'd have got over it" (295). Although Little Dorrit funnels truth into her fairy tale story, Maggy pushes back against its melodramatic ending. If autobiography becomes a powerful manipulative tool in the hands of her father, it is a self-limiting form for Little Dorrit. Telling her life story serves to reinforce the diminished expectations set for her by her family's carceral home. She does not wield the distorting abilities of the genre, but speaks herself into a powerless situation. Neither the self-indulgent

autobiography of her father nor the self-supporting dream of her would-be lover Chivery, this moment exemplifies the untrustworthiness of life stories as a realm of mixed reality and fiction, that blurs Little Dorrit's vision of a possible path forward beyond incarceration.

Little Dorrit's dark fairy tale is shaped not only by the physical prison, but by society's reactions to her institutionalized personality. Clennam struggles to remember that Little Dorrit is a real person and not a magical being, the fictional concoction of an author or institution. Clennam's clearest mental lapse occurs when he hears Mrs. Chivery explain her son's attachment to Little Dorrit. Clennam disbelieves the story, but he notes that such disbelief might be a weakness in him: "to make a kind of domesticated fairy of her, on the penalty of isolation at heart from the only people she knew, would be but a weakness of his own fancy, and not a kind one" (261). This statement suggests that Clennam sees her as a domesticated, loveless fairy, rather than a fantastical, flirtatious sprite.[83] Clennam had previously been critical of her family members being "lazily habituated" to her, and here, he finds himself potentially falling into the same trap, perceiving her as magical rather than someone who chooses to work hard for others (102). A similar moral appears in Dickens's *Household Words* article "Gaslight Fairies" (volume XI). This 1855 piece discusses the real, poor girls who play fairies for theater extravaganzas. Dickens even spotlights a Little Dorrit-like "fairy" who supports her father with her work. The article reads, "Miss Fairy aged three-and-twenty" still believes her father is "a wonderful man!...She has grown up in this conviction, will never correct it, will die in it" (27, 28). Dickens points out the flaw in trusting in a fairy tale, whether it is audience members believing the girls to be fairies themselves, the girls overly trusting their family members, or the family members—as is the case with *Little Dorrit*—taking the girls for granted. Fairy tale framings not only limit

[83] Other critics have talked more extensively about how Little Dorrit is like a fairy within this novel. See, for instance, Amberyl Malkovich.

what endings are possible, but they erase the labor and trauma inherent in working class life stories.

While daydreams and self-inventions may be inevitable, Dickens suggests these stories are less harmful if we do not count on their definitive ends. John Chivery begins the novel as a self-centered dreamer, but he ends up altering his autobiographical dream style. His mental epitaphs morph over the course of the novel as he begins to understand the wants of those around him, and he moves away from his original fairy tale ending. Frank Kermode's ideas about literary endings can help us make sense of the changing ends of Chivery's daydreams. Kermode talks about the psychological consonance between story endings and human death (7). He discusses that in the reading process, in order to make sense of things, "We project ourselves…past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle" (8). In composing his epitaph, like Little Dorrit telling her fairy tale story, Chivery extends his view past his own end to write the story of his life. Yet this new position is not one of greater truth or clarity. Chivery's epitaphs merely establish the intensity of his emotions and beliefs in the instance of daydreaming. When he continually changes his epitaph, this is not inconsistency in his character. He is following a common practice Kermode describes: "assimilating the peripeteia" that he encounters and then adjusting his future expectations (18). Kermode's lecture deals with endings on a grander scale, including religion and apocalypse. But his words work on the small scale, with *Little Dorrit*'s John Chivery, as well. For Kermode, there is a sure sense of an end—apocalypse—that people keep in mind, but they shift their understanding of how the apocalypse will occur based on the challenges that spring up along the way. John Chivery does not stick to a single end, but changes his end constantly, although keeping death a fixed point. It is only with Chivery's final epitaph that his ending significantly

alters. He finally allows himself to live out a fuller life and not be consumed by Little Dorrit's rejection of him and the loss of his prison fantasy. He marks this final epitaph by claiming a change in character, in becoming "magnanimous" (719). His ending is then less of an ending, the sort typical of an autobiography, and more a means of showing his new path forward, his new way of being. It marks not a hard end to all things, the way a fairy tale would end, but a shift in perspective that hints at a path forward. Chivery is unique in being able to move beyond the closed circuit of prison-produced character.

Beyond the fantasy-laced self-presentations of his characters, Dickens explores the spectrum of life stories in the construction and moral of the novel itself. These elements come to light when we read the novel alongside Dickens's critique of nineteenth-century fairy tales in "Frauds on the Fairies." This article berates a new George Cruikshank fairy tale for being overly propagandistic. A major portion of the article consists of Dickens's mock version of Cinderella, in which the narrator takes bold stands on minor social issues like tight-lacing and advertisement duties. Shortly afterwards, Cruikshank released his own version of the classic fairy tale, *Cinderella and the Glass Slipper,* which, like Dickens's joke version, includes strong opinions about topics beyond the normal purview of the Cinderella story. Most notably, Cinderella's father is in prison for debt because her stepmother has gambled away all the family's money. This is not a minor plot point, but greatly influences Cinderella's actions. At one point, she tells her godmother, "I thought that I should like, above all things, to go [to the ball]; but the thought of my poor father came into my mind, and now I feel that I should not like to go and enjoy myself, and be merry, whilst my poor father is pining in prison" (10-11). Cinderella here sounds very much like Dickens's self-sacrificing Little Dorrit. Neither can imagine a path forward for herself while her father is in jail. Cinderella's fairy godmother convinces Cinderella to go to the

ball, because she might be able to make friends at court who will free her father (11). Cinderella does pray for him briefly while she is amongst the royalty, although she never actually advocates on his behalf (15). Indeed, his freedom does not come from her actions or the king's. His estates are magically restored by the magical fairy godmother, very much like Mr. Dorrit's fairy out of the bank (23). Given the similarities in plot, we can read *Little Dorrit* as a response to Cruikshank's Cinderella, as a continuation of their generic debate about the role of fairy tales.[84] Investing the novel with a greater degree of realism than a short fairy tale, but keeping the same language of fairy tale metamorphoses, Dickens tells a darker story, of insufficient magic.

In assuming part of Cruikshank's story for his own novel, Dickens points to the ineffectiveness of fairy tales as policy suggestions, rather than just good stories, and the danger of desiring a fairy tale arc when the reality of life stories yields different morals. Mr. Dorrit's transformation seems deficient of any real moral. The story of a father being freed by a fairy is not meant to be the focal point of the Cinderella story, which features a virtuous, hard-working daughter. Yet the upper classes in *Little Dorrit* know nothing about Little Dorrit's role in her father's miraculous release. His fairy tale "ending" becomes a tale with no moral benefit at all. The second half of the novel, however, does give readers access to a moral for Mr. Dorrit's story: his release is not a happy ending after all, but rather the continuation of a carceral story. We might take the moral of Mr. Dorrit's story to be that no reentry process, not even the most luxurious, can be spared the shadow of the prison. While nineteenth-century reformers tried to paint prisons as places of self-discovery and spiritual reawakening, Dickens's novel insists upon the overall negative impact of prison spaces. *Little Dorrit* demonstrates that former prisoners are

[84] In her article on the influences of children's literature on *Little Dorrit,* Rachel Bennett mentions that Little Dorrit is "one of Dickens's Cinderellas," and fills the role of the "family slave" (183). She does not, however, note the potential connection with Cruikshank's Cinderella.

never free of their prisons, no matter how close to a fairy tale their reentry process seems, as we'll see in the following section.

Living with the Black Spot: Different Strains of Prison-Produced Character Change

Fairy tale endings do not provide details or logistics for life after a story ends. As Mike Cadden points out, "'Happily ever after' is a promise, not a plot" (346). In exploring life after release, Dickens asks us to explore the promise of reentry through narrative plot. Just as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* radically questioned the fairy tale ending of marriage by exploring plot after a wedding,[85] *Little Dorrit*'s structure reframes what consists of a happy ending to a carceral story. The novel includes a variety of reentry pathways. Some characters find their pathways limited by societal structures and judgments. For instance, the Plornishes seem to flourish after leaving the Marshalsea, yet live in the carceral space of the Bleeding Heart.[86] Dickens even extends some sympathy to the malevolent figure of Rigaud, who finds his reentry process made difficult by a society who disparages him for something that the courts cleared him of committing. Other characters primarily struggle with adjusting to society given the ways they have been conditioned to prison life. John Baptist, or Cavalletto, is haunted by his former cellmate. Fanny Dorrit is so fueled by revenge that she commits herself to marrying a man she does not love. Tip Dorrit never seems to manifest a purpose for his life. Mr. Dorrit is anxious that people will discover he was imprisoned and continually fears others' surveillance and judgment. Little Dorrit, who was well adjusted to her prison environment, perhaps succeeds the least well of all since she has been so accustomed, institutionalized, to the habits of the prison.

[85] Richter points to *Pamela* as a moment where our conceptions about eighteenth century novels ending with marriage is incorrect (3).
[86] Bleeding Heart Yard is a constantly policed living quarters as Pancks, the rent collector, looks to get as much money as possible from the tenants on behalf of the landlord, Casby.

While the Marshalsea is a different type of prison than the Marseilles,[87] both prisons cast a shadow on their inhabitants. This "shadow on the wall," as Dickens calls it, does not refer to the programs or lack thereof that greet reentering citizens but the burden of prison, the changes they have undergone there. In this section, we'll look closer at some of these characters to understand how the prison's taint changed their sense of self and stayed with them beyond the prison gates.

Dickens refers to the lasting impact of prison through the concept of the "taint" of the prison. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "taint" as "a stain, a blemish" (III.5.a) but also "a contaminating, corrupting or depraving influence, physical or moral" (III.6.a). In this latter meaning, a taint is something that not only remains, but remains active, lingering and worsening. Inherent in "taint" is a future orientation, an imminent spread of disease. The prison taint first appears in the Marseilles prison, on the second page of *Little Dorrit*: "[A] prison taint was on everything there" (16). Everything from the air to the men were "deteriorated by confinement" (16). The prisoners are described as "faded and haggard," comparable to the prison's equally deteriorated iron, stone, wood, air, and light. As George Yeats explains, "confinement equals contamination" in *Little Dorrit*, and the circumstances of the prison tell on the bodies of the prisoners (346). The physical environment infects the men, making them of a similarly depreciated character, although not clearly claiming whether this character change is short term or long term.

While prisons can be detrimental for physical health, we are going to primarily focus on the mental health effects of imprisonment through the lens of institutionalization. "Prisonization" is the specific term for institutionalization within prisons, and Craig Haney defines this process as "the incorporation of the norms of prison life into one's habits of thinking, feeling, and

[87] The prisons are different enough that Rigaud, on visiting Clennam, calls it a "hospital for imbeciles" compared to the "prison for men" he experienced in Marseilles (734).

acting." Haney explains these adaptations are not pathological, but "'normal' reactions to a set of pathological conditions." Some of the common effects of prisonization includes a dependence on the structure of the institution, reduced mental capacities for personal control and choice, suspicion of others, social withdrawal, over-controlling or flattening out emotions, diminished sense of self-worth, post-traumatic reactions, and incorporating exploitative norms of prison culture. While Haney is describing prisons in 21st century United States, these factors are apparent in the reentry of characters within *Little Dorrit*. Dickens does not harp on the more extreme forms of prisonization, like post-traumatic stress, as he did not view debtors' prisons as being excessively grueling or demeaning. Yet his characters do exhibit some of the hallmark signs of prisonization that limit successful reentry.

In Dickens's Marshalsea, the primary form of institutionalization is dependence on institutional structure. Dickens believed that debtors' prisons did not adequately encourage productive work habits, but instead encouraged prisoners to continue stagnantly within the existing prison structure. For instance, prison taint is invoked when Tip does not love his sister enough to change his actions; the narrator says, "[W]ith the Marshalsea taint upon his love, he loved her" (236). Dickens does not present Tip as being personally at fault for his inconstancy in work. Instead, his failings are attributed to the prison taint, the way in which the Marshalsea has habituated him to slothful prison life. Rather than imparting a certain stigma on Tip, the prison seems to be causing a defect in Tip's person by making him think differently about himself and his relationship to those around him. This characteristic continues after prison, up through the end of the novel when Little Dorrit nurses Tip, "[w]ho was never vexed by the great exactions he made of her" (806). Dickens claims that the Marshalsea has the power to make people view themselves in a new light, as the heroes of their own stories, concerned with their own wellbeing.

William Dorrit, as the longest imprisoned character, shows the greatest degree of institutionalization of the characters. Upon release, he not only continues to deploy the grandiose character that he developed in prison, but he also displays reliance on authority and distrust of others. While in prison, Mr. Dorrit develops a character in denial of his condition because he associates imprisonment with low status. Mr. Dorrit's beliefs and corresponding character continue to deepen after imprisonment. He does not reveal his association with the Marshalsea, even though it is a story that is circulating amongst the highest powers. Instead, he tells those at a convent in Europe that he is not used to confinement (437), and he constantly feels affronted by people around him, particularly servants (455, 469). These outbursts at servants seem to be projections. He doubts whether he is saying the correct thing for a person in his position. He believes that his former imprisonment is apparent to those who know nothing about it. He sees a taint in himself that others overlook due to the newfound Dorrit wealth.

Mr. Dorrit also exhibits prisonization in the form of imbibing the exploitative norms of prison life and encouraging societal rather than personal capacity for choice. He manipulatively encourages Little Dorrit to bend to Mrs. General's surface-forming techniques rather than choose her own path forward. In this moment, Little Dorrit thinks, "[T]here was the well-known shadow of the Marshalsea wall. It took a new shape, but it was the old sad shadow. She began with sorrowful unwillingness to acknowledge to herself, that she was not strong enough to keep off the fear that no space in the life of a man could overcome that quarter of a century behind the prison bars" (471). Little Dorrit despairs, not that prison taint is unconquerable for anyone, but that her father, having spent twenty five years in prison, may be too shaped by the space to ever escape its influence. Indeed, despite his denial of his past, the prison is so deep-seated in his conscience that when his health declines he imagines himself back within the Marshalsea (634).

Mr. Dorrit's character changes not only strain his relationship with Little Dorrit, but incline him to invest in Mr. Merdle's business, which will ultimately lead his family to economic ruin a second time.

Because she has spent her whole life in prison, Little Dorrit also displays a high degree of prisonization, yet hers takes an entirely different form than her father's. Although only an inhabitant, never a compelled member, of the Marshalsea, the prison shapes Little Dorrit's personality, giving her a diminished sense of self, flattened emotions, and reliance on a patterned way of behaving. Her selflessness seems utterly antithetical to the seeming selfishness of her father, but in reality, they are both understandable responses to the conditions of prison, each presenting difficulty for reentry. Having grown up in the Marshalsea, Little Dorrit learned about the world through the lens of confinement.[88] Dickens explains she has been "drinking from infancy of a well whose waters had their own peculiar stain, their own unwholesome and unnatural taste" (82). On the surface, the fact that Little Dorrit succeeds after this beginning in life—having a job and providing for her family—may support the idea that harsh prisons are successful deterrents for crime or that prisons can teach individuals valuable life lessons. The narrator does claim that her experiences in the Marshalsea inspire her work effort: "she was inspired to be something, different, and *laborious*, for the sake of the rest" (82, emphasis added). Yet if this principle of deterrence seems to work for Little Dorrit, it does not avail anyone else. Her brother, for instance, spent most of his childhood in the prison and yet manages to return as a

[88] Prisons do not only affect those living inside of them, but also their family members. In thinking about the contemporary situation in the United States, Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul note that children whose parents are in prison experience a traumatic loss that diverts their energy from other activities, and they experience a severe degree of stigma (*Prisoners* 16). In this context, children are removed from the care of their incarcerated parents, often placed with other family members, but in some cases, 10% or less, placed into foster care (19). Children often cannot visit their parents because of the distance to the prison and the reluctance of their caregivers to cause them additional trauma from the prison setting (20). Debtors' prisons did not have this same problem as family members often lived with the debtors in prison. While familial separation was less of an issue, the trauma and stigma that the children faced was just as real.

Collegian. Surely Dickens is not suggesting that productive citizens are best produced through lifelong semi-imprisonment. Rather, Little Dorrit has a strong sense of duty, as Mr. Meagles would put it,[89] for "the rest" of her family. She works hard to help others, not to avoid the personal pain and difficulty of the prison. In fact, she elects to inhabit this rough home with her father, even at an extra expense to herself.[90]

While Little Dorrit learns to succeed in her carceral context, she still acquires a prison taint, albeit unique from the rest of her family. Little Dorrit herself notices the prison's effects. She observes the shadow that the prison casts after a conversation with Fanny: "The shadow of the wall was on every object. Not least, upon the figure in the old grey gown and the black velvet cap, as it turned towards her when she opened the door of the dim room. 'Why not upon me too!' thought Little Dorrit, with the door yet in her hand. 'It was not unreasonable in Fanny'" (249). In this moment, the environment casts a somber tone, creating a physical shadow on Little Dorrit. Additionally, Little Dorrit agrees with Fanny's assertion that she is too passive. In her agreement, Little Dorrit further exemplifies her compliance, too easily forgiving her sister's unreasonable demand that she be more outraged and vengeful toward Mrs. Merdle. In her institutionalization, Little Dorrit has become accustomed to obedience and never deviates from it. Having spent her entire life in a prison, Little Dorrit grows up into a model young lady, the very ideal citizen that prison reformers would want their structures to make, but this quality also

[89] Mr. Meagles informs Tatty that what makes Little Dorrit unique and worth of imitation is her strong sense of duty. He notes that Little Dorrit, like Tatty, had a rough upbringing, but that she has not turned to irritability, but "active resignation" and "noble service," two terms of subservience more than abhorrence of prison (793). Interestingly, it is the praise of Little Dorrit's duty by her uncle that makes Clennam think that her family is "lazily habituated" to her (102). Perhaps this is Clennam not justly judging Frederick (who later defends Little Dorrit to his brother). Alternatively, Clennam might be thinking of duty as expected homage and submission to a superior (OED 1a) or even fulfilment of her role (5a) while Mr. Meagles later means duty in terms of a moral obligation (OED 4a), which vests a higher level of commendation.

[90] Tip notes that Little Dorrit pays twice as much for her lodging in the Marshalsea than "for one twice as good outside" (96).

frustrates her ability to act for herself. Sarah Winter explains Little Dorrit's disposition in terms of "emotion management," a term associated with worker exploitation, in which a person suppresses their feelings for societal reasons. Little Dorrit is a good worker, at the expense of being her full self. Winter also notes that Little Dorrit tends to work alone, an isolated individual, rather than part of a larger movement (249). While these factors are what make Little Dorrit an insufficient heroine for Winter, someone who ends up deferring Dickens's project of social criticism, a more sympathetic reading of her character could see these factors as traits encouraged by her prison upbringing, developed out of necessity.

The effect of the prison on Little Dorrit may not seem as dramatic as isolation on Clennam or self-aggrandizement on Mr. Dorrit, yet part of Little Dorrit's tragedy is that her form of suffering goes unnoticed by others, who view her as successful. Clennam, for instance, spends much of the novel disliking Little Dorrit's association with the Marshalsea, rather than recognizing how deeply entwined her character is with the structure. He dislikes whenever she calls the Marshalsea her home, and he refuses to believe she is tainted by the prison. He only briefly notices that the prison, where she has grown up her entire life, might have an effect on her character, in an often remarked upon passage that occurs after Mr. Dorrit receives news of his newfound wealth:[91]

> "It seems to me hard," said Little Dorrit, "that he should have lost so many years and suffered so much, and at last pay all the debts as well. It seems to me hard that he should pay in life and money both."
>
> "My dear child—" Clennam was beginning.

[91] Yeats describes scholars' disputes about this scene: "Critics flatly disagree as to whether Dickens intends us to take Amy as minutely blemished or to see Clennam's view as itself jaundiced" (349). Yeats particularly notes F. R. Leavis as seeing Clennam as complicit in the system of debt imprisonment (349). Similarly, Jewusiak believes we should read the narrator's response ironically (Jewusiak 288).

"Yes, I know I am wrong," she pleaded timidly, "don't think any worse of me; it has grown up with me here."

The prison, which could spoil so many things, had tainted Little Dorrit's mind no more than this. Engendered as the confusion was, in compassion for the poor prisoner, her father, it was the first speck Clennam had ever seen, it was the last speck Clennam ever saw, of the prison atmosphere upon her.

He thought this, and forbore to say another word. With the thought, her purity and goodness came before him in their brightest light. The little spot made them the more beautiful." (418)

The narrator in this passage is close with Clennam's mind, with the penultimate paragraph being Clennam's own thoughts. Clennam marks Little Dorrit's comment as a moment of her "confusion," where she says something that she does not think is true. He thinks that she speaks emotionally, not logically. Little Dorrit and Clennam both consider this a moment of experiencing the prison taint because she has grown up in a self-centered, self-righteous debtors' prison. Clennam does not take the complaint too seriously, but sees it as something against which to compare her "purity and goodness." But it is noteworthy that this is one of the few comments Little Dorrit makes in the entire novel that is not submissive—a moment when she asserts an opinion against the institution that has molded her childhood—even if she backtracks and claims that she knows she is "wrong." In this statement she almost has the boldness of her sister Fanny, pushing back against a larger system of oppression, a boldness which Little Dorrit and the narrator bristle against in its love of vengeance. Questioning the system and confronting what justice ought to mean does not get the label of goodness but of a dark spot when the differential effects of prison on inhabitants is not understood.

When Clennam is imprisoned in the Marshalsea, he admittedly learns to associate Little Dorrit with the prison; yet he continues to treat the influence as unidirectional as if she has left a trace in the Marshalsea, but the prison has not affected her. This denial is evident as he explains to her why she should not share a life with him. He says, "The time when you and this prison had anything in common, has long gone by…This is now a tainted place, and I well know that the taint of it clings to me. You belong to much brighter and better scenes. You are not to look back here, my Little Dorrit" (744-745). Maggy, with her trusty ability to cut through others' melodrama and needless self-punishment, cries out that Little Dorrit should get him to the hospital, so that the fairy tale of the little woman can come true (745). Clennam absurdly thinks the prison is able to taint him but not Little Dorrit. His experience of imprisonment is different than hers—he spirals into a confused state of isolation that neither she nor her family experienced—but it is self-centered to believe that the prison would not have affected her. He is mistaken in thinking that she can completely move on past the prison, which has been such a central part of her life. Blind to the varied forms of institutionalization, Clennam misjudges the real difficulty Little Dorrit herself experiences in a post-Marshalsea world, despite hearing about these struggles in her letters to him.

For the prison does linger with Little Dorrit. More so than her siblings, she struggles with her remembrances of the Marshalsea, perhaps because she was so institutionalized to its setting. In her letters from abroad, Little Dorrit describes her new world as dreamlike. To her, the wonders of Europe seem a dream and "only the old Marshalsea a reality" (459).[92] The rules and ways of institutional life are all she has ever known, and she struggles to adapt to the expectations of the world beyond its walls. The only sight that feels real to her are the beggars

[92] She clarifies that the Marshalsea without her father also does not feel real. It is not that the prison is more real, but that her past life is the only reality she has known.

(460), as she had previously been surrounded by the poor in and passing through the Marshalsea. While Dickens is being critical of the fantasy, work-less world of the wealthy, he also shows how prison has shaped Little Dorrit to be ill-prepared for any other social setting. Little Dorrit struggles to adjust to the spaces, the people, and the economic realities of her new life after becoming so well adjusted to the Marshalsea.

The dreamlike nature of life abroad is particularly clear in Little Dorrit's letters. We might expect a greater sense of reality in autobiographical writing, but Little Dorrit's writing shows the unreliability of the form as the human mind itself is not reliable. Her daydreams enshroud her current reality within her past prison experiences. She tells Clennam, "[W]hen we were among the mountains, I often felt…as if the Marshalsea must be behind that great rock; or as if Mrs. Clennam's room where I have worked so many days, and where I first saw you, must be beyond that snow" (463-464). In her daydreaming, her Marshalsea life haunts her like a homesickness. She imagines herself to be part of the past, reflecting on the night she was locked out of the Marshalsea: "I often look up at the stars, even form the balcony of this room, and believe that I am in the street again, shut out with Maggy. It is the same with people that I left in England. When I go about in a gondola, I surprise myself looking into other gondolas as if I hoped to see them" (464). She wants to preserve a sense of the past, partially so she can preserve the sense of the self that she developed in that space. She asks Clennam to remember her in a particular way: "I have been afraid that you may think of me in a new light, or a new character. Don't do that, I could not bear that" (464). She spends several lines worrying that she will become a stranger to him is he does not remember her as she was. Little Dorrit does not want to take on her new role and she finds herself mermaid-like, a second Flora, straining to be what she used to be. Jayda Coons suggests that the dreamy quality of the novel reduces the feeling of the

novel's totality, and Little Dorrit, the eponymous heroine, lacks a totalizing force to pull the novel together. Little Dorrit's lack of grip on reality not only allows us to critique the novel as a totalizing structure, as Coons argues, but also to question the validity of the central myth of reentry: that people can leave prison better able to thrive in society.

Little Dorrit does have a moderately happy ending, however. Unlike Flora, Little Dorrit is successful in maintaining this older version of herself in Clennam's eyes. When he is imprisoned, he finds himself in a similarly dreamy condition, such that she seems to walk straight out of his delusional daydreams. Though he thinks she has moved beyond the prison taint, she has resumed the same position she once inhabited, even donning the same clothes. In a perverse way, she has to lose what wealth she has—and might be owed by the Clennam family—in order to secure their relationship. Clennam does not want her to use any money on his behalf and rejoices when he hears that Mr. Dorrit has lost all his money in the collapse of Merdle's schemes.[93] Clennam desires the submissive, institutionalized, fairy tale Little Dorrit, after all, and she acquiesces, as is her way. The pattern of submission she engendered in the Marshalsea apparently a boon for her marriage. Having both experienced imprisonment in the Marshalsea, they seem better fit for each other, even if Clennam does not fully understand how the prison has affected her. This skeptical reading of the story's ending is not meant to imply that happiness is not possible for former prisoners. The story of resilience to imprisonment is simply not the story Dickens set out to tell, as he continuously emphasizes the way prison irreversibly changes a person's character and thus their potential life story.

[93] Little Dorrit and Clennam only embrace once Little Dorrit shares that "I have nothing in the world…O my dearest and best, are you quite sure you will not share my fortune with me now?" (797).

Coda: An End to Debtors' Prisons?

At the end of Little Dorrit's story, she has not left the Marshalsea far behind. She signs her name in the register at Saint George's Church, where her birth was recorded and where she slept on the floor. It is not quite the closed loop that Chivery imagined, of being buried with the Marshalsea, yet her life is still closely tied to the building. The clerk jokes that when she writes her name in the register it is "the third volume," as marriage, after all, is the traditional end to a three volume novel (806).The novel ends with the couple reentering society, going down the church stairs, going down into a life of happiness together amongst the "usual uproar" around them (806). With the happy ending of two people, the rest of society does not catapult itself into a higher state. And indeed, as *Little Dorrit* went down into homes, libraries, and reading rooms, it did not raise the criminal justice system to new heights.[94] The story of debtors' prisons after *Little Dorrit* is, like the story of reentry itself, one of an imagined end—an abolishment of all debtors' prisons—and a real, continued lack of ending, as punishment for debt lived on.

Debt law saw significant change in the 1840s as legislatures tried to abolish imprisonment for debt, but they also reinscribed debt as punishable when fraudulent.[95] It was *with* the abolition of imprisonment for debt in the 1869 "An Act for the Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt" that debtors lost their privileges as special prisoners. This paradoxical

[94] It is not a new claim to say that Dickens' novels end up being less revolutionary than perhaps they seem at first, with the format of the novel tending towards a happy ending for individuals rather than society as a whole. Speaking of *Little Dorrit* specifically, Sarah Winter discusses how Little Dorrit's constant deference ends up deferring the potential radicalism of the novel "so that Dickens's social criticism becomes another 'circumlocution'" (243).

[95] Finn describes the laws at this time as "Abolishing imprisonment for debt with one hand only to restore and reinvigorate it with the other" (174). Legislators abolished imprisonment on the mesne process in 1838 by 1 & 2 Vict. C. 110, but also broadened the range for when breach of contract could be considered fraud in 5 & 6 Vict. C. 116 in 1842 (173). This latter move increased the likelihood that debtors would be categorized as criminal (173). A similar janus-headed approach occurred with the Small Debts Act of 1844: the fraudulent debtor category continued to be expanded while imprisonment for small debts (less than 20 pounds to one creditor) was abolished (173). Subsequent legislation in 1845 and 1846 meant that people owing small debts were examined by the court and could be jailed if they did not appear for examination or were deemed fraudulent debtors (173). Because of the move towards imprisonment for *fraud*, imprisonment of debtors became more punitive (174).

situation, that there continued to be imprisoned debtors after abolition, was because imprisonment was still possible through county courts for small sums. Unpaid debt was reframed as contempt of court, a different kind of character issue (Finn 186). The UK only fully abolished county court imprisonment for debt in 1970 (187).[96] Imprisoned debtors disappeared from literature after the 1860s despite the fact that debtors continued to be imprisoned. Finn believes that debtors became less prevalent in imaginative fiction because the population of debtors shifted from older, wealthier debtors to younger, poorer debtors (190). The small claims courts "failed to engage the sympathies of English novelists" (190).[97] *Little Dorrit* became the figurative end of a literary trope and was heralded as partially responsible for the end of imprisonment for debt practices. At the fin de siècle, news articles in *Traders' Herald* (1880) and *Credit Drapers' Gazette* (1882), celebrated *Little Dorrit* for informing the public about problems that were by then supposedly resolved (Finn 192). In 1929, over 70 years since *Little Dorrit* was published, the *New Statesman* claimed, "It is generally known that imprisonment for debt still exists in England, but there is a comfortable belief that the propaganda of Dickens brought about changes which reduced to a minimum the evils described in Little Dorrit and made it impossible for nay but fraudulent debtors to be sent to prison" (quoted in Finn 192).

The drama of imprisoned debtors did partially continue beyond *Little Dorrit*, in non-fictional and even non-literary forms. Whitecross Street, another debtors' prison, faced continual resistance in the 1850s from its members as privileges for debtors were reduced (Finn 185). For

[96] Even if debtors' prisons are eliminated, the theory behind debtors' prisons can often continue in the form of court fines. In discussing the US setting, Jackie Wang explains, "Although debtors' prisons were outlawed in 1833, lawyers across the country have filed lawsuits claiming that these municipal fine farming practices amount to debtors' prison" (132).

[97] Finn notes that public scrutiny of these courts *is* briefly mentioned in Little Dorrit, even if it did not become a popular literary trend (190). Clennam's lawyer emphasizes that Clennam should not be imprisoned through them, favoring a Superior Court. In addition to being more proper or appropriate to his social standing, being tried at one of the Superior Courts would result in being confined in the more spacious King's Bench, rather than, where Clennam ends up, in the more confined Marshalsea (Dickens *Little Dorrit* 703).

instance, when county-court debtors were denied their established privilege of buying beer each day, the prisoners broke windows and threw chamber pots into the courtyard. Finn notes that the debtors received public sympathy. H.W. Weston even received permission from Charles Dickens to dedicate a tract to him about the prison's problems (Finn 185). Weston's 1858 text about imprisonment for debt, *Protection Without Imprisonment for All Embarrassed Debtors, Why Not?* draws upon both Dickens's name and many of the themes present in *Little Dorrit*. Weston had some passing familiarity with Dickens from his previous role as the secretary for the Chancery Reform Association.[98] Weston's text on imprisonment only briefly nods to Dickens, mentioning "Circumlocution" in reference to the law, while it contains many direct references to Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Merchant of Venice*. The piece begins by claiming that it is delusional to believe that the laws of the country are "equal and just" (3). Weston lists many ways in which laws and institutions have diverged from equality and justice and how they have been brought back towards the right: the Corn Laws, slavery, chancery, and divorce laws. A patchwork text, it includes multiple published letters and articles in various newspapers, by Weston and others. Weston notes how the commissioner, Mr. Phillips, believes that imprisonment for debt no longer exists, and he goes on to show the multitude of ways that it still does, particularly pointing out the inequality under the law between the systems of Bankruptcy and Insolvency. This is not a call for total abolition by any means. Weston carefully excludes "proved rogues" from his sympathies (16). Yet is important to note that the same story of prison

[98] The organization was not long lived after its formation in 1850, but it had helped to publicize some of the abuses of the court, including through Weston's 1850 *Chancery Infamy; or a plea for an Anti-Chancery League* (Lobban 566). The group was not particularly successful, although it did file a petition to abolish the equity jurisdiction of Chancery in 1851 (Lobban 567n). As part of their chancery reform work, the group had an 1850 campaign for those imprisoned due to Chancery-related issues (Uchida 46). Masako Uchida notes that Dickens was at least somewhat aware of this organization, having drawn from a lecture by another one of the organization's secretaries, William Carpenter, for his own writing on Chancery and also referring to the organization in "A December Vision" (55). While Dickens's subsequent novel *Bleak House* had many of the same feelings about Chancery as his writing in "A December Vision," the centrality of those imprisoned by Chancery was not foregrounded (Uchida 55).

problems continued as reforms that supposedly eliminated debt imprisonment failed to address the fundamental problems.

Dickens's *Little Dorrit* engages with the varied landscape of prison reform ideas, including the central pillars of isolation, work, and self-reflection. The novel demonstrates the profound nature by which prison can shape character and continue to affect a person's life once they have left, even given the best case scenario of reentry with enough money to secure a high status in society. The "fairy that came out of the bank" does not spirit away the core problem since the effects of prison remain with characters' memories of prison. However, Dickens does not ultimately call for a total upheaval or abolition of the prison system, and the abolition of debtors' prisons that did occur did not in fact eliminate imprisonment for debt. Foucault discusses that a key concept of carcerality is that critique and reform are embedded processes in a carceral system. He explains, "Prison 'reform' is virtually contemporary with the prison itself: it constitutes, as it were, its programme" (234). He shows how many of the complaints made about prisons in France in 1820-45 are the same complaints made about prisons in the 1970s (265-268). Most telling is Foucault's statement that, "For a century and a half the prison has always been offered as its own remedy" (268). Even as bankruptcy proceedings appeared to eliminate imprisonment for debt, shifting terms of definition—i.e. labeling poor debtors as criminal in their failure to adhere to contracts—allowed for the continual practice of imprisonment for debt, albeit in new channels and with new environs for debtors. The cyclical practice of proposed reform and prison adjustment solidifies the prison as the only option, a self-evident punishment without an alternative. Perhaps the persistence and fixity of prisons seemed too sure for Dickens, and he, like Little Dorrit, felt like these structures were more real than any other landscape, too certain to imagine a world beyond their continual taint. While he could

imagine, in a novel like *Hard Times* (1854), the justice in a well-off family circumventing the cruel legal system, for the future of a single child who has robbed a bank, he did not imagine a wider excarceral future for all of society.[99] The form of his novels, like the life stories they contain, are limited by the structuring forces of carcerality.

[99] Despite being a stickler for rules and procedure during the majority of the novel, Mr. Gradgrind desires for his son to "be saved from justice" (Dickens *Hard Times* 267).

CHAPTER III

The Ticket-of-Leave Man: Melodramatic Heroes and Villains of Reentry

In *Little Dorrit*, we saw that the process of reentry is complicated by prison's lingering effect on self-conception. Simply leaving the physical space of a prison does not equate with breaking outside of carceral logics, a system of punishment, or social stigma. But former prisoners face more challenges than internal turmoil. The stories that prisoners tell about themselves are further complicated by the stories the public tells about them. By the same carceral logic that societies create isolating prison structures, people fear the proximity of former prisoners. Few former prisoners are able to shed their association with prison as easily as Mr. Dorrit because few reenter society with such wealth at their disposal. While the oppressive realities of the parole system are well-documented today,[100] in the nineteenth century, the difficulties of prisoner reentry were just beginning to manifest. Indeed, the system itself was just starting to fall into place. One of the first popular accounts of reentry in England came in the form of Tom Taylor's 1863 melodrama *The Ticket-of-Leave Man.* Its hero, Bob Brierly, experiences the shortcomings of "freedom" when he is given leave to exit prison, and he later recounts to his love interest, May, his mixed feelings upon release:

> …[W]hen I passed out at the gate, not for gang labour, in my prison dress, with my prison mates, under the warder's eye and the sentry's musket, as I had done so many a

[100] For an informative account of the contemporary challenges of reentry, see *On the Outside: Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration* (2019) by David Harding, Jeffrey Morenoff and Jessica Wyse. It includes a seven year quantitative survey of all parolees released in Michigan in 2003 (n=11,064) coupled with interviews with 22 parolees over the course of three years.

> weary week—but in my own clothes—unwatched—a free man—free to go where I liked—to do what I liked—speak to whom I liked, I thought I should have gone crazy—I danced, I sang, I kicked up the pebbles of the Chizzle beach—the boatmen laid hands on me for an escaped lunatic, till I told 'em I was a discharged prisoner, and then they let me pass—but they drew back from me; there was the convict's 'taint about me—you can't fling that off with the convict's jacket. (23)[101]

The power of release is enough to make him feel as if he is outside of his normal reality—indeed he is about to leave what has been his reality for "many a weary week," a reality of three long years—and it reduces him to a state of sensibility on the apparent edge of madness. If prison spaces inflict mental harm on their captives,[102] so too does the sudden, unmediated, release back into the world. Brierly rejoices in the newfound freedom to do what he chooses and move his body in ways it could not before. He dances. He sings. Yet he quickly realizes that he is not really free to do what he wants, and, despite leaving the gaze of the prison guards, he is still observed critically by those around him. In this one long sentence, Brierly moves from a state of euphoria to a state of restriction, including actual, physical restraint by watchful men, even before they know him to be a convict. Once he admits his identity, the men restore his bodily freedom, but Brierly feels as if his body is still not wholly his own. Prison garb no longer frames his outward appearance, but prison still defines his identity by clothing him with an invisible "convict's 'taint." Dickens used this term in *Little Dorrit* to criticize prison's long-term influence on a person's character, a primarily internal phenomenon. Here, the term "taint" connotes its fullest sense of contagion, as if the influence of the prison can affect anyone in physical contact

[101] All references to Taylor refer to the HathiTrust version of the play unless otherwise noted.
[102] The interrelationship between prisons, asylums, and mental health are beyond the scope of this chapter. For a brief review of scholarship on the harmful mental effects of prison in the contemporary era, see the "Prison is maddening" section of Liat Ben-Moshe's 2017 article "Why Prisons are not 'The New Asylums'" (pp. 280-282).

with the former prisoner. It echoes William Blackstone description of how mid-eighteenth century law labeled people with a permanent criminal taint: "For when it is now clear beyond all dispute, that the criminal is no longer fit to live upon the earth, but is to be exterminated as a monster and a bane to society, the law sets a note of infamy upon him, puts him out of its protection, and takes no further care of him barely to see him executed. He is then called attaint, *attinctus,* stained or blackened" (quoted in Dayan 2001). Brierly was not condemned to death; but, condemned as a criminal, he bears a permanent black mark and finds himself removed from the care of the law. This scene raises questions about how the prison system prepares its subjects for release and what awaits them on the outside. So too does it draw its eye upon the members of society who are quick to judge and limit these returning citizens.

At the moment that Taylor's play posed these questions about reentry, the British public was grappling with the relatively new ticket-of-leave system, which Taylor's play references in its title. Established in 1853, this system provided an early form of parole to British prisoners. While this might sound like state-sanctioned decarceration, the capacity for movement that these men and women gained lacked freedom in its fullest sense. The ability to move freely is not in itself a guarantee of a positive outcome, and twenty-first century scholars have delineated some of the factors necessary to consider when evaluating the possibility for modern citizens to successfully reintegrate into communities after prison. According to Harding, Morenoff, and Wyse, the experience of reentry is shaped by "(1) the social, economic, and cultural resources with which the individual leaves prison, (2) the social, economic, and institutional context to which he or she returns, and (3) the fit between the two" (10). In the case of the early ticket-of-leave men, the major problem was the social context which they entered. Although initially greeted by a sympathetic press, ticket-of-leave men were later targeted by the press and deemed

a collective threat to the public.[103] Additionally, the police harassed these men, making it difficult for them to find employment. Employers were hesitant to trust anyone with a ticket-of-leave. The ticket-of-leave system did not end up reducing the power of the carceral system but actually reified it, as the public backlash against the policy led towards tougher restrictions on parole, as well as heightened use of incarceration as punishment.

Taylor's play positions itself in support of men who are suffering at the hands of the ticket-of-leave system by making its hero a young, sympathetic, honest man, full of traditional English virtues. The play counters the fear of prisoner "taint" with an idealized, heroic character. Brierly finds himself in prison not due to any purposeful illegal action, but for being accidentally caught up in a money laundering scheme. His only faults at the time of arrest are living in a somewhat drunken and irresponsible manner and overly trusting the people around him. After spending time in prison, he is released on a ticket-of-leave which allows him to move freely in the country and work for a living. He secures a job at a bank through the connections of his fiancée, where he works hard and is well like by his boss. Once his past becomes known, however, he is dismissed. Subsequently, Brierly has a hard time getting a new job due to the widespread societal distrust of ticket-of-leave men. Brierly eventually redeems himself when he is able to save the bank owner from theft, plotted by the same men who have been impeding Brierly all along.

This sympathetic portrayal of a ticket-of-leave man was highly lauded at the time of its release. The play had a record setting run of 407 performances in London and spawned

[103] The term "ticket-of-leave men" is problematic in that it assumes similarity amongst these men and designates them by a feature they would not have been proud of, in the same way that people in the 21st century now opt for "returning citizens" rather than "ex-convicts." However, I will be using this term throughout the paper in accordance with the way it was used by Victorian periodicals and Taylor's play because this paper is interested in the viewpoint of the general populace as established through written sources.

successful runs elsewhere across the country and abroad.[104] With such a large and enthusiastic audience, the play had the potential to influence public opinion in favor of ticket-of-leave men. Yet the potential radicalism in Taylor's play is limited by its adherence to the bifurcation of character in the melodrama form. While depicting the problems of the ticket-of-leave system and creating sympathy for one ticket-of-leave man, the play relies on a class-based logic which ultimately undermines total support of men going through the criminal justice system. This class-based logic is amplified by the form of melodrama, which pits a singular hero against an incorrigible villain. The exceptionality of the hero's character allows him to be seen as a rare "deserving" ticket-of-leave man in contrast to larger swaths of supposedly "undeserving," permanently tainted and criminal men. At the same time, the true villain of the play ends up being the undeserving poor. Rather than the rich, ballad-filled community of *Jack Sheppard* or the pathetic shabbiness of *Little Dorrit*, the poor "criminal" class of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* is fully corrupt and intent on dragging others down to their level. It is this trope of melodrama—the embodiment of evil—that most contributes toward a communal desire to lock up malcontents, the supposed undeserving.

[104] According to Michael Booth, Taylor's play "remained one of the most popular melodramas of the century" (*Theatre* 142). In 1863, it was performed in Birmingham ("Tom Taylor's Ticket of Leave Man") and Edinburgh ("The Ticket-of-leave man," Caledonian Mercury). A very successful New York run started in November 30, 1863 and lasted 102 consecutive performances, and two other theaters in New York performed it in 1864 (Tolles 202). As with any performance, a new cast and director can result in a different presentation of the same words. For instance, a reviewer in Washington D.C. gets some points of the plot wrong, thinking Brierly begins the play as a low thief, whether that is the fault of the reviewer or the DC production, and it claims that the play is Dickensian in that it aims "to show that there may be reformation in criminals" when that is not true in the original script (Erasmus). Despite differences in production, it seems as if American populations still continued to have the same sense of sympathy for the production's hero and used the play as a moment of considering their own policies. One newspaper reviewer commented on the acceptability of transporting an English theme to the US as "England has borrowed much of her system of prison discipline from the United Sates; we might, I think, with advantage to the criminal, and without any injury to society, adopt a course which would afford some prospect of retrieving character and allow a ray of hope to shine into the dark dungeon of the penitent and reformed convict"; in other words, England might have adopted their prison system from the US, but the US could learn from Taylor's play ("Edwin James").

In this chapter, I will detail the important aspects of the ticket-of-leave system and how the press and Taylor's play present this system through the lens of melodrama. I will then consider why the melodramatic mode was considered an ideal form for criminal justice topics and yet how the key dyad in melodrama—the hero and the villain—reinforces audience members' prior assumptions about who is worthy of freedom. Regardless of the planned life stories and optative daydreams of former prisoners, their paths forward are ultimately limited by the roles society allows them to inhabit.

The Limited Opportunities of the Ticket-of-Leave System

With his play's title, Taylor immediately declares the contemporaneity of his play and the key system he plans to examine.[105] John Stephens, in a book on censorship, explains that this title initially produced reservations for censors, but the Examiner, after looking at the material in the play itself, changed his mind. He decided it was a *model* text that should be replicated; he wrote, "I think indeed Tom…might as well keep writing a kind of Victorian drama for the Olympic Theatre" (*Censorship* 125). Contemporary political issues were potential red flags for censors, as they could prove inflammatory, but the relevance of the drama to society ultimately made the melodrama laudable in the eyes of the examiner. The contemporary quality of the play—the "Victorian"-ness of the play—made it compelling for its audiences. But what did it compel them to think or do about the issues at hand? To answer this question, this section of the chapter will work through the specifics of the ticket-of-leave system. Through this process, I will demonstrate that Taylor attempted to accurately represent the experiences of ticket-of-leave men, but he consistently gave the system the benefit of the doubt.

[105] Some critics have voiced skepticism that Taylor did justice to the particular social issue at hand in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (Tolles 201).

The ticket-of-leave system was a stopgap program introduced in England as the country began phasing out transportation as a form of punishment. Peter W. J. Bartrip describes the emergence of the ticket-of-leave system as "reform through pressure of events rather than principle" (153). The implementation of the system was not based on a belief that it was the best practice for the men or the state. It was implemented because the government faced abundant pressure from Australia to stop sending them convicted individuals. Growing colonial establishments in Australia, partially spurred by a series of gold rushes in the 1850s, resented receiving all of the empire's declared discontents. The British empire had previously lost a key destination for convicted criminals, with the successful American Revolution. James Willis suggests that transportation as punishment decreased not only because of international pressure, but because of pressures at home. Willis explains that "the rise of modern mass democratic sentiment favoring greater fairness and equal treatment of citizens" pivotally combined with an increasingly centralized state (173). Together, these forces called for uniformity in punishment, believing consistency equates to fairness. In this greater collectivist mindset, people realized that the government "exposed convicts to unequal punishment at the hands of colonial settlers and infringed upon the will of the Australian people" (Willis 176).[106] In contrast, the state desired a more systematic, internal prison system. Willis shows that the cessation of transportation by 1868 ultimately led to the "nationalization of local prisons (1877)" (178).[107] At the time the

[106] While the government might have decided that transportation was unfair, many reacted against the ticket-of-leave system by calling for a return to transportation. One notable quote in *John Bull*, in 1855, asked, "But do we not possess boundless tracts of unoccupied soil in the most favoured quarters of the globe, portions of which might be devoted to this necessary purpose?" ("The Ticket-of-leave system"). The ticket-of-leave system retreated from outwardly imperial purposes, despite beginning as a means of supporting colonial expansion in Australia. Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* does not deal explicitly with imperial concerns, but many other nineteenth-century melodramas, set in foreign lands, domesticated the empire. For a thorough look at different instances of racial and imperial overtones in Victorian melodrama see *Acts of Supremacy* (Bretton et al.).

[107] 1868 does not serve as the absolute end date of transportation, but a large portion was ended by this time. For more on the extended life of transportation, see the work of Clare Anderson. She pushes back against common narratives that focus on Australia. She notes, for instance, that the Andaman Islands off of India, not Australia,

Penal Servitude Act went into effect on September 1, 1853, penal servitude—incarceration—was the new punishment for any case that would have resulted in transportation for lengths less than 14 years (Bartrip 153). The act recognized that many people were currently serving time in English jails prior to their transportation sentence. These people were funneled into the ticket-of-leave system after further jail time. Some men, faced with jail time rather than an opportunity in Australia, expressed feeling that the government had "entirely broke faith with the prisoners," as one ticket-of-leave man wrote in an 1854 letter to the *Glasgow Herald* ("Letter from a Ticket-of-leave Man"). With the overhaul of the transportation system, the ticket-of-leave system attempted to address the many men in limbo who had been sentenced to transportation but would never be transported.

The ticket-of-leave system was not entirely new and untested. Tickets-of-leave had been granted to men incarcerated in Australia, allowing those with good behavior to enter free society in Australia before the end of their sentences (Bartrip 153). Prior to 1853, some men had also been discharged into the UK—3,450 between 1834 and 1847—but the scale of operation expanded significantly after the official adoption of the ticket-of-leave system in 1853 (155). By 1855, there had been 5,152 men released with tickets-of-leave in England, according to a letter that Joshua Jebb, Chairman of the Directors of Convict Prisons, wrote to *The Times* (159). About 1.5 times as many people were released in England in the first two years of the program as were released over the earlier thirteen year period.

Once released, the ticket-of-leave men did not have any serious incumbrances by the state, nor did they have any structured opportunities. Unlike modern parole systems, which function as extended state supervision, the only way in which the ticket-of-leave men were

"received the greatest number of convicts in the British Empire" and this site was used for transportation until it was occupied by Japanese forces during World War II (385).

monitored was when they applied to receive funds they had earned during their prison sentences. To obtain these funds, ticket-of-leave men had to wait three months and then produce testimony from an employer, clergyman, or magistrate, attesting to their attempts to earn an "honest livelihood" (Bartrip 159). In reality, many men did not have funds to collect. This was the case for more than 3,000 of those released by February 1856. Another 586 men had money but decided it was not worth applying for the funds and never collected it (Bartrip 1599). These thousands of men, a significant portion of all ticket-of-leave men, theoretically had no state supervision on reentering society. Yet they also lacked any economic base for restarting their lives.

Taylor's play exaggerates the work opportunities men had in prison to produce economic surety on release. When Brierly returns home, May offers him the money she has saved over the past three years, but Brierly refuses it. He explains that his financial situation is actually better than May's. While she has been saving "a shilling every week out of [her] savings" to try and repay, with interest, the two pounds he lent her, Brierly earned "twenty pound in brass" from prison, ten times more than the amount May was aiming for (24). This monetary difference may indicate the difficulty women faced in earning a living, especially given the costs of daily life, which Brierly did not have to cover in prison. It paints Brierly in the position of a hard-working man, fulfilling his masculine role of supporting a household. But it also suggests that prisons provide prisoners with adequate opportunity to build a financial base for their reentry process. Brierly's twenty pounds is an unrealistic amount of money to have accumulated over his three years in prison. The Select Committee of the House of Commons on Transportation estimated that "a first-class prisoner of industrious habits could earn 65s per annum," or 3 pounds 5 shillings each year for a total of 9 pounds, 15 shillings over three years (Bartrip 159). This

estimation is less than half of what Brierly miraculously accumulated in that time. Brierly also would not have been able to obtain the money until three months after his release, and only if he had a letter of reference showing he was earning a living (Bartrip 159). Taylor creates a favorable impression of the economic opportunities in prison by increasing Brierly's income while incarcerated.

Ticket-of-leave men faced further economic difficulties because of their limited access to work. Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* highlights some of the common job options available to these men, such as navvying on canals and roads (Mayer "Ticket" 35). Such low wage jobs were not necessarily easy to land, however, as Taylor has Brierly struggle to join a navvying crew. One 1854 article in *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper* began by declaring the ticket-of-leave "a Ticket of Leave to starve" ("The Ticket of Leave"). While men were paid for their labor in prison, they were not given the chance to earn a living outside due to employer bias. Despite being released on good behavior, the ticket-of-leave men were still being judged based on their association with prison. Brierly, however, has particularly good luck when he first leaves prison, securing a rare bank job (Mayer "Ticket" 35). Ticket-of-leave men were essentially restricted from positions of trust. David Mayer points out that the Taylor's choice of workplace is likely a vestige of the French play that served as the inspiration for Taylor's melodrama, *Léonard,* or *Le Retour de Melun* (35). While less representative of a typical ticket-of-leave man's employment, the bank setting forces the play's audience to confront middle class values and biases.

Some Victorians were initially sympathetic about the limited economic opportunities for newly minted ticket-of-leave men. Henry Mayhew even attempted to rally people behind ticket-of-leave men as a social cause. He hosted a meeting of ticket-of-leave men in 1857, bringing along a politician to hear the men's stories. *Lloyd's* complained, however, that the Lord in

attendance offered nothing substantial to the men, only advice about reading the Bible and trusting to God ("Ticket of Leave Tales"). This meeting was widely reported, with a *Times* article on the subject being reprinted as far away as Calcutta in *The Friend of India.* Given the international nature of the transportation system, it is not surprising that this topic garnered interest across the empire. The article in *The Friend of India* found Mayhew's investment in the ticket-of-leave men laughable. The writer suggested that Mayhew was "making capital out of the all," using the men as fodder for his own publications ("The Ticket-of-Leave Men"). [108] They jokingly write, "If he cannot better their condition in a very substantial sense, he will at least invest it with the interest of romance." Despite this sarcastic comment about the benefit of a romantic portrayal, the article goes on to suggest that the ticket-of-leave men might have been better supported if the meeting was not a conversation, but a *show*:

> The performance ought then to have consisted of a gay rollicking song, a lively conversation, an impassioned recitative, and a solemn conjuration or oath, sung by the whole company, rising for the purpose, and shaking hands all round. This would have been intelligible, and, if not severely instructive, at least impressive…But the proceedings on Snow-hill appealed so little to the imagination that the reason remains unseduced, and we ask what it was all about, and what the men meant for. ("The Ticket-of-Leave Men")

To this writer, an exaggerated, emotional, melodramatic mode would be more functional than real life stories. The author dismisses the possibility of the men accruing any tangible benefit from the meeting and suggests the most that could be hoped for is awareness-raising. If heightened public knowledge is the goal, then the author believes drama and performance would better serve the cause. This article values spectacle, even if it is not "severely instructive." Six

[108] Mayhew did eventually write about the men for *London Labour and the London Poor.* This account was not particularly melodramatic, rather a mix of statistics and self-aggrandizement.

years after this journalist's call for a ticket-of-leave melodrama, Taylor produced one to great acclaim. As we'll see in the next section, Taylor agreed with the British media about the value of melodrama in communicating the problems of the ticket-of-leave system. The form was an ideal choice for dramatizing the problems faced by ticket-of-leave men due to the form's inherent pathos.

The Appeal of the Melodramatic Mode

Melodrama is a dramatic form born out of pantomime that combines, as the name implies, music and drama. These theatrical productions featured an emotional reckoning of good versus evil, to be neatly resolved by the end of the performance. Both the word "melodrama" and the form itself originated in France at the end of the eighteenth century (Williams "Introduction"). The first melodrama was performed in England in 1800, where it remained a dominant theatrical form throughout the century (Williams "Introduction"). Peter Brooks initiated the academic study of melodrama with his field-establishing *The Melodramatic Imagination,* which focused on French melodramas from 1800-1830.[109] Despite this initial heavy emphasis on French melodrama, scholars have recently stressed that the flow of inspiration was not unidirectionally from France to England. Many French authors were influenced by English writers of the past while English authors who adopted French material often put a distinctive spin on the material.[110] Matthew Buckley explains, "England would continue to import French

[109] Brooks took melodramas seriously, in a way that had not been before. He considered the factors of the play that contributed to a melodramatic mode of novel-writing for Honoré de Balzac and Henry James.

[110] Buckley claims that French drama of the 18th century drew upon English literature, creating a complexly multidirectional picture of the system ("Early"). For instance, Alexandre Dumas's theatrical work was highly influenced by British models, like Scott (Atkinson 437). Just as English adaptations of French melodramas made the material suitable for their country, so too did French material. For instance, William Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* was used as the basis for the French melodrama *Les Chevaliers du Brouillard*, or "Knights of the Fog" (Ellis 369). By its title alone—mentioning two objects not found in Ainsworth's text—it is clear the French play

melodrama for decades to come, in a cross-channel trade that ran heavily one way...However, it would also graft the new formula, from the start, to England's native, proto-melodramatic traditions and from these develop its own national, and imperial, variations" ("Early" 14). Even if the movement of materials was not equally balanced, English playwrights made important decisions in resituating French dramas for their own cultural landscape. These English plays were incredibly successful in their own right and had a lasting impact. In Buckley's laudatory terms, "If melodrama arrived in England from France, it was England, and through the forms developed there in its first four decades of growth, that it reached the world" (15).

By the time that Taylor wrote *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, he was already an established playwright in the form of melodrama, with extensive experience in adapting French materials for English audiences.[111] English critics were well aware of the pattern of theatrical adaptation, and this practice was Henry Morley's primary complaint in reviewing Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man.* He even suggested that adaptation could be a form of dishonesty and national disgrace, calling a wide slew of English playwrights "licensed cheat[s]."[112] In Morley's view, good English melodrama requires both originality and honesty from its writers. At stake in the production of an English melodrama is not only economic success or fame, but personal character and national pride.

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adapts the text to align with French ideas of England. Central to production design was a "gauze curtain…to simulate a London fog" (Ellis 369).

[111] Tolles notes that Taylor was a leading playwright in England in 1860, but after several less successful plays that year, he did not produce any new pieces for three years. *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* relaunched Taylor on the national scene on May 27, 1863 (197). The success of The Ticket-of-Leave Man is often brought up in conversations of theatrical economies, as Taylor only received £200 for the play (Booth *Theatre* 142).

[112] Morley scathingly writes, "Some critics read, see, and try to remember, a mass of French pieces that are not worth reading or seeing, to say nothing of remembering, in order that they may maintain credit as detectives; and the source of this sort of mystification are so wide and obscure that, one might almost say, every English dramatic writer is supposed in this matter to be a licensed cheat, and nobody ever can be proved honest." (259). Morley's harsh criticism is not a complete dismissal of Taylor as a playwright; in fact, elsewhere in *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866*, Morley praises Taylor's talent. For instance, he calls Taylor's 1852 *Masks and Faces* "one of the best dramas of our time" (313).

Melodrama was a suitable form for depicting the ticket-of-leave system not only because of its popularity but because of its connections to criminal activity. Michael Booth explains, "Almost all melodramas depend upon criminal activity, or at the very least on powerful criminal intent, for their very existence" (*Theatre* 162). Often the criminal activity in melodramas was set in foreign lands or earlier times. Still, Booth claims that regardless of the setting of the melodrama, they felt connected to the reality of their audiences: "they had a sense of immediate contemporaneity, of appeal to the domestic, emotional and imaginative life of their audience" (*Theatre* 151). At other times, as in the case of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, melodramas spoke directly to criminal justice matters of their current moment, realistically depicting the problems of their time.

Historically, critics have not considered melodramas to be particularly realistic, even when set in the present. In writing *Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks intended to rescue melodrama from being considered unliterary and unrealistic as to be beneath scholarly notice. He did not, however, claim these texts to be realistic. Instead, he argued that these unrealistic texts dealt with deep truths, beyond the level of the daily or ordinary, working on the plane of the "moral occult" (5). In this truer plane, nothing is repressed or held back, but everything is shared (42). Scholars after Brooks have suggested that the genre shifted over the course of the nineteenth century, drifting closer to the realm of realism.[113]

More recently, scholars have begun to push back against the characterization of melodramas as unrealistic. Carolyn Williams demonstrates the realistic elements embedded in melodrama. In her work on Gilbert and Sullivan, Williams discusses how melodramas were "a proto-realistic genre, concerned with the real world of social relations" (*Gilbert and Sullivan* 97).

[113] Matthew Buckley demonstrated that this shift is not necessarily a clear progression. Instead, multiple fads occurred on the heels of their forerunners and then repeated themselves in the decades to come ("Early").

What made them less realistic were their resolutions: "every bit as transformative as any elixir-induced transformation in the theater of extravaganza" (101). In her more recent work on melodrama, Williams alters her stance on melodramatic endings. She contends that the melodramas' happy endings play a role in the realism of the play; they "retrospectively highlight the relative realism of melodramatic middles" ("Melodrama" 212). Rather than being the moment that confounds or breaks from realism, the endings, through this disjuncture, highlight and solidify the realistic problems that precede them. Williams's framing of melodramatic endings directly counters earlier claims by scholars like Michael Booth. In Booth's framework, the emphasis in the melodrama is wholly on the ending, with the many horrors of melodrama forming a mere "prelude to inevitable happiness" (*English* 14). Assuming Williams's framework, we might expect the central problems of *The Ticket-of-Leave Men* to be productive material for examining the problems of the ticket-of-leave system, even if we should not trust to its happy ending. Whereas in Chapter II, I showed how Dickens identified a contemporary problem by confounding the traditional ends of life stories, here I consider the way problem identification occurs despite, or perhaps because of, a traditional ending. With audience members well-versed in the genre of melodrama, they expect their play to end well for their hero, so all of the surprise and intrigue is encapsulated in the way the problem unfolds.

Focusing on realistic problems with unrealistic endings might sound counterproductive, but establishing the validity and aspects of a problem is a key first step in change. Creating sympathy for heroes and placing particular blame for their problems can be powerful assessments of real world problems. Melodramas, in fact, have historically been associated with radicalism. Rohan McWilliam explains how melodramas had their "roots in the French Revolution," and he notes how one of the first playwrights to bring melodramas to the English

stage, Thomas Holcroft, had radical politics (166).[114] Subsequent melodramas did not necessarily extol class struggle and uprising, but they did concern themselves with class-based problems and embraced a sense of democratic politics through their structure of feeling (McWilliam 170, 172). Even before centering his story on a ticket-of-leave man, Taylor was already well-known for highlighting middle class, rather than upper class heroes (McWilliam 168-9). As part of the tradition of melodrama, Taylor reframed for his audience whose stories were worth telling.

Some scholars, like Elaine Hadley, believe melodrama has even greater political potential beyond choosing provocative protagonists because their realistic problems prompt audiences to imagine possible solutions. She embraces the melodramatic mode as an effective tool in engaging communities for social solutions in drama and beyond. Part of the mode she identifies is an "ethic of visibility [derived] from traditional codes of social display" (70). Unlike earlier acting modes which "privilege[d] private spaces, private subjectivity, and private exchanges," melodramas tend to have their action and dialogue occurring in communal places, seen and overheard by other characters and a large public audience (70). Other critics, like Simon Shepherd, might read this shift as reflecting a greater sense of surveillance in public life (28). But Hadley suggests that the public nature of melodrama plots "situates law and morality in a public performative space inhabited by social and familial relationships rather within the private spaces of individuals or in God" (71). This reorientation makes characters' problems incumbent on the play's bystanders, and the audience by extension. It poses the possibility of a solution derived from a wider network of invested community members. Even if a melodrama's extravagant

[114] Additionally, McWilliam shows how censors found early melodramas to be radical; he quotes George Colman as saying, in 1824, that melodramas "preach up the doctrine that government is Tyranny, that revolt is Virtue, and that rebels are Righteous" (quoted in McWilliam 166).

conclusion comes about through individual effort, these solutions arise generally from characters who witness or overhear problems, inhabiting a similar position as audience members.

A public, theatrical grappling with the ticket-of-leave system was well suited for the nature of the system. This new system forced British citizens to confront national matters of criminal justice in a new way. A blind spot of society was suddenly coming into view and it prompted a reshaping of the public imaginary of the justice system. Just as melodramas publicly displayed issues on a stage for all audience members to witness, newspapers broadcast the lives of people impacted by the criminal justice system. Rather than being shipped across the world to be forgotten by society for years and not necessarily ever returning, people convicted of crimes were suddenly and visibly becoming community members again.

The public nature of the ticket-of-leave system stands in contrast to the usual carceral logic of isolation. According to scholars such as Göran Blix, carceral spaces are both forgotten places and places of forgetting, beyond the public purview. Looking at Victor Hugo's and Alexandre Dumas's prison interests, Blix show how these nineteenth-century French novelists highlight three types of amnesia related to prisons. This is a "triple silencing, which comprises the body, the written record, and the social memory" (42). Like *Little Dorrit,* these texts show imprisoned men losing their sense of selves, being written out of society, and forgotten by loved ones. Blix undersells how many people are involved in the enterprise of prisons, as he leaves out the knowing workers with less power as well as the many loved ones who do not forget, the Chiveries and Frederick Dorrits of French prison novels. It is a whole state enterprise that lives in this societal "blind spot," blind only to the unaffected middle classes. Yet Blix is right in seeing prison as a secretive and secluded institution; so, too was the system of transportation which sent convicted men and women half the world away. The ticket-of-leave system pushed

back against the silence, with an outpouring of bodies, written records, and social memory. The nation responded in debate through the periodic press, grappling with who comprised their community and whether ticket-of-leave men should be included. By publicly including these men as worthy subjects, in fact heroes, on stage could be a radical act of remembering and reincorporating forgotten, isolated, and discarded men.

In the following two sections, we will look more closely at two important features of melodrama to see how they were used in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* and other popular portrayals of the ticket-of-leave system: the hero and the villain. The hero, in his tragic honesty, gained public sympathy, without fully inspiring public action. The villain, in his unambiguous evil, cements the notion of character as fixed and a criminal class as beyond salvation. With such a stark dichotomy of character, the radical potential of Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* falls short.

An Unlikely Melodramatic Hero

Key to the radical pathos of Taylor's hero is that the figure of the ticket-of-leave man did not generate much sympathy in 1863. If Taylor had written his play within the first few years that the ticket-of-leave system was implemented, Bob Brierly might not have seemed an unlikely hero. At that time, various presses wrote in support of ticket-of-leave men, recognizing the economic hardships they faced.[115] However, by 1863, many periodicals had adopted their own melodramatic position in relation to ticket-of-leave men, casting them as public villains. Melodramatic techniques were also used to heighten the public fear about the "evil" potential of these men. In the face of this depiction, Taylor not only highlights the potential heroism of a

[115] Bartrip suggests that periodicals originally supported the system in its first two years.

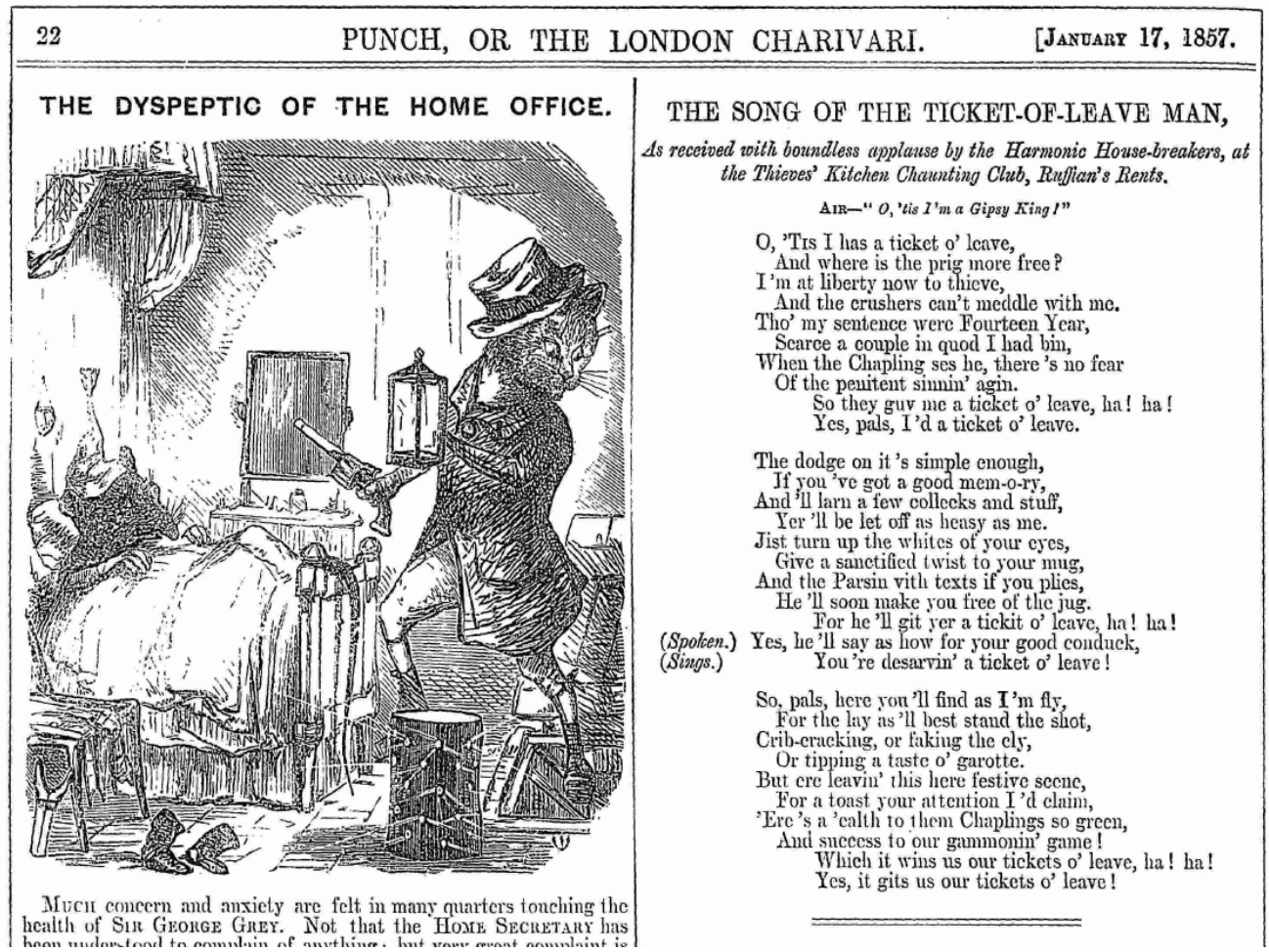
ticket-of-leave man, but he grants him the trait of honesty, an essential characteristic for an English hero and the main feature people believed formerly incarcerated individuals lacked. Yet ultimately, this singular, heroic figure was not enough to change the public's understanding of ticket-of-leave men as a whole.

Writers for periodicals seized upon melodrama's insistence on the bifurcation of good and bad people by painting ticket-of-leave men as incapable of acting in the public's interest and lying about having a change of heart. In one article in *Lloyd's* in 1854, Sir Peter Laurie explained that a reformed thief was "as fabulous as phoenix or unicorn" ("The Ticket of Leave"). *Punch* leaned into the *melos* of melodrama, publishing persona songs in which ticket-of-leave men were happy to thieve again and ridiculed chaplains who believed in their repentance (see Figure III.1, "The Song"). Another persona, with a comically thick dialect, claimed to be "injur'd hinnocent" but was caught committing illegal acts on multiple occasions ("A Lamentable Lay"). Ticket-of-leave men were cast as melodramatic lower-class villains and their potential victims were both employers and other employees. These men were not only aligned with a melodramatic type, but defined as a social group. Mayhew, for instance, in *London Labour and the London Poor* talks of the men as a "distinct class" (430). Ticket-of-leave men were treated either as a group with similar needs or a group inherently less deserving and destined to take advantage of the public, not unlike the idea of a "criminal class" that flourished in the 1860's, which was also promulgated by Mayhew.[116]

At stake in the portrayal of ticket-of-leave men as a group was the right to work. Sympathetic accounts in the first years of the system had pointed out the men's lack of job

[116] Victor Bailey suggests that Mayhew was key to shaping the image of the criminal classes as distinct from the working classes in his series of *London Labour and the London Poor*. In this text, Mayhew has a separate volume dedicated to people he views as inherently uninterested in work and willing to lie or cheat to live leisurely (242-3).

options. By the early 1860s, some newspapers were pushing back against this depiction for the sake of other workers and employers. A key contention was that these men were getting better work opportunities than "honest" men. One article contended that honest men should have "prior right to his share of labour" ("Sympathy with Ticket of Leave Convicts"). Another newspaper defended the rights of employers to know who they were hiring, claiming past imprisonment should be considered in hiring processes ("A Ticket-of-leave Case"). In these complaints, we can



22 PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI. [JANUARY 17, 1857.

THE DYSPEPTIC OF THE HOME OFFICE.

MUCH concern and anxiety are felt in many quarters touching the health of SIR GEORGE GREY. Not that the HOME SECRETARY has

THE SONG OF THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN,

As received with boundless applause by the Harmonic House-breakers, at the Thieves' Kitchen Chaunting Club, Ruffian's Rents.

AIR—"*O, 'tis I'm a Gipsy King!*"

O, 'TIS I has a ticket o' leave,
And where is the prig more free?
I'm at liberty now to thieve,
And the crushers can't meddle with me.
Tho' my sentence were Fourteen Year,
Scarce a couple in quod I had bin,
When the Chapling ses he, there 's no fear
Of the penitent sinnin' agin.
So they guv me a ticket o' leave, ha! ha!
Yes, pals, I'd a ticket o' leave.

The dodge on it 's simple enough,
If you 've got a good mem-o-ry,
And 'll larn a few collecks and stuff,
Yer 'll be let off as heasy as me.
Jist turn up the whites of your eyes,
Give a sanctified twist to your mug,
And the Parsin vith texts if you plies,
He 'll soon make you free of the jug.
For he 'll git yer a tickit o' leave, ha! ha!
(*Spoken.*) Yes, he 'll say as how for your good conduck,
(*Sings.*) You 're desarvin' a ticket o' leave!

So, pals, here you 'll find as I 'm fly,
For the lay as 'll best stand the shot,
Crib-cracking, or faking the cly,
Or tipping a taste o' garotte.
But ere leavin' this here festive scene,
For a toast your attention I 'd claim,
'Ere 's a 'ealth to them Chaplings so green,
And success to our gammonin' game!
Which it wins us our tickets o' leave, ha! ha!
Yes, it gits us our tickets o' leave!

Figure III.1. Song in *Punch* (1857) satirizing ticket-of-leave men.

see the burgeoning of contemporary processes like criminal background checks and restricting formerly incarcerated people from getting professional licenses.[117] Criminal conviction was associated with character and deemed a suitable barrier for employment.

The depiction of ticket-of-leave men as melodramatic villains increased in 1855 as the media correlated a supposed increase of crime in London with the ticket-of-leave policy (Bartrip 156). Nineteenth century newspapers were actively involved in reporting on crime, with spectacular and violent coverage often generating loyal readers.[118] Whether or not crime increased in 1855 is difficult to track, due to inconsistent and imprecise statistical recordings.[119] Bartrip's analysis shows a slight uptick in crime in 1857, yet he notes that this uptick occurred many years after the ticket-of-leave policy was implemented and could have been occasioned by the end of the Crimean war, changes in trade policies, or an increase of police in the provinces (163). There was no clear indication that ticket-of-men leave were at all responsible for new crime in London.

A second wave of ticket-of-leave man crime reporting, in the early 1860s, greatly increased people's associations of these men with crime. The press reported a series of "garroting" attacks in London that occurred in 1856 and again in 1862, the year before Taylor's play. These garroting attacks were instances of theft, in which strangulation was used. According to Cornhill magazine, the attacks were generally "moderately harmless," and the technique was

[117] For instance, an infographic compiled by the Carceral State Project at the University of Michigan shows that licenses for professions have greatly increased since the 1950s in the US, and that this barrier often keeps out anyone with a history of crime (Ordway).

[118] In her book chapter "The Rise of Modern Crime Reporting," Rosalind Crone shows how newspapers, like *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* relied on reporting violent crime as a way to compete with cheap broadsides and penny bloods with fictional and semi-fictional accounts of violence (210-11). Sensation was also used by radical publishers, like *weekly Police Gazette* that aimed to gather support for the poor by demonstrating the difficulties they faced (220).

[119] Crime statistics are often misleading as changes in rates of "crime" depend on how society labels "crime." For instance, Gatrell notes that what looked like an increase in crime in the start of the 19th century was actually an increase in the prosecution rate (250).

supposedly "learned…on convict ships from gaolers who used the technique to control troublesome prisoners" (quoted in Sindall 352). The origin of this move suggests that, in the unlikely case that ticket-of-leave men were indeed the primary attackers in these cases, they would have learned their means of violence from the carceral system. More likely, ticket-of-leave men were scapegoats, convenient villains for the press. Stuart Hall and other scholars have suggested that the new term "garroting" played an important role in the public seeing routine violence as an emergent phenomenon. Public awareness of theft with strangulation existed before the mid-1860 panic, such as the "well-established underworld type" of Chokee Bill (Hall 8). By labelling a familiar form of violence with an unfamiliar name, the media stoked a panic about untold violence gripping London. Hall explains that "[l]abels…assign events to contexts" such that terms generate a field of associations (23).[120] In this case, the newly minted group "ticket-of-leave men" was integrally linked to the new phrase of "garroting."

The newspapers sparked panic by publishing voluminously and emphasizing the villainy of ticket-of-leave men. R. Sindall recounts that in the first garroting panic, "[d]uring the winter months of 1856 *The Times* published seven editorials and thirty-one letters on the subject" (352). Sindall believes the press was more self-aware of their role in shaping public discourse in the second panic, and this, along with the attack of a prominent figure, created greater public fervor against ticket-of-leave men (354).[121] Compared to only seven editorials in winter 1856, *The Times* published eighteen editorials in November and December 1862 alone. Many of these articles argued for the return of transportation, preferring to expel these men for 7 or 14 years

[120] Hall discusses the way labels work in relation to the term "mugging," as his book addresses an England-based panic about mugging in the 1970s. Hall only briefly discusses garroting towards the beginning of his text as an example of a similar case study a century prior. Just as Hall draws on the history of garroting to understand the mugging phenomenon, I draw upon his theorization of mugging to understand what happened with garroting.
[121] The foremost garroting incident involved a public figure, Pilkington, MP for Blackburn.

from their home country. The prolific accounts of garroting stoked public fear and directed public attention to specific—and unrelated—criminal justice policy on which they could place blame and advocate for a solution.

The media coverage of garroting attacks would have been fresh in the minds of Taylor's audiences in 1863. Taylor even references garroting attacks in his play, bringing up the association himself. When Brierly is being arrested by police, he calls them "garrotin' chaps," believing them to be violent criminals rather than officers of the law (16). Brierly begins the play aligned with the periodical press, and likely the audience, fearful and suspicious of garroting ticket-of-leave men. This outburst is ironic, as he is facing state-violence, and he soon becomes a ticket-of-leave man himself, without gaining any increased disposition toward violence. In this moment, the audience and Brierly are likely aligned with their expectations and preconceptions, and this scene sets both character and audience to come to new realizations over the course of the melodrama.

Brierly emerges as the play's hero because of his ability to withstand his unfortunate position while maintaining his primary virtue: honesty. Heroes in melodramas were not valorized for their success or intelligence, but for a combination of their goodness and their pathetic position. As Michael Booth explains, "The basic hero is really rather stupid…[T]he hero is always in trouble, and spends much of his time trying to clear his good name of crimes the villain has committed" (*English* 17). Unlike Jack Sheppard, who inspired followers to breaking the mold, traditional melodrama heroes, like Brierly, stuck to their conventional values and virtues, no matter the situation. Taylor's play portrays honesty as a tragic *flaw* for its hero, as honesty about his ticket-of-leave status hampers his job prospects. The play makes its viewers question whether the economically unstable situation created by the ticket-of-leave system is

capable of producing successful heroes or whether laws, protocols, and social pressures preclude the dual states of honesty and happiness.

Honesty was a core English virtue in the nineteenth century. The particular brand of English honesty that Brierly tries to encapsulate is best seen by means of comparison. The concept of a distinctly English honesty surfaced in reviews of a French piece, similar to Taylor's play. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), featured a heroic man returning from prison, albeit with a yellow passport rather than a ticket-of-leave. The similarity between *Les Misérables* and *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* is further established through a third party, *Léonard,* or *Le Retour de Melun* (1860), which served as the basis for Taylor's melodrama. The publishers for the French melodrama deemed it similar enough to *Les Misérables* that they included a preface to the play, demonstrating that it predated Hugo's novel.[122] While *Léonard* wanted to emerge from beneath the shadow of Hugo's colossal literary achievement, Taylor's adaptation likely blossomed in the novel's shade. French literature had a rich market in nineteenth-century England, and *Les Misérables* was well received.[123] One 1862 review of the English translation claimed the novel ought to be classed with the highest of texts: "Anyone who reads the Bible and Shakspere may read 'Les Miserables'" ("English Translation"). Perhaps benefiting from the recent popularity of the ex-convict figure, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* still distinguished itself by being a uniquely English take on the French tale, particularly through its conceptualization of a virtuous hero.

[122] In the 1863 version of *Léonard*, the preface seems to exist solely to point out when *Léonard* was performed—1860—and when *Les Misérables* was written—1862. The writers establish these dates for their safety, perhaps fearing attacks of plagiarism or unoriginality: "Pour notre sauvegarde, nous rappelons ces deux dates" (Brisebarre and Nus 3).

[123] For an account of the landscape of French literature in England in the 1840s and 1850s, see Juliette Atkinson's article on Alexandre Dumas, which demonstrates how saturated the English market was with French material. English newspapers wrote anxiously about English writers being less privileged (430). In addition to having access to the French version of the novel, English readers had access to an English translation by Lascelles Wraxall within a year of the novel's original publication.

In addition to including the particular features of the English ticket-of-leave system, Taylor's play depicted a specific version of honesty in line with traditional English values. This framing of honesty aligns with English reviewers who found the value of honesty problematic in *Les Misérables*, even when they gave the novel high praise. An 1864 review, written for mothers specifically, decried certain "French" moral judgments in the play despite its sympathy for Jean Valjean and overall approval of the novel. Specifically, the author disliked that the Bishop lied to save Valjean; she explains,

> The bishop does what is rather startling to our English ideas of right and wrong. He tells a deliberate falsehood, says he had given the man the forks and spoons, and asks him why he had not taken the candlesticks also, which were bestowed on him at the same time. This is a thoroughly French incident. No English novelist would have placed the saint of his book in such a predicament…Our neighbours over the water do not consider lying as disgraceful as we do. Of that there can exist no doubt in the mind of anyone who has lived abroad. We must judge people by their own code in such cases. French law would say there were '*des circonstances attenuantes*,' and the bishop must be pardoned accordingly. ("A Mother's Thoughts" 98)

Curiously, the issue here is not only the behavior of the "dishonest" bishop, but also the author, who chooses to put his character in a situation that pits two virtues against each other. First and foremost, this reviewer believes that English writers should not compromise their heroes but should paint them starkly good or bad, in melodramatic fashion. The reviewer further distinguishes between the French and English "idea of right and wrong." In her opinion, English people have a higher expectation of honesty and count it essential in terms of morality, as compared to laxer standards in France. This is true, in her view, not only in terms in the field

"ideas" but also the field of law, which we can consider to be a product of cultural values. Another review in 1862, this one written for the *Daily Telegraph,* similarly called the Bishop's actions surrounding Valjean "very French" before clarifying that "it is surely also very noble." This second reviewer also turns from literature to law, claiming that *Les Misérables* proves the problematic nature of the French prisoner release system ("Les Miserables"). He further states that the book might help the English think through their policies: "great portions of M. Hugo's work are very strong arguments in favour of what we call philanthropy in secondary punishments, and might be quoted in support of the ticket-of-leave system." Despite seeing French character and English character as distinct, the reviewer thinks the high degree of character in a fictional French character relates to the real scenario of whether many Englishmen deserve to be languishing in prison. Both reviewers find *Les Misérables* valuable for understanding systems of criminal justice, despite balking at the novel's displays of just dishonesty.

This is not to say that honesty is not valued in *Les Misérables,* but that the type and standard of honesty seems to be qualified. The differing interpretations of honesty as a virtue in *Les Misérables* and in the minds of the English reviewers maps onto Mary Christian's categorization of virtue in the novel. She argues that *Les Misérables* distinguishes "between two kinds of virtue: one a law-abiding 'honesty' concerned with outward uprightness of conduct; the other a more inward, spiritual quality, a 'holiness' definable only by God" (11). This distinction applies to the Bishop, who lies to help Valjean, but also to the character of Fantine, who remains holy despite turning to sex work from economic necessity (11). Hugo suggests that this second form of honesty, a holiness, is more important when both forms of honesty cannot be maintained at once. Yet the English reviewers demand both types of honesty from their heroes concurrently.

Taylor's play similarly demands both upright conduct and spiritual purity from its hero. May, the heroine, reinforces this demand on stage by supporting the natural goodness of the hero while also chiding his moments of dishonesty. Brierly does not initially embrace full honesty upon his return from prison, and May suggests that this dishonesty is to blame for their later sufferings. Brierly is not blatantly false, but stumbles into lies that he thereafter maintains. At first, he lies about his identity as a means to protect May's respectability from her landlady, who assumes he is her brother and that startles upon hearing he has been "discharged" (21). He temporarily adopts the identity of May's brother and, not deviating too far from the truth of being under governmental supervision, says he was discharged from "Her Majesty's Service" (21). This untruth becomes hard to renege when, in the same scene, the landlady shares this assumed identity with Mr. Gibson, who hires Brierly to work in his bank under this context.

Although the couple slip into a position of questionable honesty, May tries to keep her hero on the virtuous path. While both May and Brierly are happy with Brierly's new job, May shares her concern about withholding information from Mr. Gibson. Six months after being hired, May says to Brierly that she can't get "one thing…off my mind": "Mr. Gibson doesn't know the truth about you" (33). They have, at this point, clearly shared the truth about their romantic relationship. The wider community does not seem to be bothered that they lied about being siblings instead of sweethearts. But May implies that hiding Brierly's past incarceration is a more substantial lie. She does not say that their employer is ignorant of Brierly's record or his personal history; instead she says, he is ignorant about "you," as if Brierly's incarceration defines who he is. Brierly replies in a way that preserves his sense of honesty, but explains his delay: "It's hard for a poor chap that's fought clear of the mud, to let go the rope he's holding to and slide back again. I'll tell him when I've been long enough here to try me, only wait a bit" (34).

For Brierly, the issue is not about maintaining a delusion forever, but creating a window of opportunity through which he can prove his merit before being judged by his past. The one small lie he told to the landlady is his rope, something substantial that he can hold onto but that might also slip out of his hands. He has not been climbing up by manner of the rope alone, but by his own actions and the strength of his body. Still, the rope is a necessary support until he reaches a secure, resting spot. The logic of temporary disguise seems reasonable, and similar to the way that Jean Valjean hides his identity throughout most of *Les Misérables*.[124] Yet, unlike *Les Misérables*, Taylor's play demands more constant and immediate honesty of its main character.

Despite the practicality of Brierly's decision, Taylor suggests that this lie leads towards a significant downward spiral for Brierly and May. Yet this decline also results from the actions of other characters. Detective Hawkshaw and Dalton both know Brierly's history since they were present at Brierly's arrest. Hawkshaw has sympathy for Brierly, believing he "paid his debt at Portland" (39). Dalton takes a less kind position exposes Brierly to his boss. When he does so, Gibson takes the information seriously. Gibson agrees that Brierly has been "steady and industrious" (46). Yet Gibson "must think of [his] own credit and character" because it would not do if people knew or suspected that he employed a ticket-of-leave man (46). The reality of Brierly's work and the character he had displayed for six months are not sufficient to guarantee his continued position.

Taylor has his characters consider these various forces as the reason for Brierly's dismissal before ultimately suggesting Brierly needs to take responsibility and pursue a job honestly. At first, much of the blame for Brierly's dismissal is laid at Gibson's feet. When May

[124] Jean Valjean, does decide ultimately, at the novel's conclusions, that he needs to use his real name if he wants to live honestly and honorable with his ward and her new husband Marius, and he confesses his past to Marius in order to avoid feeling like he was committing a daily crime (Hugo 1394-6).

finds out her husband is fired, she protests to Gibson saying, "[Y]ou couldn't have the heart" (47). Gibson deflects the issue away from himself by insisting, then and there, that she, too, is fired for her deception in this business. Yet Gibson had not been at all offended by her earlier deception about her relationship with Brierly; prior to this conversation he had brushed off that lie as a joke, saying to Brierly, "She is a first-rate housekeeper; though she *did* call *you* her brother, the little rogue" (37). The identity of rogue is a joke when it is a matter of lying about a relationship but becomes a fire-able offense when it concerns past imprisonment. At this moment, the play could hammer home that the primary problem at hand is society's self-absorbed fears; yet Taylor has his leading lady forget her bitterness towards Gibson and doubles down on the virtue of honesty. Like Little Dorrit before her, May withdraws her critique of others to insist on a framework of individual responsibility. May tells Brierly, "We were wrong to hide the truth—we are sorely punished—if you've courage to face what's before us, I have" (47). Where Jean Valjean, upon discovery, would flee and assume a new name, May and Brierly, in English fashion, try to learn from the apparent moral of their story. They truthfully present Brierly's papers at future opportunities for employment. Brierly is not, rewarded for his honesty, however, and finds himself continually without employment. It is only upon taking up a partial falsehood—pretending to Dalton that he will help with a crime while actually assisting his former employer—that he is able to regain Gibson's favor. While Taylor's play seems to be outwardly demanding honesty, it seems as if honesty of a certain kind does not prosper in the given situation. Instead, it is a cross that Brierly must bear, along with his ticket-of-leave status.

The play's insistence on personal responsibility aligns with the individualistic thinking of liberalism. Martin Wiener demonstrating the "penal legislation of the 1860s and early 1870s….[was] an expression of the disciplinary subtext of Gladstonian liberation. It was

characteristic if this form of Liberalism to accompany virtually every conferring of benefit with a demand for better behavior" (152). Ticket-of-leave men were granted freedom, but asked to be melodramatic heroes once given that privilege. When they failed to be perfect citizens, such as Brierly withholding his past, they faced further difficulties. As Wiener explains, "The imposing of blame and penalties upon those who failed to meet the obligations of citizenship, who misused freedom…was rooted deeply within mid-Victorian liberalism" (152). Freedom was not a guaranteed right, but a privilege that demanded adherence to a strict code of behavior. Freedom was accompanied with specific character requirements, but little trust in the men's character.[125]

For some critics, Brierly's honesty during his latter trials marks him as an old-fashioned hero, potentially at odds with the viewing audience of the mid-nineteenth century. Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor has demonstrated that the virtue of honesty was in flux at the time, as the English nation grappled with the relationship between character and credit. While not dealing with the term honesty specifically, her article "'Who Acts John Bull?': Speculating on English National Character and Modern Morality," demonstrates a reconfiguration of the relationship between an Englishman's character and their monetary word. In her brief section on Taylor's play, she hones in on Dalton, the counterfeiter and melodramatic villain of the play whose lies about money accompany lies about identity (73). While his character might seem like a straightforward condemnation of all types of dishonesty—theatricality included—Wagner-Lawlor also notes that Detective Hawkshaw, too, relies on elaborate disguise. Disguise, then, is not an inherently negative feature, but one with some potential.[126] She believes Brierly, in

[125] This concept, of freedom with a caveat, parallels the cause of emancipation in the US. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman shows how freedom for former US slaves was accompanied with "onerous responsibilities…with the enjoyment of few of its entitlements" (121).

[126] Alternatively, we could read Hawkshaw's deceitful appearances as uneasy instead of laudatory, suggesting mid-Victorian discomfort with the honesty of policemen.

contrast, suffers because he is "[t]he worst actor in the play" and "too honest actually to change his identity" (73, 74). For her, Brierly is a noble hero, but not of the modern age, and that in his representation on the stage as the hero, audience members confronted questions about the national character, which was previously conceived as particularly candid and "*essentially* non-theatrical" (80). In this light, Brierly is not a character like Jack Sheppard, who would encourage awe and imitation through his inventiveness, but serves as a site of pathetic sympathy in his dogged consistency. In this light, Brierly's honesty highlights the frustrating circumstances of his surroundings, the absurdity of trying to be honest when admitting a carceral past disqualifies a man from earning a living.

Whether audience members viewed Brierly's tragic honesty as a flaw worth emulating or not, there can be no doubt that the play celebrates him as a hero in the end. Brierly has the last line of the play, proudly proclaiming, "You see, there may be some good left in a 'Ticket-of-Leave-Man' after all" before the final tableau (64). Yet could this honest ticket-of-leave man, in his final moment of triumph, affect the way audience members thought about ticket-of-leave men generally? Or is he just *a* ticket-of-leave man with some good in him, surrounded by rotten thieves? One of the problems of the heroic figure of melodrama is that the hero may not be seen as standing in for an institution or a group, but as his own exceptional, honest person. Brierly, after all, had never committed a bad act and the worst that could be said was he did not admit his ticket-of-leave status to his boss originally. Nor does Taylor depict any other ticket-of-leave men in the story.

The problem of the exceptional hero is compounded by the carceral logic of differentiation. In the nineteenth century, both the poor and prisoners were commonly sorted into categories of deserving and undeserving. Charitable gifts were seen as being conditional upon

the nature of the recipient. For instance, a home visiting guide from 1846 claims that the "undeserving are those who are the most forward to ask assistance, and the most likely to misemploy it when given" (Charlesworth 159). Self-confident assertiveness was disliked in preference for quiet, passive, humility, i.e. the typical melodramatic hero. These categories of deserving and undeserving were applied to ticket-of-leave men, too. Consider Watts Philips's "A Ticket of Leave, a Farce," which played in December 1862, some three months before Taylor's play debuted. The play was set in "Unfortunately the present" and included two ticket-of-leave men. Nuggets was wrongfully convicted and returns to see his sister in England after making his fortune honestly in Australia while Bottles is employed in the sister's household and is intent on stealing from her. The play eventually reveals that Bottles had committed the crime for which Nuggets was originally convicted. Bottles's continued criminality is associated with his being of a lower class. Throughout the play his illiteracy is highlighted, while Nuggets can read and has more substantial financial security. In this light, the ticket-of-leave system is presented as working well enough for Nuggets, who "deserves" his freedom and the audience's sympathy, but not at all in the case of Bottles, who appears unredeemable. With one good and one bad ticket-of-leave holder, the play suggests that the system is letting free just as many undeserving and deserving men. By the end of the play, Bottles does promise to reform, but he also says in an aside, "The farce wouldn't be complete without it" (12). This line calls attention to formal expectations of resolution while also dismissing the idea that a former prisoner would ever stop breaking the law. In farce, as in melodrama, the good remain good and the bad remain bad, regardless of their story trajectories.

The division of ticket-of-leave men into deserving and undeserving categories emphasizes the individual nature of the men, rather than paying attention to the debilitating

factors of legal and carceral processes. The false boundary between deserving and undeserving is clear in a ballad such as "The Ticket of Leave Man."[127] The song begins with a shoemaker being ruined by a ticket-of-leave man who was "still inclined to thieve." After the shoemaker cashes a forged note, he goes to Botany Bay and after a year returns as a ticket-of-leave man himself. He is frustrated at not being able to find work and though "not inclined to thieve," he says, "They make me a thief and dishonest at last" by denying him the opportunity to work honestly for a living. The system, here, does not reform a person who is supposedly dishonest to start. Instead, it ends up forcing an honest man to use illegal means after cutting the speaker off from the regular economy. This ballad demonstrates the lack of clear definition between deserving and undeserving ticket-of-leave men. It suggests the danger of the ticket-of-leave system is that it can make people change their character, depart from honesty, and become "undeserving." The system here seems doomed for repeated failure with each refrain. The speaker retains the reader's sympathy even as he regresses from virtuous English honesty. Yet the reader's initial sympathy, as in the farce, is dependent on the man's innocence of wrongdoing. When literature, like this ballad, the previous farce, or Taylor's melodrama, overly stress heroic, individual character, they threaten to occlude larger systemic problems.

Framed Villains of the System

Even more so than heroes, villains shape the plot of melodramas. Most melodramas are "villain-driven," as the hero primarily reacts to the villain's actions (Mayer "Encountering" 150). While a Jack Sheppard makes his own story, a Bob Brierly is at the mercy of those around him. In *The Ticket-of-Leave Man,* Taylor could have cast a variety of villains for the ticket-of-leave

[127] The text of this ballad occurs in Hugh Anderson's collection of transportation ballads on page 291. No publisher or publication date is provided.

system. This section will focus on four potential villains, as proposed by the press or the play: the police for their meddling and aggressiveness, society for its negligence and cruelty towards returning citizens, the people who engage in criminal behavior for their choices, and the construct of the prison for its impact on its prisoners. Taylor's play suggests the fault for the system's failures likes, from least to most, in the police, the prison, society, and the "criminal class." By emphasizing the supposed "criminal class" as the gravest villains, the plays ultimately suggests the beneficial nature of both policing and prisons, without fully holding society accountable for its classist beliefs.

The police were often framed by the periodical press as the nemeses of ticket-of-leave men, prior to the 1860s garroting panic. An 1858 *Morning Chronicle* article recounts the story of a 21-year-old man arrested for loitering when he was waiting for a young woman for a few minutes. Simply because he was in possession of two keys the police thought that he was standing there "for the purpose of committing a felony" ("A Ticket-of-Leave Man's Story"). The police informed him he should not be out after 11pm and told him to avoid the police. The press printed his indignant reply, that "he hoped the police would not be allowed to insult him in the streets." For ticket-of-leave men, freedom of movement—and freedom to stand still—was limited by the surveillance of police.

In *The Ticket-of-Leave Man,* Brierly similarly feels affronted by an overreaching police force. However, this occurs before he goes to prison. The police do not identify themselves in arresting Brierly, so he thinks they are criminals attacking him (16). In this moment the audience cannot visually identify the police either and may be angry at the officers' lack of transparency and infringement on privacy. David Mayer demonstrates that the play's original audiences would have had reason to be suspicious of the police. The metropolitan police was relatively new,

formed in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel, at a time when police were associated with squashing rebellions.[128] Plainclothes police officers, the type of office embodied by Detective Hawkshaw in Taylor's play, were only established in 1842. They were considered particularly suspect because of memoirs published in the 1820s by an undercover French police officer, Eugène-François Vidocq. Vidocq's memoirs shocked the public and spurred plays such as J. B. Buckstone's *Vidocq; The French Police Spy* for the Surrey in 1828 ("The Ticket").[129] Taylor's play further suggests that the threat of police contributes to a carceral environment for the poor. Before Brierly commits any crime, the police are called on him because the owner suspects he will not have enough money to pay his bill, regardless of Brierly's truthful protestations (12). Additionally, the owner accuses May of stealing spoons and threatens May she will be "locked up for annoying my customers" (15). The police seem to be at the disposal of proprietors with money against those without. These early moments in the play suggest that, even before prison supposedly taints Brierly, the threat of the police looms heavy over the working poor's lives.

Despite the potential distrust of police at the beginning of the play, Taylor's play does not have the police harass Brierly after he returns from prison. Instead, the primary police figure, Hawkshaw is presented as more sympathetic towards Brierly than anyone in the play besides May. Despite having the occasion to reveal Brierly's identity, Hawkshaw does not do so. This fact clearly struck some viewers as noteworthy, as seen by its inclusion in *The Illustrated London News* review of the play ("The Ticket-of-Leave Man"). Later, we even see Hawkshaw advocate for Brierly to working-class men. When Brierly's ticket-of-leave status is revealed by Moss to a work crew of navvies Brierly wants to join, Hawkshaw pipes up, "Who knows, lads—perhaps

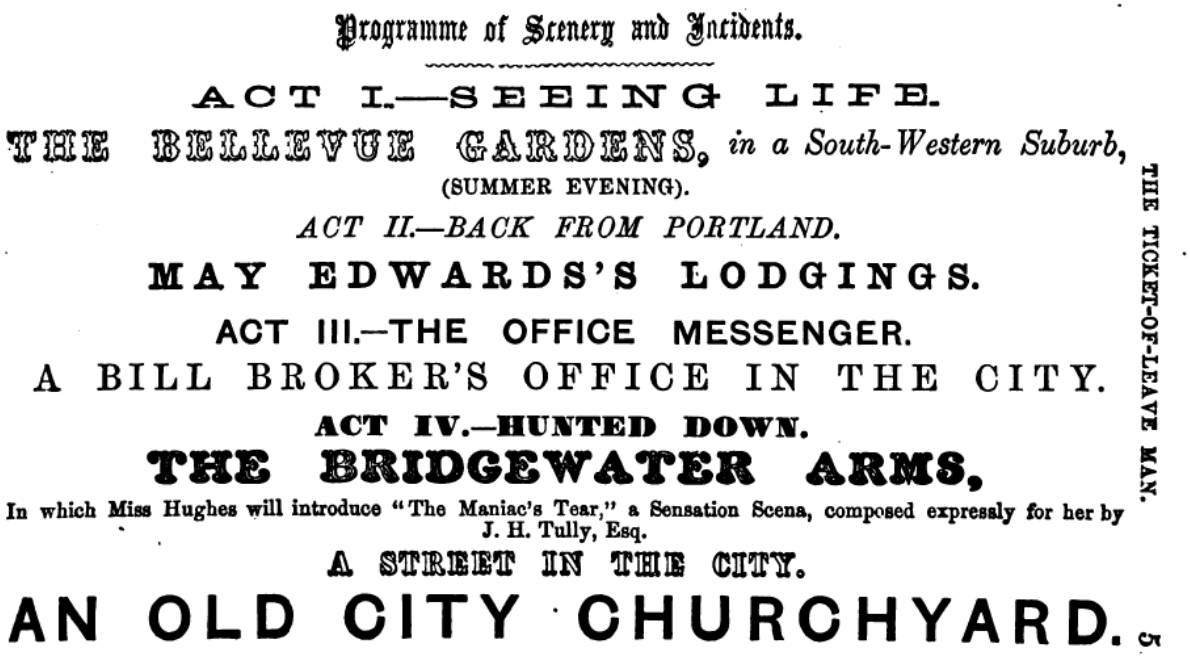
[128] This even led to the death of dozens of protesters in the 1819 Peterloo Massacre (Vitale, ch. 2).
[129] While Mayer reflects on other important historical situations in relation to the play such as the garroting scares, the abolition of the transportation system, and the surveillance of parolees, these are primarily in service of why audiences might have found Hawkshaw more suspect than readers today.

he's repented" (58). The working men refuse to listen and physically turn away from Brierly (58). Hawkshaw is seen as kind-hearted and just, even more sympathetic than regular working men. Perhaps for this reason, Hawkshaw had an afterlife beyond the play, featuring in his very own comic strip by Gus Mager, from 1913-1922 and again from 1922-1952. Through Hawkshaw, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* portrays police as allies, not enemies, of people returning from prison.

By showing Hawkshaw to be more forgiving than the navvies, Taylor offers society and its stigma as potential villains in the play. The role of general society is most clearly articulated through Emily, a theatrical performer. Throughout the play, she appears in moments where the fourth wall is broken, and the audience is forced to confront their position as audience members. She makes jokes about her taken name, St. Evremond, which "looks well in the bill, and sounds foreign" (22-23), and she lauds the authentic feel of the bank, which to her feels different from the sets she sees on the stage (34). Emily draws the audience's attention to the conventions of the theater while she insists on the realism of Taylor's play. This juxtaposition make the audience hyper-aware of the fictional constructions before them and are forced to reflect on their own relationship with what is occurring in the performance.

These metaleptic moments culminate in Emily's final scene. Having established herself as a successful performer, she sings "Maniac's Tear," which Maltby describes as a "sensation ballad" (48). When the actress playing Emily sings her ballad for her on-stage audience, she is also singing for *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*'s audience, and this action stands as a microcosm for the whole show: a musical and melodramatic performance for money. The play pokes fun at this concept, by enhancing the performance's sensationalism, which is generally less prominent in Taylor's melodrama, and juxtaposing the song's pathos with irreverent comedy by way of

Emily's husband, Green. This juxtaposition is clear when Green sets the scene for the audience: "It's a sensation ballad! scene—Criminal Ward, Bedlam! Miss St. Evremond is an interesting lunatic—with lucid intervals. She has murdered her husband—[*finds basket in his way.] –* Emmy! If you'd just shift those trotters—and her three children, and is supposed to be remonstrating with one of the lunacy commissioners on the cruelty of her confinement!" (49) In-between exclamatory statements setting up Emily's sensational character, Green finds himself tangled up in the repeated gag of cheap trotters, the symbol of his inability to support himself with work. The unsympathetic tone with which the play considers a man's inability to find substantial and non-degrading employment, speaks to a larger issue of a lack of sympathy for working class men. Additionally, this moment suggests that the pathos of a play like *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* is overblown and unrealistic, dealing with the grandiose without attending to the everyday. This moment creates sympathy for Emily while making her a spectacle beyond the realm of realism. The crowd values the performance, as evidenced by Green claiming, "Emly is bringing down the house in the 'Maniac' (52). The ballad itself is selling well, with three dozen a night being purchased at one shilling a piece (48). Audience applause and consumption does not equate with audience sympathy for an imprisoned woman. They are instead celebrating the performative spectacle. In the program of the show, the fourth act includes a special note: "In which Miss Hughes will introduce 'The Maniac's Tear,' A Sensation Scene, composed expressly for her by J. H. Tully, Esq" (Lacy 5; see Figure III. 2). The fact that this song is given high priority in the billing, and billed as a sensation scene, not just a song, portends its value in the play at large. Even as it makes fun of itself, the play relies on the sensationalism to sell tickets. Taylor shows himself and his audience complicit in caring more about entertainment than the affairs of afflicted people.



Programme of Scenery and Incidents.

ACT I.—SEEING LIFE.

THE BELLEVUE GARDENS, *in a South-Western Suburb,*

(SUMMER EVENING).

ACT II.—BACK FROM PORTLAND.

MAY EDWARDS'S LODGINGS.

ACT III.—THE OFFICE MESSENGER.

A BILL BROKER'S OFFICE IN THE CITY.

ACT IV.—HUNTED DOWN.

THE BRIDGEWATER ARMS,

In which Miss Hughes will introduce "The Maniac's Tear," a Sensation Scena, composed expressly for her by J. H. Tully, Esq.

A STREET IN THE CITY.

AN OLD CITY CHURCHYARD.

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN. 5

Figure III.2. Program page for *The Ticket-of-Leave Man.* In *Lacy's* acting edition.

The song itself sheds further light on the lack of empathy, or the fake empathy, that can occur through melodramatic performances. Unfortunately, there are no records of the song written by James Howard Tully for the original play.[130] Yet we can imagine the character of the ballad by considering the composition created for a 1981 production of the play, and by looking at similarly titled ballads from the nineteenth century. The 1981 ballad was written in a warm, G major. The lyrics mock the incarcerated woman, rather than empathizing with her. For instance, "the Maniac's tear it fell with a *plop*," sounds more comedic than tearful (223).[131] And the final stanza entreats men to "blend your tenderest tears with hers: / show your grief for her ghost, / and purchase her story / so gruesome and gory, / for two shilling a sheet from mine host!" (223).

[130] Martin Banham identifies James Howard Tully as the original composer in a footnote (207).
[131] In discussing the 20th century version of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, citations refer to the version of the play edited by Banham.

These verses call for empathy, but not in the name of any serious action or mental thought, but as a means towards monetary gain. Feelings of sadness and titillation are proffered on equal footing, as the song calls for tender tears, but also a desire for the gruesome and gory. It certainly does not call for action on behalf of incarcerated women suffering from their imprisonment. Taken as a microcosm for the play at large, these lyrics suggest that Taylor's play will have little tangible benefit for ticket-of-leave men due to the nature of theater and nineteenth-century theater-goers.

It is possible the original song was more sympathetic, but this seems unlikely given other surviving ballads about "mad" women in the nineteenth century. Consider, for instance a ballad published in New York in 1842 entitled "The Maniac, -- She Lingered Near the Cot." The piece was written by Henry Coleman, and composed by Jonathan Blewitt, who wrote music for London theaters for most of his life. The key is D major, and the song also focuses on an emotional, crying woman, with lines like, "The tear stood in her eye." Despite the possibility of a crying woman being sympathetic, the song quickly establishes that she is not a figure of sympathy, but rather a person incapable of love: "'Twas not the sigh of love, / Such feelings ne'er had birth." In fact the piece goes on to clarify, "The tear which dimm'd her eye / Was deathly in its smart." Instead of being a broken-hearted woman, she seems to have murdered the person laying in the cot in cold blood. In this piece, a mad woman is a fearful, inhuman creature. Coleman and Blewitt did not write their ballad for Taylor's play, but it provides a glimpse into the emotional register that might be expected when a madwoman sang in theatrical performances.

The unwavering societal stigma against ticket-of-leave men can be further seen in the lack of empathy shown by actors involved in performances of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*. Unlike

Mary Anne Keeley, who descried how empathetically linked she was with her Jack Sheppard character, Joseph Jefferson did not feel any more connected to ticket-of-leave men while playing Brierly in a touring performance. Jefferson recounted performances of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* in colonial Tasmania in his autobiography. In the chapter breakdown, this section is titled "A Terrible Audience," and within it, Jefferson recounts how the audience was terrible, not in terms of their engagement with the piece, but because of their own carceral histories. Jefferson describes that there were "[a]t least one hundred ticket-of-leave men…in the pit on the first night of its production" (260). He notes the strong sense of sympathy in the crowd around prison topics:

> …as Bob Brierly revealed to his sweetheart the 'secrets of the prison house,' there were little murmurs of recognition and shakings of the head, as though they fully recognized the local allusions that they so well remembered; deep-drawn sighs for the sufferings that Bob had gone through, and little smothered laughs at some of the old, well-remembered inconveniences of prison life; but then, Bob was a hero, and their sympathies were caught by the nobleness of his character and his innocence of crime, as though each one of these villains recognized how persecuted he and Bob had been. (260)

He considers these audience members "villains" and repeatedly assumes that they are accessing carceral memories while viewing the show. Jefferson further comments on how much the play has affected the men, based on his interactions after performances: "old 'lags'…accosted [him] on the street…and told some touching tale of their early persecutions" (260-1). The men, touched by the show, shared their stories in response. Jefferson does not return their interest. By calling himself "accosted" and modifying the touchingness of their stories by an undercutting "some," Jefferson shows that he does not want to hear about their past experiences. Granted, not all acting

methods encourage performers to empathize with the characters they display. Yet it is disheartening to find that a man playing a formerly incarcerated person cannot sympathetically consider the lives of those he portrays; how could ticket-of-leave men hope to find an empathetic ear beyond those with similar experiences? In Tasmania, the play seemed to powerfully validate the lives of formerly imprisoned men in the audience. But for general, middle class audiences, those harboring suspicions of ticket-of-leave men, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*'s self-reflexive humor does little to seriously challenge assumptions about the character of formerly incarcerated, working class people.

One of the main reasons that the play's critique of middle-class stigma does not prevail is that Taylor makes Moss and Dalton melodramatic villains. Both men are vindictive members of a supposed criminal class who orchestrate all of the problems in Brierly's life. After seeing Brierly well-established at the bank, Moss says, "A convict get himself into a respectable situation. It is a duty one owes to society to put his employer on his guard" (46). Moss parrots what middle-class newspapers were printing, but with sarcasm, since he clearly does not care about the bank. Instead of making the audience confront an honest person revealing Brierly's past, audience ire is directed at Moss for his malicious targeting of Brierly. Later in the play Moss and Dalton confirm that they are repeatedly informing on Brierly:

> Dalton. It would be a pity to let a ticket-of-leave man in among all those nice sober, well-behaved young men.
>
> Moss. I must blow him again; he must be near the end of his tether, now. (54)

Moss implies that they are primarily revealing Brierly's past in order to get him to the "end of his tether." They scheme to leave him with no other work option than criminal activity. As Brierly understands it, Moss and Dalton aim "to close all roads against me but that which leads to the

dock" (58). Dalton pursues this path, despite himself being drawn into criminal activity in a similar fashion. Dalton admits that he's "tried the honest dodge, too" but it didn't answer because, as he tells Moss, "I had a friend, like you, always after me. Whatever I tried, I was blown as a convict, and hunted out from honest men" (50). In this moment, the audience learns that Dalton also has spent time imprisoned, further cementing him and Moss as hardened, villainous characters, intent on ruining the honest Brierly.

Brierly is not privy to Moss's or Dalton's statements, yet he, too suspects a specific outside force acting against him. He soliloquizes on the mysterious misfortune he has encountered as he tries applying to a job one last time:

> Yes, the old anchor is my last chance—I've tried every road to an honest livelihood, and one after another, they are barred in my face. Everywhere that dreadful word, jail-bird, seems to be breathed in the air about me—sometimes in a letter, sometimes in a hint, sometimes a copy of the newspaper with my trial, and then it's the same story—sorry to part with me—no complaint to make—but can't keep a ticket-of-leave man. Who can it be that hunts me down this way? Hawkshaw spared me. I've done no man a wrong—poor fellows like me should have no enemies (52).

Brierly is not upset here at the people who say they cannot employ a ticket-of-leave man. He does not linger on why they would not keep him, even though they do not complain about his work. He wonders what the audience at this point already knows the answer to—who is bringing up his past? Brierly does not wonder about a general populace. Rather, he assumes there must be a singular, particular enemy, a melodramatic villain. This narrow blame spares the audience from their complicity. Had Brierly's speech occurred before Dalton's, the audience might have felt indicated or accused by Brierly's words, part of the general atmosphere of people policing

workspaces. Instead, the audience feels sorry for Brierly and mad at the designated villains who are making life difficult for him. Shortly thereafter, Brierly doubles down on this point by asking Moss directly, "Only tell me—Is it you who have followed me in this way?—who have turned all against me?—who have kept me from earning honest bread?" (58). By making a singular master villain with a plan, the play shifts Brierly's problem from society's nonacceptance of ticket-of-leave men to the vengeful attacks of established criminals (58). In this view, economic limitations and societal stigma are not criminogenic, only the criminal class are. The play emphasizes the selfishness of these men when Dalton explains, "You see, when a man's in the mud himself and can't get out of it, he don't like to see another fight clear" (58). The criminals become the villains, not necessarily from innate evil, but from a jealous hatred of seeing others succeed. This dynamic was clear to nineteenth century audiences; it was, in fact, George Bidwell's primary complaint about the play in his 1890 autobiography *Forging His Chains: The Autobiography of George Bidwell, the Famous Ticket-of-Leave Man*.[132] Rather than suggesting any class solidarity among the poor, Taylor depicts an insidious, competitive restrictiveness within the "criminal class."

The term "criminal class" is worth considering here as a means of understanding the way a group of people became melodramatically vilified. Victor Bailey has traced the use of this phrase within nineteenth-century England. The concept existed as early as the 1810s, but the term itself emerged in 1851 (240, 232). Bailey locates the climax of interest in the "criminal class," in the 1860s, the same decade as Taylor's play (243). He explains that this categorization

[132] George Bidwell, an American forger who spent time in English prisons, wrote in his 1890 autobiography, that the play was wrong in that people don't try to induce others into crime (551). The autobiography briefly discusses Taylor's play in its final chapter. I do not include this quote to suggest Bidwell's opinions can stand for all ticket-of-leave men, but merely one example.

placed excessive blame on the perpetrators of crime, rather than on social factors contributing to criminal activity:

> Crime was thought to be embedded in the lowest sectors of the social order; it was seen as a product of an alien, almost an outcast, group. Encoded in this language was a set of values which verified the tenets of political economy; criminals were masterless men without gainful employment, attracted by the ease of a life of crime. By denying that crime was an integral feature of working-class life, induced by poverty of unemployment, the discourse exonerated the process of economic production and the inequitable distribution of wealth, incriminating instead urban dislocation and moral in-discipline. (254)

People did not associate the working class with criminality generally, but believed that people who committed crimes were a small group set apart, racially distinct, and tending to live together in concentrated quarters. [133] Resistant urban spaces like the Mint in *Jack Sheppard* were outlawed in the mid-eighteenth century, but police still treated particular urban locales as unlawful. [134] Policing and subsequently incarcerating people in parts of the city helped create a class of people who were, in fact, separate and treated differently than other sections of society (Bailey 248). Policing, in this way, acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The concept of innate and cultural criminality was reinforced by policing practices and in media coverage.

The media bias against a "criminal class" and an undeserving criminal figure is evident in their coverage of Taylor's play. *The Glasgow Daily Herald* claimed that Tom Taylor was

[133] Bailey distinguishes the term "criminal class" from a broader concept of the "dangerous classes," a term which came from France and was associated with the threat of lower class workers rebelling, akin to the French revolution or a Marxist rebellion. A major portion of Bailey's article distinguishes between these two groups in order to suggest that Victorians were more worried about a small criminal class than a mass uprising of working individuals.
[134] Simon Joyce explains that "the original Mints….were largely outlawed by capital statutes of 1722 and 1724 making the obstruction of an officer's duties a felony punishable by seven years' transportation" (319).

making “a hero out of such materials” that society was not sympathetic towards, but that the result was a play “decidedly superior to any of the sensation novelties which have lately occupied the stage” (“The Ticket-of-leave Man – Theatre Royal”). The reviewer enjoys the play for entertainment, and its realism, but rejects the call for sympathy for someone who has spent time in prison. Other news articles specifically responded to the idea about whether the play would be able to change the hearts and minds of would-be criminals, rather than the minds of biased society members. A *FUN* illustration depicted two men, with the tell-tale short hair of ticket-of-leave men, at the theatre, passing off what a stolen wallet and talking about how “affectin’” they find Taylor’s play (“The Ticket of Leave Man”; see Figure III.3). The illustration suggests the play might be emotional, but that it will not change criminal behavior. In fact, the comic suggests Taylor’s play potentially creates occasions for crime. The *FUN* illustration was likely responding to a news story from earlier in the month that ran in multiple newspapers about a criminal who altered their course of behavior after viewing *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* in Birmingham. He was apparently so moved by the story that he decided to return a portion of the money he stole from his employers (“Tom Taylor’s Ticket of Leave Man”). This story was reprinted in newspapers and was even included in “the National Theatre’s Cottesloe production of the play which opened on 12 February 1981” as Martin Banham explains in his edition of the play (15). The idea that the play’s success should be measured by how it changed the actions of would-be criminals misses the main problems presented by the play. This news story seems triumphant, but really it continues to purport that people who steal are not honest or good by nature nor driven by necessity. It places the burden on the poor to be upstanding Bob

60 FUN. [OCTOBER 24, 1863.

TICKET-LEAVE MAN

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN.

First Gentleman (with short hair), to second ditto:—"I SAY, FREDERICK, AIN'T IT AFFECTIN', NEITHER? BLOWED IF I AIN'T A GOIN' TO CRY!"

THE IRON-Y OF NEUTRALITY.

CUSTOM's minions, do not seize them,
Leave the iron rams alone;
Scorn, that even caution won't stem,
May in bitter words be shown.
But, if 'tis the fixed intention
To detain them, sound the knell
Of our commerce and invention—
Shade of Freedom, fare thee well!

Say not that the Yankee nation
(Nation!—Neptune, save the mark!)
Shall behold, with fierce elation,
Britons heed a puppy's bark.
If our motto is free-trading,
Who shall say ye, may not sell?
But if England's strength is fading—
Shade of Freedom, fare thee well!

Neutrals we, but thus detaining
Ships for *any* purpose built,
Scutcheons of our race were staining
With a brand of moral guilt;
Who is he that thus disgracing
Britain, makes each bosom swell?
One whose pow'r none fail in tracing
To a hollow, artful "sell."

Men of England! ye are aiding,
By such neutral acts, the foes
Of freedom, who, while yet upbraiding
Slav'ry, magnify its woes.
Cease, then, longer to dissemble,
Let your future actions tell
That you ('twill make oppression tremble)
Wish the Southern people well.

"IT'S AN ILL WIND," ETC.—The conveyance companies are not in the least alarmed at the probable success of the Pneumatic Dispatch. They say that the new company must come to "blows" as soon as it begins to work.

STRANGE HALLUCINATION.—An old gentleman residing at Camden-town has told an acquaintance he always made himself tea every night, and got up in the morning a little coughy. He has since been taken care of.

Figure III.3. "The Ticket-of-Leave Man" in *FUN* on October 24, 1863.

Brierlys even when the world is set against them. It additionally removes any pressure from the criminal justice system to improve its practices. The hero's story suggests that society needs to change its mind about the honesty of ticket-of-leave men, but the power of the criminal villains in the play overpower this message, focusing audience emphasis on wanting to fix or rehabilitate criminals through the justice system.

This is not to say that prison systems are presented as flawless in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*. Like the returning citizens in *Little Dorrit*, Brierly is so affected by his prison experiences that he initially views the free world through darkened lenses. His prison experiences less change his character than his reference points with reality. When he is relieved that May's landlady leaves him and May alone, Brierly sighs with relief, "One would think she'd been on the silent system for a twelvemonth!" (22). While the silent system is a grim thing to joke about, this

comment shows how his past three years have changed the way he looks at the world, measuring the system against the stick of the prison. He shortly afterwards compares May's room to a cell—"How snug it is! as neat as the cell I've just left" (22). This gives him an opportunity to reflect on the need for pride in prison and the few things he had there, but it also shows that life outside prison for the poor is not significantly easier. Later, when May says she has "work promised" and that it might be an option for him as well, Brierly retorts, "Bright days! I can't see them through the prison cloud that stands like a dark wall between me and honest labour" (53). Unlike Jack Sheppard, whose prison break leaves no stain on him and whose excarceral feats help his community, Brierly feels the burden of the institution not only on himself but on his loved ones. He despairs to May, "I've brought thee to sorrow and want, and shame. Till I came back to thee thou hadst friends, work and comforts" (53). Part of the pathetic suffering that defines Brierly's melodramatic heroism is caused by the prison conditions he faced. Yet the prison is not as vilified as Moss or Dalton, but actually portrayed as something that assisted Brierly in his heroic development.

Taylor suggests the evil of prisons comes from the "bad" men inside, not the institution itself, which has praiseworthy elements. This belief can be seen when May reads a letter that Brierly has written from prison. She notes how Brierly has "improved in his handwriting since the first" prison letter, a purported benefit of his imprisonment (17). As she reads the letter's content, however, it is clear he is struggling in jail: "[B]ut for your love and comfort I think I should have broken down" (17). Brierly further expands on this theme when he says to May in person, "But for you, May, I should have been a desperate man. I might have become all they thought me—a felon, in the company of felons" (23). Brierly resists the label of felon himself, but he easily applies it to all the men around him in prison. He feels threatened not by the system

of the prison or those running it, but from the company of prisoners. His anxieties mirror those of the reformers discussed in Chapter II, who feared prisoner-to-prisoner "contamination." In comparison, Brierly attests of the administrators, "[A]ll were good to me" (23). In fact, in his letters to May, Brierly also suggests that imprisonment was the best possible path for him, and key to his development as a man: "But now we both see how things are guided for the best. But for my being sent to prison, I should have died before this, a broken-down drunkard, if not worse…This place has made a man of me" (17). Brierly defines his manhood by his prison experience and believes it superior to becoming a man in freedom. In Taylor's play, prison causes suffering to its inmates, but its failings lie not in the system or administrators but in those evil or undeserving villains that populate it. In this way, Taylor exemplifies the problem that Marie Gottschalk has identified, of focusing on "nonviolent, nonserious, and nonsexual offenders (the so-called non, non, nons)" (165).[135] *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* concentrates on a rare "good" criminal, further condemning the other men. If Taylor's play celebrates the potential of one ticket-of-leave man as a sympathetic hero, it does so at the expense of condemning a huge population of formerly imprisoned people as villains.

Taylor's reification of the current justice system, and prisons specifically, can be seen in the way his honest hero tries to work within the system. While imprisoned, Brierly acts in accordance with the prison's rules. He tells May afterwards how he "had full marks and nothing against me" (22). Upon leaving prison, he continues to play by the rules. He is not angry at being caught up in a money laundering scheme, but reserved, with modest hopes about his future income. When May optimistically suggests that he might get a job with Mr. Gibson, Brierly

[135] Gottschalk demonstrates how this unbalanced focus has led to the further reification of prison systems. For instance, some advocates for lighter punishments for drug offenders take a position about being hard on violent offenders to compensate (167). This sort of focus tends to focus on a small group of prisoners instead of the majority, as contemporary US prisons "are not filled with easily identifiable Jean Valjeans" (169).

insists, “No chance of that, May. I must begin lower down, and when I’ve got a character, then I may reach a step higher, and so creep back little by little to the level of honest men. There’s no help for it” (24). He has resigned himself to a class of dishonest men, despite the fact that he is not inherently dishonest. He states this “gloomily” according to the text; he is not optimistic about the path ahead, but he acquiesces to the system, despite the misfortune it guarantees him.

A similar pattern of prison reification occurred in periodical publications that were sympathetic to ticket-of-leave men. Consider one conversation which appeared in multiple newspapers,[136] entitled in the *Caledonian Mercury* as “‘The Ticket-of-leave’ on the Real Stage.” Its title lends the article a greater sense of reality than Taylor’s play despite its similar theatrical structure. The piece begins with a ticket-of-leave man in a witness box, “holding up to Mr. Yardley a parchment document,” his ticket-of-leave. Named only “Applicant,” he proclaims, “I apply your worship to revoke this license.” The ticket-of-leave man has had a hard time getting and keeping work, and the dialogue sets up readers to be sympathetic for the man, especially as the court official, Mr. Yardley, seems to disregard the evidence before him, constantly changing the subject. For instance, Mr. Yardley asks what the man was before he went to prison, but when the man answers “I was a gentleman’s servant,” Mr. Yardley retorts back, “I have no power to revoke it.” Mr. Yardley does not grapple with the fact that the applicant might have a hard time returning to the line of work he was accustomed to—regardless of why he was incarcerated—because it is a position that requires great trust and also letters of recommendation. Instead, Mr. Yardley abruptly tries to shut down the entire conversation. The ticket-of-leave man is like Brierly in his willingness to go along with the system, but his experiences show that the system

[136] For instance, the *Caledonian Mercury* explains that it is a reprinting from the *Star* and the same script is printed as “A Ticket-of-Leave Man Preferring Prison to Liberty” in the *Belfast News* and “The Value of a Ticket-of-Leave” in the *Cheshire Observer*.

will not lead to success and the gatekeepers of the system are blind to the core issues, as is clear in this excerpt:

> Applicant.—I have had two or three places, and got turned away from each one.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—Why have you been turned away?
>
> Applicant.—That I cannot tell; but it is true.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—Did your employers know what you were when they engaged you?
>
> Applicant.—No, sir.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—I suppose they found out what you were after they employed you?
>
> Applicant.—They did; but I can't tell how.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—And then they turned you away?
>
> Applicant.—They did, and now I cannot get any work.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—You are not decrepid and weak: why not go and work in the fields?
>
> Applicant.—I came from Maidstone yesterday, and could not get any field work there.
>
> Mr. Yardley.—You cannot expect to lie in clover and stand upon velvet. You must commence your career again and make up your mind to work hard. You must start from the lowest round of the ladder, and strive diligently to reach the top to regain your position and character.
>
> Applicant.—I have worked hard whilst under my sentence, and I am willing to work hard now.

Mr. Yardley preaches his beliefs at the man and does not listen to or believe what he hears in response. He refuses to recognize that the ticket-of-leave man *is* willing to work, regardless of the type of job available. If *Little Dorrit* supported the Victorian religious fervor for work, the case of ticket-of-leave men show that work was not a guaranteed answer to all men's problems.

While elements of the criminal justice system are being attacked in this article, like the lack of job support and unfeeling officials, this article ultimately upholds prisons. The ticket-of-leave man seeks a solution not in terms of making any societal changes but in revoking his ticket—*in being reincarcerated.* The failure of this version of parole makes the man not want to be free of movement at all, at least according to this representation.

Because of the success of melodramatic newspaper accounts and plays like *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* in showing failures of the ticket-of-leave system, the government responded with more carceral and punitive policies. David Mayer deems it a failure of the play's goals that Parliament subsequently passed legislation against former and current prisoners: "Through two successive sessions Parliament wrought legislation that reflected panic and total rejection of the tolerant humane spirit of Taylor's drama" ("Ticket" 38). One piece of legislation Mayer refers to is the Garrotters Act of 1863, which added corporal punishment to those convicted for robbery by force (38). Such legislation responded to violence with an-eye-for-an-eye mentality, increasing the sum total of harm.[137] Additionally, the Penal Servitude Act of 1864 reduced the number of people who could access the ticket-of-leave system and more strictly surveilled parolees (38). This legislation did not address the ways the system failed ticket-of-leave men, but decided the idea of parole itself was problematic. In comparison, increased prison time seemed like a favorable option to the public and legislators. Mayhew, for instance, in *London Labour and the London Poor*, claimed that ticket-of-leave men gain great knowledge in prison: "A high authority tells me, that it is impossible for a gentleman's son to be trained with greater care at Eton or at any of the other public schools than each of you have been" (431-2). While Mayhew was likely being hyperbolic, his statement nonetheless reveals that he thought prisons were a

[137] This sort of legislation counters the paradigm progression from punishment to discipline that Foucault argues occurred. Instead, we can see a continued reliance on violence and the threat of violence within carceral contexts.

functional part of the justice system. Rather than advocating for adjustments in the free world that might provide job opportunities and educational training, he doubles down on incarceration.[138]

The failure of one policy implementation, like the ticket-of-leave system, should not detract from the hope for utopic excarceration. It only helps clarify what needs to be taken into account when trying to act practically on such a dream. Even within the relative failures of Taylor's melodrama, there is a shining moment suggesting the possibility of community reconciliation beyond the restrictions of prisons, police, or societal stigma. Shortly after his return from prison, Brierly learns that the sole person who suffered from his unwitting crime was May's landlady, Mrs. Willoughby. When he was caught money-laundering twenty pounds at her shop, she was not compensated for the lost twenty pounds. No institutional force helped Mrs. Willoughby when she was affected by the crime, but she, like Brierly, was left to suffer for someone else's choices. Brierly was not bound by any necessity to repay her and in the eye of the law he had fully paid for his crime by serving his time. Yet Brierly decides to repay her for the money she lost. He anonymously gives her the full twenty pounds he earned in prison. Brierly redefines justice as something between people, based on their needs and desires. He does not practice a form of restorative justice exactly, as he does not openly communicate with Mrs.

[138] This failure of logic, which metaphorically throws out the baby with the bath water, is a common issue with rhetoric that reifies carceral institutions. Liat Ben-Moshe, for instance, demonstrates the way that current health professionals and advocates have claimed that carceral institutions like prisons or asylums are superior to people dealing with their mental health difficulties freely, when in reality those individuals are simply lacking social services that they should be able to receive while maintaining freedom of movement. She explains, "[I]f the problem [mental health distress] is endemic to incarceration itself…creating more psychiatric units in prison is not a solution but part of the problem…'treatment behind bars' is an oxymoron" (282). On the flip side, some people have advocated for purportedly non-carceral solutions, which, like the ticket-of-leave system as originally enacted, still falls short of true freedom for people beyond the prison walls. James Kilgore explains that practices like electronic monitoring, tend to include excessive monitoring that effectively limits people's job options and hinder their mental health, tending to "perpetuate the culture of punishment."

Willoughby about his role in the harm she experienced nor listen to her needs in response.[139] She never learns the full story or understands Brierly's point of view, and she misses Brierly's hint that the surprise monetary donation of twenty pounds could be from "somebody that's wronged you of the money and wants you to clear his conscience" (30). Because of this secrecy, Willoughby maintains her negative impression of the person who took her money saying, "[W]hat do the likes o' them care for the poor creatures they robs—hangin's too good for 'em, the villains" (27). Despite Brierly's heroic nature, one person's acts are not enough to change the accumulated beliefs of society.[140] Likewise, portraying one honest, sympathetic ticket-of-leave man is not as influential on society as perpetuating the idea that the primary problem is a class of malicious men. Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Men* may use the melodramatic form to productively display the problems that ticket-of-leave men faced returning to society in England, but it ultimately ended up reinforcing the belief in a villainous criminal class and the belief that these men are evil enough to deserve cages.

[139] Restorative justice is a practice by which parties involved in a dispute meet and discuss their point of view, with the aim of repairing harm and leading to personal and communal transformation. Centre for Justice and Reconciliation defines restorative justice as "a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that allow all willing stakeholders to meet, although other approaches are available when that is impossible. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities" ("Lesson 1").

[140] May believes that Brierly's goodness to Mrs. Willoughby "brought us a blessing already" in the form of his bank job (31). Yet Brierly loses this job from the same prejudice that Mrs. Willoughby and Gibson share about formerly incarcerated people.

CHAPTER IV

An Epoch without Arrest: William Morris's Abolitionist Utopias

Having looked at two reformist-leaning texts, we will now return, in this final chapter, to the excarceral potential of *Jack Sheppard*. In *Little Dorrit* and *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, characters showed heartfelt concern for people returning from prison. These texts recognized problems in contemporary prison systems but could not envision a solution beyond the carceral forces of isolation and differentiation. Later in the nineteenth century, William Morris took this imaginative leap, dreaming a world without prisons. His utopian novel *News from Nowhere: An Epoch of Rest* describes a socialist future that embraces penal abolition.[141] *News from Nowhere* not only lacks prisons, but it also elaborates a social and economic structure to facilitate human thriving. It provides examples of humane responses to incidents of human harm. A penal abolitionist reading of this novel allows us to explore the history of abolition in counterbalance to the dominant reformist mode of nineteenth-century prison-related activism and writing. After a brief review of scholarship on *News from Nowhere*, this chapter will analyze the novel through an abolitionist lens and show the affordances of this lens in approaching Morris's literary and socialist work more broadly. Morris's play *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened* and his popular socialist songs underscore police and courts as key loci to confront when pursuing social

[141] Throughout this chapter I will use the term "penal abolition," or just "abolition," rather than "prison abolition" to explicitly refer to the elimination of not only prisons but connected institutions like the police and courts. Additionally, I will use the term "socialist" throughout this chapter as a broad umbrella term to refer to Morris's politics and the movements in which he participated, rather than "anarchist" or "communist," Morris's preferred term. The choice of "socialist" aligns with the names chosen by the broader organizations in which Morris acted.

change. Rather than take a hard line on the fixity of character, Morris shows the flexibility of humans to live in a different system. Morris embraced a utopian mode in his abolitionist approach and relied on both inquisitive dialogue and embodied examples to envision a different future. Together these features allowed him to invite readers to work towards another possible world.

News from Nowhere is most frequently read in terms of its political orientation or its contribution to the utopian genre. Because penal abolition is a political stance that works towards a utopian future, an abolitionist reading builds upon both political and utopian strains of scholarship. Understanding Morris's political orientation and interventions in the utopian genre will allow us to better interpret his particular brand of abolitionist utopia.

On the political front, scholars have examined William Morris's socialist beliefs, as enacted in the novel, in relation to ongoing debates within socialist movements of his time. The late nineteenth century saw a variety of competing socialist visions and fracturing activist and political organizations. Morris himself participated in and was affected by these divisions. He was part of the Social Democratic Foundation (S.D.F.) before splitting to form the Socialist League in 1885. In the course of publishing *News from Nowhere* in the Socialist League's newspaper the *Commonweal*, Morris was part of another splintering. The organization veered towards anarchism and Morris lost his editorship of the journal (Lloyd 273-4). This tumultuous political environment suggests that relatively small differences in political beliefs held grave importance to late nineteenth-century socialists, at times overshadowing their shared socialist cause. The particular flavor of Morris's socialism becomes important in this setting, and *News from Nowhere* can be read as an indication of Morris's stance on specific issues. Trevor Lloyd shows, for instance, how Morris made changes to *News from Nowhere* that align with his shifting

views and changing relationships to socialist groups. From its original publication in the *Commonweal* in 1890 to its subsequent publications, with Reeves and Turner in 1891 and Kelmscott Press in 1892, Morris adjusted the means of revolution that brought about his socialist utopia.[142] In addition to looking at Morris's changing beliefs, scholars consider *News from Nowhere* in conversation with other socialist literature. *News from Nowhere* is often read against the state socialist vision in Edward Bellamy's extremely popular *Looking Backward* (1888), which had sold over 100,000 copies in England by the start of 1890 (Beaumont 31). Morris disagreed with many aspects of Bellamy's utopia and worried that *Looking Backward* would be considered the primary guide for socialism.[143] Beyond reading *News from Nowhere* for the minutiae of its political creeds, the novel can also be read in terms of what it *does* and how it asserts an influence on readers. Michael Holzman has argued that *News from Nowhere* occupied the space in the *Commonweal* that would otherwise be used for political agitation. He argues that the novel can be read as a political response to James Blackwell's earlier *Commonweal* article, which called for socialists to decide upon the sort of society they want to work towards (592). Collectively, these scholars convincingly frame Morris's novel as attuned to the political situation of the late nineteenth century and actively in conversation with socialist politics. We can consider the abolitionist principles on display within the novel as another aspect of politics worthy of analysis in the larger frame of socialist action in the nineteenth century.

[142] Lloyd notes that in later versions, Morris's ideas drift away from those of his anarchist comrades, and Morris seems more willing to accept trade unions. During the time Morris was revising the novel for republication, he also wrote for the S.D.F. magazine *Justice*, despite his previous split from the group (Lloyd 286). Another helpful article for understanding the political factions at the time is Ruth Kinna's work on Morris and anti-parliamentarianism.
[143] Morris concluded his review of *Looking Backward* by saying, "The book is one to be read and considered seriously, but it should not be taken as the Socialist bible of reconstruction; a danger which perhaps it will not altogether escape, as incomplete systems impossible to be carried out but plausible on the surface are always attractive to people ripe for change, but not knowing clearly what their aim is" (*The Commonweal*, June 22, 1889). For more on the relation between *News from Nowhere* and *Looking Backward* see Larry Lutchmansingh and Vincent Geoghegan.

Within scholarship on utopian literature, *News from Nowhere* is discussed not only in relation to *Looking Backward*, but also within a wider range of utopian texts. Some scholars have looked at the enduring influence of Thomas More's original *Utopia* from 1516,[144] while others have suggested the influence of contemporary science fiction.[145] *News from Nowhere* has also been compared to later texts, particularly *1984*.[146] In addition to comparative or genealogical arguments, scholars have also considered Morris's unique contributions to the genre, pointing to his lengthy explanation of how his utopia was formed, his allowance of dissent, his non-authoritarian stance, and his openness to change.[147] The extensive scholarly work on *News from Nowhere* through a utopian studies lens provides a key opportunity to consider what aspects of utopian theory might fruitfully align with the forward-thinking orientation of abolitionist thought.

While some scholars have read *News from Nowhere* through other lenses, including a notable cluster of articles on environmentalism,[148] I have not found evidence of the novel being read within the tradition of penal abolition.[149] The phrase "penal abolition" was not common in nineteenth-century parlance, as the term rose to prominence in the late twentieth century. Some

[144] Krishan Kumar, in comparing Morris to Bellamy, spends a portion of his article on Thomas More's influence on Morris. *Utopia* was one of Morris's favorite books and the subject of a public lecture he gave in 1885. Morris also wrote a preface for the Kelmscott edition of *Utopia* ("*News*" 135). Kumar suggests that Morris was particularly inspired by More's understanding of history as useful for approaching the present and building the future.
[145] Owen Holland compares *News from Nowhere* to writing by Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne and H. G. Wells. Darko Suvin investigates the influence of utopian booklets like the 1884 "The Socialist Revolution of 1888," which include Morris as a character, and other novels such as Walter Besant's 1888 *The Inner House*.
[146] Anna Vaniskaya claims both authors engaged in writing romantic socialism, which pits a series of dualities against each other: authoritarian vs. democratic, uniformity vs. individuality, etc.
[147] A. L. Morton and Terry Eagleton both claim that *News From Nowhere* is unique in its focus on the historical development of the utopian society. Marcus Waithe ("Laws") and Joe P. L. Davidson both helpfully summarize a strain of critical thought, stemming from Abensour that interprets Morris as writing a more liberatory, non-authoritarian utopia.
[148] Environmentalism and the work on ecotopias can be considered a subcategory of literary focus on the novel's politics. This scholarship will be discussed in greater length later in this chapter.
[149] While I have not discovered any scholarly pieces linking William Morris with penal abolition, Rachel Kushner's 2019 NYT piece on penal abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore briefly mentions Morris as a "proto-abolitionist."

may be wary of retroactively considering Morris within a penal abolition lens as Morris was more focused on a larger socialist vision than specifically dismantling penal systems, yet this focus aligns well with twentieth and twenty-first century penal abolition. Penal abolition includes an inherent critique of capitalism and insists upon coalition-building with thinkers and organizations that have other social justice commitments.[150] Penal abolition is more than the removal of prisons. It is envisioning and working towards a better world, in which prisons do not exist. In this sense, Morris's novel can be read within the frame of penal abolition.

Before delving into Morris's vision to explore his writerly choices, it is important to qualify that he does not presume to have discovered the best or only socialist future. Rather than the fixed sure ends of the autobiographic stories of Chivery and Little Dorrit, Morris acknowledges the role of others in shaping the particularities of the future. He presents his novel's utopia as merely one dream version of the future. Following Miguel Abensour's reading of *News from Nowhere*, scholars often read Morris's novel as exemplary among utopian novels for encouraging readers to imagine their own utopias rather than strictly adhere to the author's vision. Abensour has received some pushback from scholars, such as Joe P. L. Davidson, who points out that Morris's utopian vision was propagandistic and attempted to corral the public around key socialist tenets. Yet Morris himself espoused a belief that utopian novels should be read as "the expression of the temperament of the author" (*Commonweal,* 22 June 1889). There is a difference between forwarding a few key ideas and insisting on only one strict path forward. Norman Talbot explains that readers of Morris's time would have seen the novel as a tale of

[150] Critical Resistance, the preeminent penal abolitionist organization in the United States in the early twenty-first century, has an abolition organizing toolkit called "A World Without Walls," which begins with a series of "connection sheets" in order to demonstrate the intersection of penal abolition with other social causes, such as homelessness, healthcare, and education. These sheets are meant to encourage coalition-building among people and organizations.

wish-fulfillment particular to William Morris. Frequent *Commonweal* readers would have recognized the novel as winking at them when it dealt with Morris's niche interests, such as care for old buildings. Furthermore, the novel lacks the feeling of totalitarian decree because, as Krishan Kumar notes, it is more interested in producing an emotional state than an enumerated, scientific system ("Pilgrimage" 92). These stylistic choices encourage us to read the novel as a productive rather than dangerous form of utopian writing, if we use the bifurcation of utopias proposed by Laurence Davis. The novel is less a "quest for ethical perfection," which Davis considers troubling, than a "vivid exercise of ethical imagination," capable of "facilitating broadminded democratic debate about difficult social problems even more effectively than mainstream varieties of political thought" (Davis 74). In this spirit of ethical imagination, we turn in the next section to consider how *News from Nowhere* contributes to debates about abolitionist thought through a utopian form.

Reading *News from Nowhere* as an Abolitionist Novel

A key feature of utopias are their dearth of law enforcement and prisons. The general lack of prisons in utopian writing makes the genre favorable for abolitionist imagination, yet this tendency does not guarantee that all utopias without prisons are abolitionist in orientation.[151] Often the absence of prisons in utopian writing is used to signal a better functioning society without the text deeply engaging with concerns about criminalization or confinement. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* can serve as one example of a text that boasts no prisons, yet

[151] Miriam Eliav-Feldon notes, "The absence of laws and of law-enforcement is the hallmark of utopian fantasy; but in the serious utopias too we can find the claim that, even though laws and penalties cannot be completely dispensed with, the merits of the system are such as to reduce to a minimum the rate of crime and of immoral behavior" (quoted in Malloch 25). Additionally, Vincenzo Ruggiero notes that "Both classical and anarchist Utopias postulate societies without prisons" with anarchists seeing the lack of prisons as commensurate with the redistribution of wealth and reducing social structures which encourage competition ("Crime" 81).

seems to perpetuate key problems of penal systems. When crime occurs in Bellamy's futuristic Boston, people are treated in hospitals with "firm but gentle restraint," under the assumption that crime is a form of atavism, the appearance of an ancestral trait (Bellamy 98). Bellamy does not elaborate on the means of restraint, so it is unclear to readers whether the hospitals are carceral institutions in their own right. Beyond the use of hospitals to deal with crime, Bellamy's utopia troublingly uses solitary confinement when people refuse to work for the national labor army. Dr. Leete explains, "As for actual neglect of work, positively bad work, or other overt remissness on the part of men incapable of generous motives, the discipline of the industrial army is far too strict to allow anything whatever of the sort. A man able to do duty, and persistently refusing, is sentenced to solitary imprisonment on bread and water till he consents" (61). Here, as with the hospitals, Dr. Leete does not further explain the means of incarceration, neither where it occurs or how often it is used. Even without these specifics, the looming threat of confinement in hospitals or isolation disqualifies Bellamy's purportedly prison-free socialist utopia from being an abolitionist paradise.

In contrast, *News from Nowhere* has three key features which allow us to read it as an abolitionist novel. The text A) promotes a world vision in which prisons, police, and courts are absent, borne from a thoughtful engagement about the harms of these systems, B) demonstrates the socioeconomic structures which allow for human thriving such that violence is minimized, and C) engages with the dilemma of how to deal with differences of opinion and harm when either arises. While any one of these features would make a novel useful to read with an abolitionist lens, together these elements make *News from Nowhere* ripe for abolitionist analysis and considering the particularities of Morris's abolitionist vision. The aforementioned components are presented either in dialogue or realized in the landscape and events of the utopia.

Dialogue, as a common feature in utopian writing, encourages questioning and hypothetical thinking, as well as modeling communal care for the wellbeing of society. Pairing this feature with explicit examples in the fabric of the utopia allows readers to not only hear, but see and feel the futuristic society. After looking at these features of the novel, we will also think about what aspects of penal abolitionism Morris's novel fails to fully develop, particularly as regards the analytic of race.

A) A World Without Prisons

In comparing Morris's ideas to current abolitionist theory, this chapter will use David Scott's articulation of key penal abolitionist theories as a guidepost. Scott proposes ten theories which he believes are central to abolitionist thought:

1) crime is a social construction
2) only some of the many problems in society are labelled crime
3) the term "criminal" reflects social disparities, not differences in people
4) the law uses blaming language
5) inflicting pain, including through prisons, hurts people and does not resolve conflict
6) many people solve problems without resorting to the law
7) punishment reinforces and mystifies power hierarchies
8) punishment lacks moral legitimacy
9) penal processes are out of control
10) punishment is a danger to society (93-99)

His theories are not an accepted standard, but his theorization builds upon an extensive collection of abolitionist thought, and his clear enumeration allows for easy cross-referencing. *News from*

Nowhere, as a literary text, does not state the core beliefs of its utopia in a similar numerical list. Yet the majority of these ideas are folded into the dialogue between William Guest and his guides.[152] These conversations reveal the degree to which such ideas are embedded into the culture and ordinary thought of Morris's utopia, demonstrating a radical break from the mindset of nineteenth-century society.

Before William Guest learns that England has no prisons in the future, he finds that England's future inhabitants articulate their understanding of crime and punishment as antithetical to mainstream nineteenth-century thought. As Guest progresses through Trafalgar Square with his primary guide, Dick, and an accompanying old man, they begin to discuss the criminal justice system of the Victorian era. Dick favorably compares the medieval time period to the nineteenth century in terms of justice measures, explaining that nineteenth-century people were "hypocrites, & pretended to be humane, and yet went on tormenting those whom they dared to treat so by shutting them up in prison, for no reason at all, except that they were what they themselves, the prison-masters, had forced them to be" (61).[153] Breaking down this sentence, we can see the ways in which Dick's understanding of criminal justice aligns with Scott's first, third, and eighth abolitionist theories. When Dick calls jailors "hypocrites" who "pretended to be humane," he points to the false moral legitimacy which grounds prison practices (theory 8). While prison officials, like those featured in Chapter II, claim to be improving the people they imprison, they are in fact simply torturing them. When Dick claims that this torture is "for no

[152] *News from Nowhere*, understandably, does not explicitly deal with theory nine, as it refers specifically to the increase of imprisonment and legal proceedings in the late twentieth century. The novel additionally does not address theory two, the idea that many problems occur, but not all are labeled crime. Yet this idea is implicit elsewhere in Morris's writing. In a November 21, 1887 letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Morris says, "I agree with your correspondent 'A Lawyer' that if the enactments on the statute-book were enforced all liberty would soon be stopped"; it is clear here that he does not think every enactment is enforced equally ("Law and Liberty League").
[153] All references to *News from Nowhere* come from the Thames & Hudson facsimile of the 1892 Kelmscott version of the novel.

reason at all," he does not explicitly state that crime is a social construct (theory 1), but he denies that there would be any legitimate reason for imprisonment, breaking the link between crime and punishment which society often naturalizes. Dick then refutes the idea that crime committed in the nineteenth century is due to people being criminals. He suggests instead that imprisonment is due to social disparity, the way in which the upper classes, their jailors, "forced them to be" through socioeconomic and legal limitations. Dick articulates here Scott's third abolitionist theory: people receive the label of "criminal" because of social disparity, not intrinsic difference. Admittedly, in his anger at nineteenth-century society, Dick does not avoid the language of blame which Scott says is problematically entrenched in the law (theory 4). As an emotional response, blame may be harder to eradicate to the same degree as the social and physical structures of prison systems. In summarizing what he understands to be the guiding principles of nineteenth-century prison practices, Dick builds up his credentials as a penal abolitionist thinker, in line with twenty-first century thought. The fact that Dick speaks as an ordinary citizen, rather than a criminal justice specialist, enhances the sense that people in this utopia collectively think deeply about justice issues.

As the characters' conversation continues, it becomes clear that England no longer has any prisons, and, in fact, the entire mindset about prisons has so utterly shifted as to make prisons unimaginable. Until this point in the novel, Dick has been patient with the bewildered and betimes wrongfooted William Guest. But when the topic of prison arises, Dick loses his composure. After hearing Dick's upbraiding of nineteenth-century society, Guest protests that Victorians might not have known what prisons were like; this statement inspires outrage and shock in Guest's companion:

> "More shame for them," said he [Dick] "when you and I know it all these years afterwards. Look you, neighbor, they couldn't fail to know what a disgrace a prison is to the Commonwealth at the best, and that their prisons were a good step on towards being at the worst."
>
> Quoth I: "But have you no prisons at all now?" As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I felt that I had made a mistake, for Dick flushed red and frowned, and the old man looked surprised & pained; and presently Dick said angrily, yet as if restraining himself somewhat, "Man alive! how can you ask such a question? Have I not told you that we know what a prison means by the undoubted evidence of really trustworthy books, helped out by our own imaginations? And haven't you specially called me to notice that the people about the roads and streets look happy? & how could they look happy if they knew that their neighbours were shut up in prison, while they bore such things quietly? And if there were people in prison, you couldn't hide it from folk, like you may an occasional manslaying; because that isn't done of set purpose, with a lot of people backing up the slayer in cold blood, as this prison business is. Prisons, indeed! O no, no, no!" (61-2)

William Guest struggles to imagine a world without prisons. His mind allows him to believe in less or better prisons, but no prisons "at all" stretches beyond his reckoning. Even as a socialist, Guest is in the position of many people of his time, and just as many in the twenty-first century. In *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Angela Davis explains that people have a hard time imagining a world without prisons because the current systems are treated as "an unconditional standard" (106). In Morris's utopia, abolition has succeeded, and prisons are not the standard of practice. Prisons are instead the standard of unacceptable government policy.

Living in a new societal standard, Dick represents the opposite position of Guest, in which a single prison seems unimaginable to him. Because of the form of dialogue, the reader gets to see the stark contrast between Guest's and Dick's mindsets. What astounds Dick is not the pain one human might inflict on another, but the conspiracy of the public, the ability for anyone to be happy while knowing that pain is being inflicted on others through their government. Dick refuses to believe in the ignorance of anyone in the nineteenth century, believing that such ignorance is in their control to correct, as prisons are not secret things. Here, Dick does not believe that punishment mystifies the real sources of power (theory 7). He lays an onus instead on the people of the nineteenth century to pay attention to their complicity in power structures, despite Guest believing such knowledge might be obfuscated by the system. In this way, Dick strongly demonstrates the idea that punishment is a danger to all of society, in that he believes that its presence corrupts all people, and that no people could possibly be fully happy if any punishment were occurring (theory 10).

Dick's anger marks this scene as noteworthy. The scene breaks from the plane of heady ideas to draw us in to the heart of the society's beliefs. This momentary break from the dreamy air of the novel adds weight to moments of abolitionist thought that occur in later chapters. While other scholars have noted the importance of Dick's anger in this scene, they provide alternate explanations for the reason why. Marcus Waithe claims that this scene shows Guest learning to self-censor so as to better align with the social norms and standards of the utopian society ("Laws" 225), and Norman Talbot reads the scene as evidence that the utopia's inhabitants are still capable of strong emotions, like fury, despite their general placidity (45). While both these takes might be true—William holds his tongue after this outburst and Dick reveals the less even side of his character—the cause of the outburst is not negligible. Dick's

anger highlights the importance of penal abolition to the new society, beyond other features, like no money or private property, that Guest has thus far encountered. Dick speaks with a moral anger and cannot imagine a happy society coexisting with prisons. His outburst strikes the reader as a lightning bolt, reorienting us to the radically different ways of the future and encouraging us to pay attention to how matters of crime and punishment manifest as the tale continues.

Dick's grandfather, Hammond, shortly thereafter elaborates on theories of crime and punishment by drawing connections between economics, governance, and punishment practices. In responding to Guest's queries, he explains that most forms of law and courts have become obsolete. For instance, the utopia has no "such lunatic affairs as divorce courts" because relationships are more fluid and less binding (79). The elimination of private property has furthermore diminished the need for civil law, and it has reduced violent crime associated with private property (115-116). The reduced systems of law are also deeply connected to modes of governance. Hammond explains that punishment is an expression of fear, which was used in governing when society was "an armed band in a hostile country" (117). For Hammond, the heart of government is not the law-making bodies, but rather the "brute force that the deluded people allowed them to use for their own purposes; I mean the army, navy, and police" (109). These synonymous forces of government and carcerality are further connected with the economic system of capitalism. As Adam Buick explains in his survey of economics in *News from Nowhere*, a coercive state is understood to be central to a capitalistic system, as "the machinery of coercion (government, courts, armed forces, police, prisons) needed to enforce the monopoly exercised by the owning class over access to the means of production" (156). The penal system, rather than being a side issue, is at the heart of government power in a capitalist system.

In Morris's utopia, the abolition of prisons is necessarily connected to new systems of government and economics. Hammond explains that governing through fear is not necessary when people "live amongst our friends" (117). He poetically explains the logic of why coercive forces are not necessary anymore: "a man no more needs an elaborate system of government, with its army, navy, and police, to force him to give way to the will of the majority of his *equals*, than he wants a similar machinery to make him understand that his head and a stone wall cannot occupy the same space at the same moment" (107). Hammond suggests here that the "elaborate" system of government is not a mystical, wondrous thing, but primarily a coercive force, an armed figure that aims to solve disagreements by ramming heads into stone walls. If people believe each other to be equal, and value others' lives, then disagreements can be solved without such forces. Dialogue can take the place of skull smashing.

Hammond's explanation aligns with Scott's fifth and sixth abolitionist theories, as well as prefiguring abolitionist ideas about the police. Hammond makes clear that punishment practices inflict pain more so than resolve conflict (theory 5) and that people are more than capable of solving problems without resorting to legal action (theory 6). In relocating state power in the police rather than in lawmaking bodies, Hammond's words—and Morris's ideas—prefigure Micol Seigel's theorization of police and military as "violence workers." Seigel argues that much of the police's work could be done by others, like firefighters or counsellors, and what defines the core essence of the police is their threat and use of violence. In her view, violence workers function as "the human-scale expression of the state" and maintain the state's monopoly on legitimate coercion and violence (25). Abolitionist thought goes beyond simply imagining a world without prisons to see a world without violent, coercive governance.

In talking with Dick and Hammond, Guest hears a theory of punishment that is closely aligned with twenty-first century abolitionist thinking. Hammond, in particular, reveals that the erasure of prisons is not independent from other major changes to society. Penal abolition depends on the removal of private property and people viewing each other as equals. *News from Nowhere* demonstrates the interconnectedness of prisons with social and economic structures through utopian form of dialogue. In the next section, we'll see how these ideas are mapped onto the environment of this new England.

B) A World Without Prisons

A *Pall Mall Gazette* review of *News from Nowhere* stated, "If the romance finds no place in the library of serious sociological disquisition, it will at least be remembered by all lovers of the Thames as one of the fairest pages in the literature of their favourite river." ("The Latest"). In this review, the novel's focus on the River Thames and its surrounds is the antithesis of serious sociological discussion. The reviewer questions the staying weight of the novel's socioeconomic arguments, like the conversations between Guest and Hammond discussed above, but accepts and appreciates the remapping of the Thames in a utopian world. In this section, we will consider how the two seemingly disparate approaches of sociological conversation and cataloging geographic features do in fact fit together. The emotional, visionary Thames trip can be seen as a critical geography approach that complements the socioeconomic discussions which proceeds it.

When discussing penal abolition, it is important to talk about more than just the removal of prisons, as prisons are entangled in larger socioeconomic questions. Angela Davis explains that we miss a larger picture when "we focus myopically on the existing system" rather than looking at the extensive relationships that connect prisons to the government, economy, courts,

police, media, and other organizations (*Are Prisons Obsolete?* 106). This set of symbiotic relationships is called the prison-industrial complex, and penal abolition requires addressing this larger system. While the term "prison-industrial complex" postdates *News from Nowhere*, Morris addresses the larger socioeconomic changes in tandem with the removal of prison systems.

We will only briefly look at the economic conditions that Morris proposes as coexistent with an abolitionist society as other scholars have thoroughly covered the socioeconomics of the novel.[154] Central to Morris's economic conceptualization of utopia is joyous labor. Unlike the compelled work in Chapter II or the owner-limited and character-restricted access to work in Chapter III, the religious fervor for work in *News from Nowhere* is set by the workers' interests. In *News from Nowhere*, people take time and care in making their products, such that each tobacco pipe is made with pride, its own beautiful piece of art (51). Members of the utopia are not restricted by capitalism's time crunch, nor are they limited to a single occupation. They can change from one field to another at their leisure. For instance, after a stint working indoors on mathematics and weaving concurrently, Dick's friend Robert takes over Dick's job on the river (15). This flexibility means workers do not find themselves stuck in a rut but can continually seek out work that engages them. Morris's utopian belief in enjoying labor builds off of Ruskin's and Carlyle's ideals of work, yet Rob Breton shows that Morris is unique in believing that joy in work is only possible in noncapitalist conditions. Morris does not suggest, like his forebears, that perfect work is possible in an industrial, capitalist society (Breton). Morris was concerned about entire systems, not about fixing individual problems.[155]

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[154] See, for instance, Adam Buick's "A Market by the Way: The Economics of Nowhere" and Lyman Tower Sargent's "William Morris and the Anarchist Tradition."

[155] Morris held to this larger vision even when it meant appearing uncompromising, such as when he contested piecemeal parliamentarian reform in the 1880s (Breton 52).Notably Morris shifted his stance in the early 1890s, after parting ways with the anarchists that had taken control of the Socialist League (Davis, Laurence 65). Morris was not so much intractable as committed to his ideals. For more on this shift in his policies, see Ruth Kinna.

The social structures of *News from Nowhere* are less clearly articulated than the economic structures, but they are just as important to the functioning of the utopia. At first glance, Morris's utopia lacks recognizable formal social bodies, like legislatures, only mentioning motes in an offhand manner. Yet Morris did not deny the need for social structure; he instead chose to approach this need from a less rigid perspective. Marcus Waithe explains, "Morris was an enemy of legalism, but he believed in duties, manners and responsibilities. He proposed not the rejection of rules, but rather a rejection of rules as administered by institutions" ("Folklore" 157). Social norms and values, rather than legal fixities, structure social interactions. Although Hammond claims that society is not plagued by judgmental public opinion, Waithe is skeptical of this loose structure of rules, pointing out the cautionary tales of gossip in Victorian novels ("Folklore" 163, *News* 82). Elsewhere, Waithe mentions how "oppressive features" of Victorian "social customs and conventions" can be as problematic as the rule of law ("Laws" 227). As we saw in Chapter III, social stigma against ticket-of-leave men helped drive new carceral laws against these men. Yet Morris's novel continually insists that society's new set of shared values allow for smooth social and economic operations. These values are not based in status or sectarianism, but in equality and trust in the inherent goodness of others. The lack of clearly articulated social rules and structures might be a failing in a political tract or theory, but within a novel, this feature encourages readers to learn from example, dealing with issues as they arise rather than from a top down perspective that would be foreign to the utopia's culture.

The integrative approach of novels, in which readers learn by seeing rather than simply hearing, is heightened in the last third of the text, when Guest travels up the Thames. Morris adopts an approach akin to Harriet Martineau, who wrote short stories to demonstrate her economic beliefs earlier in the century with *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Yet where

Martineau directly dealt with pressing issues like the Poor Law in her economic fables, Morris more lyrically and diffusely demonstrates his economic principles. Krishan Kumar associates *News from Nowhere* with a form of utopian writing that rejects more programmatic utopian forms. Instead of laying out all the laws of society, the novel creates an emotional sense or feeling of the new world, which Kumar believes would better encourage people to work towards a new future than set precepts (Kumar "Pilgrimage"). Guest's journey around London and up the Thames may feel rudderless, but it is actually guided by principles, which align well with a critical geography approach to social and economic problems.

A critical geography approach places an emphasis on the land in order to show how economic and social practices play out spatially. Michelle Allen describes the concept of a critical geography approach to reform as follows: it "encompasses at once the textual, the social, and the spatial, allowing us to see interplay among discourse, the social order and the built environment" (18). Critical geography's emphasis on the "interplay" of multiple forces in a particular space make it useful to twenty-first century abolitionists who want to show the relationships of the prison-industrial complex. Edward W. Soja explains that a spatial understanding is key to approaching social change: "[T]he geography…of justice…is an integral and formative component of justice itself, a vital part of how justice and injustice are socially constructed and evolve over time" (1). A critical geography approach to penal abolitionist justice, exemplified by scholars like Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Judah Schept, and Brett Story, displaces prisons from the spotlight to make land usage the protagonist of scholarly storytelling.[156] Schept and Story, in mapping the economic conditions of the Appalachian carceral landscape, argue "for a decentering of punishment and a renewed focus on the

[156] See, for instance Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag*, Judah Schept's "Keep Local Kids Local," Brett Story's *Prison Land*, and Story & Schept's "Against Punishment."

production of poverty and wage labor within both our analytic mappings of the carceral state and our organizing efforts against it" (10). They claim that a greater emphasis should be put on "issues of labor power and public entitlements," which are often uncoupled from policies of punishment and crime (25). Schept and Story turn to the geography of Appalachia to make these abolitionist arguments. Morris's careful mapping of England's landscape engages in a similar process of defocalizing political arguments and rooting his readers in the geographic realities of his utopia.

In addition to being used by twenty-first century penal abolitionists, critical geography was a key method of socialism in the late nineteenth century, most clearly demonstrated by Peter Kropotkin. William Morris was well acquainted with Kropotkin, a geographer and anarcho-socialist thinker who relocated from Russia to England in the 1880s. Kropotkin, like Morris, was less interested in focusing on industrial spaces, in favor of understanding decentralized agricultural areas (Springer 50). At the time that Morris was writing *News from Nowhere*, Kropotkin was publishing essays in *Nineteenth Century* which would later be collected as *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899). Kropotkin's writing aligns with Morris's novel on key points, like encouraging decentralization and discouraging strict divisions of labor.[157] But whereas Kropotkin's text was a socioeconomic treatise, Morris's novel has a more immersive feeling and less defined structure. As much as discussing the minutiae of ideas matters, these ideas speak more emotionally to their audiences when absorbed through a story.

The novel's interest in geography and place also resonates with nineteenth-century dialogue about the impact of reform on London's most destitute. Michelle Allen notes that in the

[157] Florence Boos further discusses the parallels between Kropotkin's and Morris's ideas. She also shows how both thinkers may have influenced the "Garden City" movement of Ebenezer Howard, which started its first "garden city' in 1903.

1880s, there was widespread disillusionment about the effectiveness of reform as people realized that slum-clearing projects, though theoretically providing better air circulation, ended up exacerbating housing difficulties for the poor (117-8). The Cross Act of 1875, formally the Artisans and Labourers Dwellings Improvement Act, led to mass evictions of the poor without readily providing new housing for them (121). While the poor were viewed as victims, they were simultaneously blamed for their situation, particularly when families were unwilling to move as part of the Cross Act. Allen explains that loyalty to a community and love of place were interpreted as stubbornness, laziness, and insularity (129). In this light, the adoration of the Thames in Morris's utopian society emanates sympathy for people who refused to leave their homes. By re-envisioning the Thames, rather than placing his utopia elsewhere, Morris suggests that solutions should not be sought by relocation, transportation, or colonial expansion, but in attending to the places one loves at home in new ways.

Reading *News from Nowhere* as a series of mappings, overlaying Morris's England with a utopian England, clarifies the novel's structure. Scholars like Patrick Brantlinger have claimed that the book has "nothing like a plot" (42). Yet others have emphasized the way that a journey structure organizes the text. In this vein, *News from Nowhere* has been contextualized with nineteenth-century ideas about ethnography,[158] pilgrimage[159] and guidebooks. Alison Byerly's reading of *News from Nowhere* with contemporary river guidebooks is particularly helpful in understanding the novel through a critical geography lens. Byerly believes Guest's fluid Thames travels would have resonated strongly with British readers. While the Thames was a public

[158] James Buzard documents the emergence of fieldwork ethnography in the 1890s, including the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS)'s Ethnographic Survey of the UK, undertaken in 1892-1899. Buzard reads Guest as an ethnographer who is given privileged knowledge about Nowhere but always remains outside of it socially (460).

[159] In religious pilgrimages, a pilgrim "seeks an image of perfection" and then brings home knowledge of the site to share with others (Kumar "Pilgrimage" 93). Kumar breaks Guest's pilgrimage into an intellectual pilgrimage around London and an emotional pilgrimage up the Thames, although he emphasizes the fluidity between these categories.

health crisis in the middle of the century, clean-up efforts refashioned the river as a popular recreation site by the end of the century (86). The flourishing guidebook market included volumes on the Thames, which were written to invoke an intimate journey back in time to a more pastoral England. Readers were thus primed to think of the Thames as a kind of time machine even before Morris's utopia (119). Morris draws not only from the mystical nature of the Thames, but its reality as well. By grounding his utopia in a trip up the Thames, Morris was "map[ping] a utopian landscape that was specific enough to seem plausible" to his readers (122). Even if *News from Nowhere* has minimal plot, Byerly insists that, "Victorians were accustomed… [to] viewing a trip up the Thames as a trip to nowhere" (122). The lack of plot grounds the novel in a watery reality. Readers could feel like they were lost in conversation and fascinating views on the utopic journey upriver. Building on Byerly's analysis, I argue that Morris's remapping of London and the Thames not only invokes a sense of a familiar landscape but purposefully juxtaposes a past and future landscape to make a socioeconomic argument. Morris replaces well-known locales with depictions of new land usages. Whereas nineteenth-century tourists traveled around the country and abroad to see what they hoped were "better" prison systems, Morris shows us how virtual travel at home can reveal better excarceral structures for society.[160]

Throughout Guest's journey, he and his guides routinely map their traversed landscape, showing how banded-workshops replace factories and how apricot orchards fill Trafalgar Square (64, 58). Martin Delveaux explains that Morris's descriptions of land connect him to the politics of Back to the Land and Back to Nature movements. Consider for instance the narrator's travels

[160] See, for instance, Janet Miron's *Prisons, Asylums, and the Public* on the travel habits of visitors to the United States and Canada in the nineteenth century. While prisons were open to the public for much of the nineteenth century, by the end of the century, when Morris was writing *News from Nowhere*, prisons had begun to restrict visitors.

through a romantic wooded Kensington Market (*News* 36-37). Before the text names "Kensington Market," with its foregrounding of human commerce, the landscape proclaims itself as a mixed use area with a little brook, a market, and a town hall. Guest acknowledges both a sense of familiarity and unfamiliarity with the place: "Although there was nothing familiar to me in its surroundings, I knew pretty well where we were" (36). The land itself is not changed, nor the narrator's sense of positioning in space, yet the place feels transformed. Dick maps out the new "market" not in terms of its commercial, private businesses, but through the extent of the woods: "it goes from here northward and west right over Paddington and a little way down Notting Hill: thence it runs north-east to Primrose Hill, and so on; rather a narrow strip of it gets through Kingsland to Stoke Newington and Clapton, where it spreads out along the heights above the Lea marshes; on the other side of which, as you know, is Epping forest holding out a hand to it" (37). The dense description of neighborhood names asks for an ideal reader who knows London well, and it asks them to remap the multiple distinct locales as one connected forest. Dick then mentions that they are approaching a section called "Kensington Gardens; though why 'gardens' I don't know" (37). Public knowledge retains the name of Kensington, the British palace where Queen Victoria was born, but the idea of private palace gardens stretches beyond the bounds of understanding in the utopian future.[161] Dick's inability to see the distinctness of a small, enclosed garden resonates with the utopia's use of land. The natural landscape is wholly integrated into society, with forests even anthropomorphized to have hands, as if a member of society, rather than segregated or preserved in small parcels.

[161] Though privately owned, the gardens were partially open to the public ("Landscape History"). While this section of the novel does not expand on the uses of Kensington Palace, later on, the reader finds Windsor Castle transformed into communal dwellings (233).

The term "garden," however, is central to the way Hammond translates the socioeconomic structure of the new world to his nineteenth-century guest. In what Paddy O'Sullivan suggests is one of the "most (justifiably) famous passages from the book" (O'Sullivan 177), Hammond summarizes England's geographical transformation as follows:

> England was once a country of clearings among the woods and wastes, with a few towns interspersed, which were fortresses for the feudal army, markets for the folk, gathering places for the craftsmen. It then became a country of huge and foul workshops and fouler gambling-dens, surrounded by an ill-kept, poverty-stricken farm, pillaged by the masters of the workshops. It is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoiled, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty. (Morris *News* 103)

Instead of separate parcels of owned gardens, the whole of society is a connected singular garden. In this passage, the state of government is inextricably intertwined with the state of the land. Morris sees ideal land use as driven neither by the desire for coercion and "protection" through armies in a feudal mode nor the extraction of goods in a capitalist mode. The resulting ideal, a garden, may seem less political in its emphasis on the "trim and neat and pretty" yet this seemingly apolitical image is defined by collective care and a lack of governmental coercive forces upon the land. In *Topophilia,* Yi-Fu Tuan explains that in the early and mid-nineteenth century, the western world idealized a middle landscape, of farms and gardens, which lay between the profane city and the equally profane wilderness (104-105). Morris himself had experimented with creating real-life instantiations of factory-communities when his company refashioned Merton Abbey in 1881 (Boos 14-15). The term garden took on even greater political meaning shortly after *News from Nowhere* was published, as Ebenezer Howard's Garden City

Association, founded in 1899, created individual cities, such as Letchworth, for cooperative living (Boos). While not thoroughly explaining intricacies of utopian land use, Morris's continual emphasis on the beautiful landscape of his penal abolitionist utopia critically intervenes against capitalist land use, as a prerequisite for a world without prisons.

C) Solving Problems in a World Without Prisons

In addition to abolishing penal systems and demonstrating the way society can be reshaped to reduce social problems, *News from Nowhere* takes a rare step for a utopian novel in admitting its inhabitants are not perfect. Because of this, they need to have humane ways to deal with issues like murder. How to navigate major social issues without using force or imprisonment remains an important challenge for abolitionist thought. As Vincenzo Ruggiero explains, "Abolitionism neither pursues a perfect system nor anticipates future uniformity or purity; its stance grants a central role to the notion of conflict" ("Utopian" 92). *News from Nowhere* embraces the need to manage conflict when Guest and his companions meet Walter, who lives in a village where a murder recently occurred over a romantic dispute.

This Maple-Durham scene has garnered scholarly attention primarily for how Morris chooses to grapple with, rather than avoid, the darker side of humanity. Norman Talbot explains that romantic problems are beyond what can be solved by socialism: "nothing can prevent the turmoils of romantic love and sexual longing, even when all economic and class-base obstacles are removed" (Talbot 45). Domestic and sexual violence were both visible in the media when Morris was writing *News from Nowhere*. Lisa Surridge shows that sexual violence against women was prominent in the media of the 1880s due to feminist campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Act and the Whitechapel murders in 1888. Additionally, Morris was primed to think about the long-lasting societal effects of romantic engagements, even before the media's

spotlight. He previously wrote about the famous society-ending love triangles of Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot and Helen-Paris-Menelaus (Marcus "Folklore" 161).[162] Scholars commend Morris on acknowledging potential romantic problems. For instance, Owen Holland shows that Morris was critical of other writers whose utopian writing avoided problems among humans. He quotes as an example Morris's response to reading Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* on May 2, 1885: "the passions have to be reckoned with by almost everyone; and thence come all kinds of entanglements, which we could not wholly get rid of in any state of society" (quoted in Holland 31). For Holland, the murder scene in *News from Nowhere* responds to the absence of human entanglements in texts like *Walden* by showing how "negative emotions, such as jealousy or melancholy" can interrupt a utopian community without destroying it (36). *News from Nowhere* recognizes the massive problems that can arise in interpersonal relationships, but it also refuses to allow the response to these problems to be capital punishment, imprisonment, or indeed, the collapse of society.

Prior to hearing about the recent murder, Guest had learned from Hammond the general principles guiding the new societal responses to interpersonal violence. Hammond explained that society's role is not to punish or even to take the reins, but to support the primary actors. After noting that "[h]ot blood will err sometimes," Hammond asks the following crucial questions (116),

> But what then? Shall we the neighbors make it worse still? Shall we think so poorly of each other as to suppose that the slain man calls on us to revenge him, when we know that if he had been maimed, he would, when in cold blood and able to weigh all the

[162] Morris wrote about these stories in *The Defence of Guenevere* and *Scenes from the Fall of Troy* respectively.

> circumstances, have forgiven his maimer? Or will the death of the slayer bring the slain man to life again & cure the unhappiness his loss has caused? (117)

Hammond has faith in victims being logical and not vengeful when given both facts and time to calm down. He requires the rest of society to maintain a similar spirit. He explains that people who have caused harm need to find peace within themselves and atone. Furthermore, Hammond says that seeking forgiveness and reconciliation should be the tantamount focus after a problem occurs because torturing a man with punishment would displace personal reflection on wrong-doing with "a hope of revenge for *our* [society's] wrong-doing" (118). He explains that because England is now "a society of equals," no one will "play the part of torturer or jailer, though many [will] act as nurse or doctor" (119). Notwithstanding the potential for medical institutions to be carceral, this response to problems places the power in the hands of those involved in the crisis, while the rest of society provides consultation and assistance.[163]

The Maple-Durham case particularizes the response Hammond articulated, as the community response minimizes gossiping, recommends space for self-reflection, and attends to factors beyond the immediate problem, such as companionship and housing. After Dick's friend Walter informs the travelers that a "death by violence" has occurred, Dick encourages Walter to tell the story, not from a desire for gossip, but in hopes that sharing will decrease Walter's sadness (239). Walter likewise does not encourage gossiping, but shares the story without using

[163] Stephen Coleman more fully delves into the language of illness and crime in this scene, noting that "Except for cases where they are 'sick or mad (in which case he must be restrained till his sickness or madness is cured)', all that Nowhere asks of its transgressors is that they feel remorse and ask for society's pardon--which is readily given. One is a little uneasy about so-called madness being a justification for enforced restraint; Morris was writing at a time before there was widespread sensitivity to the dangers of psychiatric abuse, and before writers such as Szasz and Laing produced their radical and compelling critiques of 'the myth of mental illness'" (86). There certainly were some signs in the nineteenth century about the fallibility of mental institutions. Sensation fiction like Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* suggested the potential abuses of psychiatric institutions. Yet even if the people in Morris's utopia treat crime like a disease, it is clear that the default is not turning to a medical expert or institution, i.e. not simply replacing psychiatric incarceration for penal incarceration.

the names of the people involved. This approach decreases the potential of stigma or negative repercussions for those embroiled in the event while still allowing Walter to process his engagement with the community problem.

In telling his story, Walter says multiple times that the community sought to provide advice and support, without resorting to threats. He explains that a man was "bitten with love-madness," and the man began to harass his love interest when she preferred a different man (240). Walter notes that, at this point, the problem was recognized communally, and an intervention was taken, not by an official with a designated role, but by "those of us who knew him best" (240). The man's friends, including Walter, proposed that the man "go away" (240). Although Walter does not clarify a length of time, the casual wording of "go away" does not indicate banishment or a complete break from society, rather a temporary reprieve to another location. When the man did not take their advice and the problem continued, his friends informed him that "he must go" (240). In this instance, we see a group compelling another person, but there is no clear sense of threat behind the claim. Indeed, Walter says that the "individual trouble had so overmastered him [the love-bitten man] that we felt that we must go if he did not" (240). People of the community would perhaps relocate and allow the man to continue in his own dwelling as one way to address the issue without requiring or threatening excess force. This second intervention was better received, and the man consented to leave, but he unfortunately had an unpleasant conversation with the woman and his rival before leaving. In the heat of the moment, he tried to hurt the successful suitor with an axe, which resulted in his own death at the hands of the man (240-1). After the death occurred, the community's primary recourse was again to recommend a temporary leave of absence to the surviving man. They advised him "to go away, in fact, to cross the seas" (241). Again, it is not clear if such a move

would be permanent or temporary, but the emphasis appears to be on withdrawing from the heat of a problem to gain perspective. Such a recourse would not be possible in a society with fixed jobs, but since people can alter their occupation with ease in this utopian society, a temporary relocation would be easier to manage financially. Additionally, the novel makes clear that the purpose of withdrawing is not to inflict lonely or punitive seclusion. Walter in fact worries that the surviving man might kill himself from regret if left alone, and Dick concurs with Walter that it would be better if Walter live with the surviving man (241, 243). Although this man killed someone that Walter knew well and considered a friend, he is willing to offer companionship and even relieves him of the burden of finding a new abode. Walter journeys upriver with Dick and Guest to find a house where the man might stay (244). Throughout the process of managing this issue, the community did not take charge to solve the problem but primarily acted to minimize harm for all people involved.

After hearing about the incident, Guest has a better understanding of how matters are handled and why ordinary people, guided by core values, could come to better decisions than courts. He reflects that "no amount of examination of witnesses, who had witnessed nothing but the ill-blood between the two rivals, would have done anything to clear up the case" (242). In this utopia, courts are not seen as a necessary recourse to find "truth," such as whether the murder was in self-defense or not. Instead, people accept that a person has died at the hands of another. Rather than digging further into the event, they create space for the man and the people of the community to deal with the weight of that reality, without encouraging further violence. Guest's concluding thoughts on this scene are that he "had no fear any longer that 'the sacredness of human life' was likely to suffer among my friends from the absence of gallows and prison" (242). The proceedings in the Maple-Durham story consistently value human life,

respecting both the man who died and the man who took his life. This incident usefully allows Guest to see the values of the utopia in action, an embodiment of earlier theoretical dialogue.

Admittedly, the Maple-Durham story only represents one problem that might need to be addressed in a socialist utopia. In revising the novel for publication after its serialization, Morris added a second instance of fissure, a scene in which some workers choose not to answer the call for the annual harvest, deciding instead to continue their construction project. Rather than seeing these events as the limit of potential problems, they can productively spark discussion of what further complications abolitionists need to consider in working towards a prison-less future. Some scholars have highlighted additional possible problems. Marcus Waithe worries about instances where people might enjoy causing pain ("Folklore" 165-6). Additionally, Laurence Davis wishes that Morris dealt more seriously with the possibility for significant differences in ethical opinions. Davis suggests that new settings, even radical socialist visions, would generate new conflicts because of the nature of ethical value: "Values conflict, and hard choices must sometimes be made between them" (70). He finds it hard to believe that the value of harmonious coexistence would trump individual opinion and interest in all cases, as seems to be the situation in Morris's utopia. Davis believes that there should be structures to maintain and navigate difference as a precaution for these scenarios. These further considerations are important for abolitionists to consider, but their absence from Morris's tale do not make it a failure. Just as Morris did not want *Looking Backward* to be the socialist bible, we should not look to *News from Nowhere* to provide all the answers, only to provide some guidelines and spark further conversation.

This section of the chapter, along with the preceding two sections, has established the ways in which we can profitably think of *News from Nowhere* as abolitionist. It charts a path

forward by pairing exploratory dialogue with realized landscapes and particular trials. Before moving on to the implications of this approach to Morris's oeuvre and twenty-first century abolitionist thought, we will take a slight detour to consider an important aspect of abolitionist theory that Morris does not deeply engage: race.

A Foray Beyond Nowhere: Race and Criminality in the Nineteenth-Century

Despite having many features of an abolitionist text, *News From Nowhere* does not pay close attention to racial difference when bemoaning the problems of the nineteenth-century penal system, nor does the utopia explicitly demonstrate peaceful coexistence of different ethnicities. It is unreasonable to ask a novel to do everything, yet this omission is noteworthy considering the tangible racial problems in the nineteenth century as regards the penal system. Without addressing race, Morris's utopia seems to fall into the mainstream Futurism paradigm protested by Afrofuturists: assuming that "any future would be defined and directed by a Euro-American majority; people of color would fit into those futures merely as an afterthought" (Kilgore, De Witt Douglas). While I would not go as far as some scholars who claim that the novel is invested in eugenics, it is important to question the degree to which Morris's utopia allows for racial difference, because racial reasoning has continued to be a key factor in criminalization practices since the nineteenth century.

In the twenty-first century, race is an important analytic for understanding the problems of the penal system. While the abolitionist theories David Scott enumerated do not include a racial analysis, the idea of racial difference is contained within theory three: the terms "crime" and "criminal" are disproportionately applied to actions and people of lower social status. Angela Davis powerfully argues that we need to consider race as an analytic since punishment

disproportionately affects people along racial lines: "While most imprisoned young black men may have broken a law, it is the fact that they are young black men rather than the fact that they are law-breakers which brings them into contact with the criminal justice system" ("Racialized" 367). Lisa Marie Cacho has made similar arguments about the criminalization of Latinos in the US, showing how laws are differentially applied such that "color-blind policies…did not have race-neutral intentions or results" (41). She explains that certain populations are policed through "de facto status crimes": "[a] person does not need to *do* anything to commit a status crime because the person's status is the offense in and of itself" (43). While Davis and Cacho are primarily concerned with the contemporary US context, a racial analysis is helpful to fully understand the state of punishment in late nineteenth century England, particularly when it comes to the criminalization of immigrants.

Nineteenth-century policy and practice tended to both racialize and criminalize immigrants. In the middle of the century, Irish immigrants fleeing famine were racially criminalized (Swift).[164] While the overrepresentation of Irish immigrants in arrests and imprisonments diminished by the end of the century, anti-Irish sentiments lay the groundwork for other anti-immigrant feeling, legislation, and policing.[165] The most politicized group of immigrants around the time of *News from Nowhere* were Jews fleeing pogroms and poverty in

[164] Peter King shows that English people associated Irish people with violence in the eighteenth century, but that there is less compelling evidence this resulted in increased criminal charges, citing "only show limited evidence of prejudice obstructing justice" in Old Bailey Court Records of 1750-1825 (414). However as Irish immigration increased with the Irish famine in the 1840s and 1850s, statistics clearly show overrepresentations of Irish-born people in committals to prison (Swift 402). Roger Swift notes that many policemen were Irish (410), but that does not preclude the system from being racially prejudiced. Irish communities were often united against the police, when they were enforcing licensing laws or regulating lodging houses, with whole neighborhoods coming together to resist police harassment (Swift 414).

[165] Swift says that more work needs to be done on Irish experiences in the fin de siècle, but notes Irish immigrants might have been better integrated socially because, "By the 1880s and 1890s working-class Irish men and women were making an important contribution to a growing labor movement, most notably in the context of the 'new unionism'" (419). Swift also believes that Irish people may have benefited from people turning their fears about immigration towards other populations: "The perceived threat in the 1880s and 1890s came not from the Irish but from the thousands of poor Jewish immigrants" (420).

the Russian Pale of Settlement. There was some sympathy shown towards immigrating Jews; for instance, Daniel Renshaw points to the 1894-1906 Dreyfus Affair as a moment of popular engagement in support of Jews against anti-Semitism in the French military (42). At the same times, Jews were caricatured as ruthless, criminal masterminds, and were even blamed as the engineers of the 1899-1902 Boer War because of supposed financial interests (45). Paul Knepper demonstrates as well that Jews were suspected to be involved in sex trafficking and the Whitechapel murders that began in 1888 (63).[166] Racial antagonization of immigrants culminated in the next century with the first enactment of legislation against immigrants in Europe, the Aliens Act of 1905 (Knepper 61).[167]

Despite the prominence of racial criminalization in the nineteenth century, anti-racist theory was a crucial oversight in most socialist action at best, and anti-Semitic at worst. In *Freedom Dreams,* Robin Kelley demonstrates the uneasy historical relationship between socialist and black liberation movements. When the US Socialist Labor Party was formed in 1872, it denied racial discrimination as a central concern, wanting to primarily focus on labor without the analytic of race (Kelley 41). While Kelley points to some evolutions in socialist politics over the twentieth century, he generally bemoans the lack of inclusion of racial concerns in socialist groups. Within the UK, the socialist party often aligned with Irish nationalists, aware of the

[166] Between 1880 and 1914, 2.4 million Jews left the Pale of Settlement, with tens of thousands going to the UK (Knepper 62). In that same time frame, the Jewish population increased from 40,000 to 200,000 in London (Knepper 63). Jews had already achieved some social victories by this time, being granted eligibility for Parliament and high office by acts in 1858 and 1871 (Knepper 72). Perhaps because of this, middle and upper class Jewish society responded to the claims of Jewish criminality and connection with sex trafficking by accepting some responsibility for the problem, rather than pointing out the discriminatory nature of these claims. The Jewish Ladies' Society for Preventive and Rescue Work was formed in 1885 to address sex trafficking, for instance (67).

[167] Jewish migrants were not the only immigrant group criminalized at the end of the nineteenth century. While a smaller immigrant population, Chinese migrants were also associated with crime, specifically with narcotics and, particularly after Sax Rohmer's introduction of the character Fu Manchu in the early 1910s, with criminal masterminds (Renshaw 8).

unique problems facing Irish communities,[168] but there appeared to be some mixed feelings about Jewish people.[169] As an example, Renshaw points to Michael Davitt, a socialist and Irish nationalist whose stance was against anti-Semitism in the form of pogroms. Yet he believed that Jewish people, as a group, were nefariously perpetuating the evils of capitalism (45). While *News from Nowhere* is not anti-Semitic, its lack of racial analysis turns a blind eye to problems within contemporary policing and socialist movements.

Some critics have taken a more extreme position in suggesting that there are eugenics tendencies in *News From Nowhere.* Patrick Parrinder points to a persistent link between eugenics and utopian writing, claiming that many writers seem unable to imagine a better future without controlling human reproduction (1). He suggests that the source of increased physical attractiveness in Morris's utopia is not simply a healthier environment and fewer negative social forces (8). Rather, Parrinder thinks the novel supports libertarian eugenics, a belief that people themselves will select optimal partners to lead to the collective betterment of the human race. Daniel P. Shea takes an alternative approach to reading eugenics in *News from Nowhere,* suggesting that Morris uses an altered class-based approach to eugenics, believing that people will sexually select against an idle, upper class (154). Shea reads the central plot of *News from Nowhere* as a procreative quest, "[f]ollowing the spawning salmon on their upriver course" (159). While romance is certainly central to *News from Nowhere*, I do not find either eugenics frame convincing. The ability for environmental changes to alter health outcomes was a core belief for nineteenth century sanitary reformers, who had grand ideas about what improving

[168] In his book on the relationship between Irish revolutionaries and the British Labor movement, Geoffrey Bell points out that socialists and Irish nationalists were united in the Bloody Sunday demonstration, and that "[a] particular focus of the protest was the 'Mitchelstown Massacre' of September 1887, when police had fired on a crowd of Irish demonstrators in Mitchelstown, County Cork, demanding land reform and fair rent" leaving three dead and two wounded (ix). Police violence against the Irish was a known entity for socialists.
[169] Marcus Waithe provides supplemental evidence of socialists deriding the figure of the Jew as capitalist ("Law" 228).

sanitation would do for not only health but society (Allen 2). Piers Hale also argues that Morris's belief in the improved health of people aligns with contemporary belief in neo-Lamarckian inheritance, as Lamarck was only fully discredited by the end of the 1890s. Morris's novel does not discuss the flaws of racial discrimination, but neither does it implicitly argue for white supremacy.

In *News from Nowhere,* Morris did not discuss problems related to race in his time period, nor in the time period that served as an important model for his utopia, the later Middle Ages. Waithe notes the strong exclusionary processes within this earlier time period, and Laurence Davis similarly points out that the later Middle Ages represented a "marked decline in status and safety" for groups such as Jews, heretics, women, homosexuals, and lepers, particularly with the Inquisition (72). Being inspired by this period does not mean that Morris desired to replicate the worst aspects of the time. To read the novel in an abolitionist lens, however, it is valuable to complement the novel with historical understanding of its blind spots.

While *News From Nowhere* does not strongly emphasize the societal problems related to race or immigration, it does promote openness as a value, both in terms of welcoming different ideas and outsiders. Waithe has argued that hospitality is indeed the key value of *News from Nowhere.* He claims that hospitality structures interpersonal interaction in Morris's world. Waithe suggests that hospitality in the utopia can be understood as "tolerance" because "Guest comes from a place not simply different from Nowhere but antagonistic to it" ("Laws" 215). Yet the arrival of one foreign person is not the same as extensive immigration. Additionally, while Guest may have different ideas and look older, he is not coded as racially different; indeed, signs point to the fact that he may be Dick's ancestor. Guest also tends to accommodate himself to the rules of the utopia, trying his best to fit in, rather than preserve his individuality. Based on these

factors, Waithe wonders the extent to which dissent would be allowed in Morris's socialist utopia: "When the tables were turned, when the Morrisian position was no longer the minority position, would unorthodox opinion still enjoy the right to be heard?" ("Laws" 217). Waithe does not think *News from Nowhere* fully answers this question, but he does show how Morris tries to point to continued free speech in the novel, with dissenters like the old grumbler. Even if the grumbler is made to appear a bit silly, "nobody is going to penalize him" for his dissent (Waithe "Laws" 219). Though misguided, the grumblers are welcome to their own ideas. With these moments of foreign arrival and open dissent, the utopia provides readers an opportunity to think further along abolitionist lines of what a utopia would look like that fully addresses historical issues of racialized criminalization.

Having established the abolitionist framework of *News from Nowhere*, I will now turn outward to demonstrate the importance of these values for Morris more broadly in his work, and to examine what aspects of utopian, abolitionist thought occur in his late playwriting and poetry. Morris's works, as well as his actions with the Socialist League, demonstrate that encounters with the criminal justice system were part of the daily experience of trying to realize a socialist utopia. His behavior and work together exemplify the ways that performative utopia was used to work towards social change.

The Front Lines of Socialist Fervor

Now that we have read *News from Nowhere* through an abolitionist frame, we can look outward to see the extent to which this framework allows for a broader understanding of Morris's oeuvre and his activism. A few years prior to publishing *News From Nowhere*, Morris's socialist activities brought him in close and violent encounters with the criminal justice system in

the forms of agitation, arrest, trial, and imprisonment. In addition to dealing with these forces in the streets and in the courts, Morris uses the utopian mode in his theatrical writing to enact a better world beyond coercive powers.

The most prominent of Morris's police encounters was on November 13, 1887, also known as Bloody Sunday. He participated in a demonstration in Trafalgar Square that was attacked by the police, leaving three dead, 200 people hospitalized, and 75 arrested (E. P. Thompson 491).[170] E. P. Thompson explains that earlier biographers of Morris saw Bloody Sunday as a turning point for the writer. They claimed that Morris became disillusioned with the idea of a socialist revolution after this event (502). Yet Thompson points out that the successful socialist revolution in *News From Nowhere* has similar conditions to the events of Bloody Sunday, but manages to succeed where the socialists of 1887 did not (502). Thompson reads this literary move, of reiterating history, as a sign that Morris still felt aligned with the means of revolution he espoused before the violent police encounter.

Bloody Sunday appears in *News from Nowhere* just prior to Dick's revelation that the utopia has no prisons. The events of November 13th are as amazing to Dick as the idea that a society would have prisons. Dick expresses dismay about the facts of Bloody Sunday as recorded in history books. He tells Guest,

> Some people, says this story, were going to hold a ward-mote here, or some such thing, and the Government of London, or the Council, or the Commission, or what not other barbarous, half-hatched body of fools, fell upon these citizens (as they were then called)

[170] The reasons behind the demonstration show the interconnectedness of criminal justice and socialist concerns. E. P. Thompson says that the heart of the protest was against the treatment of Irish M.P. O'Brien while in prison (488). The event was also deeply rooted in the problems of joblessness and homelessness, as people were sleeping in Trafalgar Square in large numbers, beginning in the summer of 1887 (Allen 134).

with the armed hand. That seems too ridiculous to be true; but according to this version of the story, nothing much came of it, which certainly is too ridiculous to be true. (59)

Dick does not use the word police, but frames the police as the "armed hand" of the government. When Guest protests that the "story" is truthful, Dick cannot believe that people "put up with that" (59). Dick and the old man accompanying him are even more disbelieving that "the bludgeoned" were sent to prison (60). Their disbelief may be read as naïve or unrealistic, as Guest has recently experienced Bloody Sunday himself, but their stalwart faith in the ability for people to stand up against governmental armed forces is commendable in its utopianism.

In contrast, the protestors of Bloody Sunday received minimal support from the press, and those who were outraged were interested in reforming rather than revolutionizing the justice system.[171] Michelle Allen notes that the only sympathetic response was from The *Pall Mall Gazette* (136). At the time, the paper was under the editorship of William Thomas Stead and was liberal in its politics.[172] Stead was one of the founders of the Law and Liberty League following Bloody Sunday, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* published the fledgling organization's proceedings. The group hoped to address a variety of problems within England's system of law, including "the right of procession, free speech, the freedom of the press, and personal liberty" ("Establishment" 2). In reporting on the first meeting of the organization, which Morris attended, the *Pall Mall Gazette* explains that there was vehement "feeling against both police and magistrates" ("Establishment" 2). Speakers insisted that people should always have lawyers to defend them, that police should be cross-examined in trials, and that there should be a universal bail center to

[171] Micol Seigel explains that people are often outraged against instances of police violence, but view these acts as exceptional moments of corruption, when in reality the police's entire power is based on the potential of violence (26).

[172] W. T. Stead was editor from 1883-1889. One of his most well-known campaigns was against child prostitution in 1885, which resulted in a bill raising the age of consent from 13 to 16. He is associated with what Matthew Arnold termed "new journalism." For more on the connection between politics and Stead's new journalism see Kate Campbell.

help the poor (3). Yet not all present were against the concept of police, with the chairman explaining he had less an issue with the police than "those who gave them their instructions" (2). Morris wrote a letter to the editor the *Pall Mall Gazette*, published on November 18, 1887, noting his wariness of the group's reformist approach to the law: "I don't quite like the title of the League set on foot by you, for I cannot see, especially after last Sunday, what relation there is between Law and Liberty other than that between the wolf and the lamb. I agree with your correspondent 'A Lawyer' that if the enactments on the statute-book were enforced all liberty would soon be stopped" ("The Law and Liberty League"). For Morris, law does not promote liberty, but severely restricts it, like a predator cornering its prey. Yet he judges the group based on its intentions and happily sends his subscription.

While Morris continued to be involved in the league and they were able to accomplish some small successes, Morris's experiences leading up to Bloody Sunday provided good reason to doubt an approach which trusted the righteousness of legal apparatuses.[173] Bloody Sunday was not Morris's sole encounter with the police, but the culmination of several years of agitation. E. P. Thompson recounts how Morris's Socialist League often helped S. D. F. speakers who faced cases of obstruction (394).[174] Morris directly voiced his opinion on these occasions, which can be best seen in a courtroom drama during occurring in September 1885. As a spectator in the crowd, Morris witnessed police perjuring themselves and cried out, "Shame!" He was arrested for disorderly conduct and released a few hours later (Thompson 396-7). Morris was

[173] In a letter to the league on November 21, 1887, Morris asked for particular attention to be paid to the use of unsupported testimony from the police as professional witnesses. He also complained that jury trials are directed by judges. A month later, the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported on what the league had thus far accomplished: fines paid for 16 prisoners, appeals for 13 cases, and two prisoners defended.

[174] This was a moment in which the police were concerned less about people's freedom of movement than the specific ideas that socialists were preaching. Morris pointed out in an interview that the socialists were targeted specifically because of their socialist message, and that other options were not available to them as working men might not be able to pay the cost to rent halls and the open-air speaking format allows them to reach a different population than they otherwise would ("The Poet and the Police").

conscientious about how components of his identity facilitated easier experiences with police, such as this quick release. He gave an interview on September 23, 1885, about the events for the *Pall Mall Gazette,* in response to news coverage the previous day in *The Standard* ("The Poet," "Socialists"). Morris believed that he was not sent to prison because he had told the judge that he was a well-known artist and writer, and he comments on the lack of justice in his going free when others did not:

> The existence of this spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of the working men makes the position one of some difficulty for persons with means. I have not yet made up my mind what course I should take if I were simply fined. My view is that everybody ought to do in this manner as his conscience bids him. We are certainly determined to support our friends. It grieves me to see so many outsiders taken, for all the speakers were not taken. We ought all to be taken.

Morris notes the discrepancy in how punishment is served based on the wealth and nationality of the individual in question. He also raises the issue that the system funnels more poor men into prison simply because they cannot pay fines. Despite debtors' prisons being supposedly eliminated in the 1860s, the use of court fines continue the reality of imprisonment for poverty. Morris does not know if he would go to prison instead of paying the fine if he were arrested, so as to stand in solidarity with less affluent prisoners.[175] Only a few months later, Morris was confronted with the reality of this conundrum. After being arrested on July 11, 1886, he was fined one shilling, because he was a gentleman, while his friends were fined 20 pounds each.

[175] While Morris seems to take seriously the problems within prison, the person interviewing him from the *Pall Mall Gazette* makes light of prison. This can be seen in the closing exchange in the article: "'Have you any important literary work in hand at present, Mr. Morris?' 'I cannot say that I have—I cannot find time.' 'Then it may be a public gain if you are cast into prison?' 'Ah! but there is the oakum to pick.'"

Morris refused to pay the fine and was imprisoned for two months (Thompson 402). Morris's refusal highlighted the inherent imbalance in court proceedings.

Choosing not to pay a fine was one means for Morris to assert himself against official narratives of justice. Control of narrative is at the heart of politics and policing, two forces which are inherently antithetical, according to Jacques Rancière's ten theses on politics. Police control the realm of what is visible and sayable, which politics aims to intervene against. Rancière's eighth thesis is applicable to the demonstrations Morris took part in, as Rancière explains that police do not engage with, but disrupt demonstrations. Their business is "first of all, a reminder of the obviousness of what there is, or rather, of what there isn't: 'Move along! There is nothing to see here!'" Rancière shows that the struggle between politics and police is not only over the domain of visibility, but of space, as politics "consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein." To protest in the streets, to refuse to pay an unjust fine, or indeed to write a play exposing the problems of a court is to perform politics, to stand in opposition to the state's narrative.

In this sense, Morris was engaging in politics when he transformed the real courtroom events of 1885 into an 1887 theatrical production. Performed a month before Bloody Sunday, *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened* boldly addresses the problems of the penal system by depicting current issues and projecting an alternate future. Its two part structure contrasts corrupt court proceedings with a socialist utopia. Norman Talbot believes this play, which he labels an English agitprop or social protest play, is a more limited form than *News from Nowhere.* Yet the play is helpful in demonstrating Morris's relation to aspects of the criminal justice system, and the extent to which uprooting these structures, not working through them, was central to Morris's

conception of a resultant utopia.[176] Even more than *News from Nowhere*, *The Tables Turned* demonstrates that the power of the state lies in narrative control, which they use to label both the poor and dissenters as criminals. The play uses the power of utopia to insist upon a counter storyline. This alternative vision turns the monologue of the state into a powerful dialogue, disputing the truth in criminal justice proceedings.

The narrative power of the court is illustrated in the linked figures of Justice Nupkins and the police participating in the court proceedings. Throughout *The Tables Turned*, Nupkins is less concerned with justice than maintaining the power of his court, demanding decorum and respect from the crowd. After almost falling asleep during the proceedings, Nupkins is on multiple occasions awakened by cries of consternation from the crowd of onlookers, who point out the inconsistencies of state witnesses. On one instance, after it is pronounced that a woman stole three loaves of bread, a voice cries out, "She's got three children, you palavering blackguard!" (3). Nupkins exclaims in response, "Arrest that man, officer; I will commit him, and give him the heaviest punishment that the law allows of" (3). Nupkins believes that threat to the legitimacy of the law, the court, and the police witnesses demands the highest degree of punishment, and he refuses to allow outside voices or ideas enter into the carefully controlled court proceedings. After another outcry, the justice orders officers to "arrest everybody present except the officials," such that one voice becomes reason to prosecute all (8). The judge's power even holds sway over what ought to be an independent jury; he delivers a long speech to them, after which a voice from the crowd decries, "You convicted her: you were judge and jury both!" (8). Time after

[176] Talbot claims that the play has a "repulsive clarity" and that it is "almost lifeless to the reader" when experienced as a text and not a play. If the reader is not as engaged in the play in the contemporary era, we can still imagine the engagement in the play's nineteenth century audience. Also, the play's "clarity" is useful for expanding upon less clear parts of *News from Nowhere*.

time, the judge polices what narratives are allowed within his court, strictly enforcing who can speak and be heard.

The police additionally exert an influence over the official narrative. In the case brought against Mary Pinch for stealing bread, the police eyewitnesses explicitly show that they have been colluding on a fictional story, which they struggle to remember with any consistency. Sergeant Sticktoit says in an aside that he knows the prosecutor wants him to say the woman took loaves of bread from three different shops, and he wonders what they had agreed together was "the likeliest way" she would have done so (3, 4). Constable Potlegoff's story does not quite match with Sticktoit's, and the final officer, Constable Strongithroath contradicts himself at every turn, speaking slowly "*as if repeating a lesson*": "I saw her steal them all—all—all from one shop—from three shops" (5). The same officers are also called in the case of socialist Jack Freeman. The officers exaggerate the number of people present at socialist events and twist the language of socialist terms, either out of ignorance or on purpose. For instance, they say that Freeman encouraged the crowd to "disembowel all the inhabitants of London," the country's capital, when he was actually talking about the economic concept of capital (11). The police work together with an agreed upon story and work to distort and discredit the stories of the accused. These comic exaggerations push against the authority of the real figures of judges and police.

Across the three cases which occur in Nupkins's court, the judge and police antics support the same general narrative: those who commit "crime" are poor, political, and violent. In terms of wealth, Justice Nupkins clearly discriminates in his proceedings based on class. The play opens with wealthy Mr. La-Di-Da at the bar, who has robbed a widow and her orphans. Nupkins says he must

> …perform the painful duty which devolves on me of passing sentence on you. I am compelled in doing so to award you a term of imprisonment; but I shall take care that you shall not be degraded by contamination with thieves and rioters, and other coarse persons, or share the diet and treatment which is no punishment to persons used to hard living: that would be to inflict a punishment on you not intended by the law, and would cast a stain on your character not easily wiped away. (1-2)

The justice is aware of the problems of imprisonment and approaches the concept wearily. He points out the poor diet and treatment that occur in the prison system. Yet Nupkins justifies giving a less harsh penalty to a wealthy man because he believes the wealthy man will be more greatly affected by prison. He is concerned about what the man will be like after prison, explaining, "I wish you to return to that society of which you have up to this untoward event formed an ornament without any such stain" (2). Noting the ability for prison to stain character, he wants the gentleman to be shielded as much as possible, for the smoothest reentry. It follows that Nupkins sees poor people as having already stained characters. Reentry to society is not an option for them since they never counted within society in the first place.

Despite Nupkins's clear discriminatory sentencing, Mr. Hungary, Q.C., the prosecutor, insists, "The law is made for the poor as well as for the rich, for the rich as well as for the poor" (3). Mr. Hungary uses this argument as a reason why "false sentiment" should not be used in the case of Mary, a poor woman, despite the evident use of sentiment in the case of La-Di-Da, a wealthy man (3).[177] When Mary has a chance to speak, she not only denies the fact that she stole the bread, but she questions why such an act would be considered a crime at all: "I didn't steal

[177] *News from Nowhere* also addresses the problems of sentencing discrepancies based on class. Guest reflects on the nineteenth-century courts that "it was considered a miracle of justice and beneficence if a poor man who had once got into the clutches of the law escaped prison or utter ruin" (106).

the loaves—and if I had a done, where was the harm?" (6). The punishment she receives is significant—eighteen months' hard labor—which does not seem reflective of the harm she inflicted. Are three loaves of bread equivalent to a year and a half of physical toll, separation from family, and stigma that she will carry for the rest of her life? From Mary's perspective her sentence is worse than a death penalty for her and her children, and she cries, "Won't you save all further trouble by hanging me, my lord? Or if you won't hang me, at least hang my children: they'll live to be a nuisance to you else" (9). The courts deem slight reduction in a merchant's private property as reason to ensure generational poverty; the baker's life and livelihood are not being treated as equally valuable as that of a poor woman or her children.

The same sense of de facto status crimes is evident when socialist Jack Freeman is at the stand. The justice exclaims, "With the utmost effrontery having pleaded 'Not Guilty,' he says, 'I am a Socialist and a Revolutionist'!" (21). For Nupkins, being a socialist is a de facto crime. For *being* a socialist, Jack is deemed guilty, receiving six years penal servitude and a fine of 100 pounds (22). While Jack's "crime" of being political might appear different than Mary's "crime" of being poor, the justice's narrative equates the two characteristics. Mary's act is cast as political when Nupkins explains that it was "a revolutionary theft, based on the claim on the part of those who happen unfortunately to be starving, to help themselves at the expense of their more fortunate, and probably—I may say certainly—more meritorious countrymen" (7). Without any evidence of her political allegiances, her actions are presented as part of a broader movement which Nupkins hopes to quell. In this process of politicizing Mary's (unproven) theft as political, Nupkins politicizes poverty and judges Mary and her entire class as unworthy revolutionaries.

While this equation of poverty and politics seems strategic in the justice's favor, it is worth noting that Morris himself thought it important not to discriminate between political

prisoners and other types of prisoners. In a *Commonweal* article on September 8, 1888, there is a note that the paper disagrees with Liberals who discuss "the iniquity of treating political prisoners no better than 'criminals'" because they do not want to raise the value of political prisoners over other types of prisoners.[178] The article explains that political prisoners may raise the profile of the problems with prisons more broadly:[179] "The clear insight that people are now getting into the fact that an English or Irish prison mean *torture*, and the loud protest against the torture of political prisoners brings into clearer relief the distorted morality of decent modern society, which claims full permission to torture all prisoners who are non-political without questions asked." Whereas Nupkins writes off poverty as politics in order to condemn it more easily and to ignore state responsibilities, Morris argues for a broad politics to encourage solidarity against the penal system.

Nupkins fuses the categories of poor and political by implicating both in violence and non-Englishness. He relates the two groups and antagonizes them with a single stroke, by suggesting they represent a threat to the lives and livelihood of the justice and other members of the state. In describing Mary Pinch, Nupkins says she must be "in collusion with the ruffianly revolutionists, who, judging from their accent, are foreigners of a low type, and who, while this case has been proceeding, have been stimulating their bloodstained souls to further horrors by the most indecent verbal violence" (8). Not only are the poor cast symbolically out of their own country, deemed non-English, but they are deemed violent as well.[180] Unlike in *News from*

[178] For instance, in reporting on the Law and Liberty League, the *Pall Mall Gazette* writes of "our prisoners" that "[t]hey were in gaol as felons simply because they were too poor to pay the fines" (Nov 23, 1887).
[179] For instance, earlier in the year *Commonweal* had published prose reflections during imprisonment by Fred Henderson called "Prison Life in England" and a poem by Ernest Jones during confinement called "Prison Thoughts."
[180] This language mirrors the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the trial that inspired *The Tables Turned*. When *The Standard* covered the original trial on September 22, 1885, it noted that two of the people arrested were foreigners and the judge advised them that "if they desired to help on their fellow-men let them go back to Germany."

Nowhere, *The Tables Turned* offers here a brief moment to think about anti-immigrant mentality and its role in criminal processes. The state, having the authority over violence, can dictate what actions are deemed as violence in others and labels those they act against as no longer being constituents of the state.

The distorted narrative of socialist violence against the state is exemplified through Jack Freeman's trial. He is on trial for spreading socialist ideas, which is phrased as "sedition and incitement to riot and murder, and also with obstructing the Queen's Highway" (9). The prosecutor associates socialism with violence: "murder and rapine are eagerly looked forward to under such names as Socialism, revolution, co-operation, profit-sharing, and the like" (10). And the terms of socialism are described as "a sort of cant language or thieves' Latin, so as to prevent their deliberations from becoming known outside their unholy brotherhood" (10). Just as court disruptions are portrayed as violent, so too are socialist actions. When the socialist ensign enters the court, Nupkins screams, "Help, help! Murder, murder!" and "Murder! thieves! fire!" despite there being no such violent emergency (22). In controlling the narrative of the court, Nupkins defines unequally what counts as violence and what violence will be tolerated.

Building upon his experiences on the front lines, Morris demonstrates in *The Tables Turned* the extent to which the courts and police are a united front of the government, controlling the social conception of crime and narratives about both the poor and socialists. In his play, as in *News from Nowhere*, a socialist revolution occurs, resulting in a new utopian world. At the end of the first part of the play, William Joyce, a socialist ensign exclaims, "The Tables are Turned now!" (22). The second part of the play makes it clear, however, that the socialist vision of the future is not a simple reversal of power as the phrase "the tables turned" implies. Instead, the

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Immigration control is a major part of contemporary policing and prison policy with immigrant detention centers being one of the largest growing sectors of American prison systems.

socialists have reimagined society and displaced coercive structures of "justice." The second part of the play follows the former justice as he tensely navigates the new countryside. Nupkins fears that he will be hunted, maintaining this suspicion even after multiple positive interactions with people, who give him food and refrain from prying into his affairs. Still, he misses the "happy days when *I* used to sentence people to be hanged!" (23). Even Mary Pinch, who Nupkins had sentenced before the revolution, kindly tries to help the former judge, but he insists that she wants to murder him (25). His character has not changed, but society does not condemn him for this. Marcus Waithe points to this moment as an example of the hospitality and tolerance which Morris believed in ("Laws" 215). Not all members of the new utopia are quite as forgiving. The socialist ensign, William Joyce, decides he wants to continue to scare the justice, although he hopes Nupkins will ultimately become adjusted to the new world. Joyce brings Nupkins to a council, which allows Nupkins to temporarily understand that they are talking about shooting him, when actually discussing shooting a dog. Joyce tells Nupkins to "[b]ear your own troubles as well as you used to bear other peoples'" (28).[181] Nupkins feels the terror that he used to inflict, yet his terror is unfounded, unlike the real horror that awaited the people he used to sentence.

In attempting to assist Nupkins in moving on with his life, the council hopes, but does not trust, that he will integrate into their new way of life. They insist that Nupkins must learn to "live decently," which Nupkins interprets as "hard labour for life, after all" since he would have to work in the fields (30). There is no clear sign that Nupkins will mentally adjust to the new world or lose some of his terror, and Joyce worries that "he will be trying some of his old lawyers' tricks again" (31). Still, Jack Freeman insists to Nupkins that he "got the better of us damned

[181] Morris's view on what "turned tables" would look like was not unanimous among the socialist movement of his time. For instance, F. Kitz wrote a *Commonweal* article for February 19, 1887 which includes courtroom dialogue in which four wealthy men who have never worked are sentenced variously to work and hard labor, being explicitly punished for their former lack of occupation.

Socialists after all" since Nupkins used to bully them, but now there is no one to bully him (31-32). The people who lose power in the transition to socialism might feel as if the tables are turned even if there is not actually a complete reversal, and there remains the threat of a return to the previous ways. Yet Freeman feels confident the new system will prevail, telling Joyce, "He can't hurt us; so we will hope the best for him" (31). Nupkins may not be truly "awakened" or enlightened in the course of the play, but the text allows space for him to flourish beyond its close.

The utopia of *The Tables Turned,* like the one in *News from Nowhere*, abandons the structures of power that were odious before, including prisons and courts. The new society has no prison (29), and the Freeman explains that no one would want the position of jailer or executioner: "[W]ho do you think is going to do such work as that! People punish other because they like to; and we don't like to" (30). As for courts, Joyce says that perhaps cows will "want Courts of Justice now, as we don't" (22). Eradicating courts does not remove the necessity for people to solve problems. Joyce explains that courts previously did not get at "the real state of the case" (27). Because of red tape, courts ended up being "a set of rules drawn up to allow men to make money of other people's misfortunes" (27). Instead, the new utopia has a council. Morris does not show the council proposing any overarching laws or judging individual people, but rather collectively problem solving. They discuss wood for a new building, exports of wool to other towns, a new wheel at the silk mill, and when to begin the harvest (28). As with *News from Nowhere*, Morris does not stop at condemning events in the nineteenth century, but insists on envisioning what other ways of living could exist, that could work for the very same people the current system fails, not artificially perfected utopian people.

Because *The Tables Turned* is a play, the performance momentarily enacted Morris's dream abolitionist utopia as more than just a vision, perhaps becoming a utopian performative for actors and viewers alike. Jill Dolan describes utopian performatives as "small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (5). For Dolan, utopian moments are not necessarily intended to translate to social action, but rather to impart a feeling (19). Yet for Morris's audience, such feelings might funnel into further dedication to the cause. The play was originally performed at the Hall of the Socialist League. Not only were its audience members likely socialists, but so too were the players, with William Morris even playing the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the first act.[182] Dolan talks about utopian performatives as uniquely bringing the audience together, feeling "themselves as part of a congenial public constituted by the performance's address" (14). In the case of *The Tables Turned*, performance was not so much creating a community as strengthening it. While the ballads of Jack Sheppard encourage individual thoughts of excarceration, this performance produced a collective embodiment of excarceration. The players acted out events based on real life, that they were part of, rewriting the narrative to show their perspective, and they acted out together the future that their organizations strove to achieve. *The Tables Turned* shows the extent to which Morris viewed police and court confrontations as endemic to socialist activism. The abolitionist principles in *News from Nowhere* are not a side consequence of a better world, but are key to forming that world.

[182] For more information on the other players, such as James Allman (Sergeant Sticktoit), H. B. Tarleton (Constable Potlegoff, 1st Neighbor), H. A. Barker (William Joyce Socialist Ensign), and J. Lane (2nd Neighbor), see the "Biographical Notes" of William Morris's Socialist Diary, edited by Florence Boos.

Chants for Socialists and Performative Abolitionist Utopia for the 21st Century

A few years after *The Tables Turned* contrasted the reality of the front lines of socialist agitation with a utopian vision, Morris's *News from Nowhere* committed itself to expanding fully on the vision, hoping to make it more robust and worthy of striving toward. At the close of *News from Nowhere,* William Guest finds himself back in the nineteenth-century, unsure if his experiences were real or a dream. The book famously concludes that, even if it was all a dream, the dream has some use: "if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream" (278). The forward-looking book ends on a forward-looking note, with the necessity of sharing a vision. Sharing a vision implies sharing the work necessary to achieve the vision, but Morris emphasizes the goal and the dream as paramount.

Morris's emphasis on the utopian mode is a helpful reminder for the twenty-first century. Contemporary scholars of utopia encourage people to dream and envision the future, noting how rarely futuristic thinking is embraced politically. The heart of penal abolition is a dream of the future, but activists often have to defend themselves against being called too dreamy, and perhaps defensiveness leads to a wariness of or deemphasis on dreaming. "What Abolitionists Do," and article by twenty-first century abolitionists Dan Berger, Mariame Kaba, and David Stein, begins by noting that critics of abolition consider it "unworkably utopian and therefore not pragmatic." The authors cite an article that considers abolition a "fever-dream demand to destroy all prisons tomorrow" before detailing in length the practical actions and tangible wins of the twenty-first century abolition movement. Dreamers of all kinds often find themselves confronting the term "utopian" as an insult. Writing in 2007, Ruth Levitas calls the political environment of her time "anti-utopian," which allows those in power to continually dismiss her challenges as utopian, "while placing the ideological/utopian claims of one's own position

beyond scrutiny" (298). In reality, contemporary criminal justice also deals in the terms of futurity, building prisons for the number of people they expect to incarcerate and targeting people they fear will one day cause harm.[183] This position resonates with abolitionists Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore's understanding of the modern day carceral state, which they label an anti-state state, "a state that grows on the promise of shrinking" (152). In the Gilmores' theorization, modern lawmakers promise to shrink the state, bemoaning state funds going to welfare and housing, but then they do not actually decrease government funding; rather, they redirect it to other forms, such as policing, prisons, and courts (148).[184] The terms of debate are established by those in power, people satisfied with the current penal system, and it is contingent on abolitionists to assert the validity of other possible futures.

While Rancière considers utopias to be nonpolitical states, the process of imagining a utopia is an act of politics. In Rancière's view, politics is about "lodg[ing] one world into another"; in this sense, abolitionists are inserting a world without prisons into a world that refuses to see it as possible. Ruth Levitas explains how Ernst Bloch "posited the existence of a utopian impulse, an anthropological given" in *The Principle of Hope* (290). While Levitas is skeptical of a universal claim, she is sympathetic to the repetitive strands of utopian dreaming throughout time, including her current moment in the late 2000's. She agrees with Bloch about the value of having a "*horizon* of future possibilities" as a necessary tool for producing the future (291). She champions utopian thinking "*as a method* [which] permits holistic and long-term thinking" (300). Levitas explains that utopia "at its best, is a necessary failure, but will fail us

[183] Carceral studies scholars Jackie Wang, Elizabeth Hinton, and Stuart Schrader have all written about how contemporary policing is proactive and preventive, imbued with the attitude of counterinsurgency before any insurgency occurs.

[184] Gilmore and Gilmore point out, for instance, "state spending at all levels (federal, state and local) has increased as a percentage of GDP by around 10 percent…since the start of the prison-building boom" despite lawmakers making claims about wanting smaller governments (146).

less than its absence" (304). The day to day actions of abolition are important, but in order for them to result in a better world, these actions must be contextualized with a bold vision.

The tension of balancing daily pressures with long term goals is a constant concern in abolitionist thought. David Scott points to Stanley Cohen in 1990 as laying out the necessary twofold path of abolitionism: "combin[ing] the ethical imperative to promote immediate help with a political desire for radical transformations of social and penal systems" (90). Scott proposes a variety of theories and principles to guide abolitionists in balancing the dual imperatives of short-term support and long-term change. In any given moment, the balance might swing more in one direction or the other. For Morris, the future vision was necessary, even in the very instant of protest.

Morris's writing in fact reminds us that even in the daily struggles on the front line, it is important to keep the dream alive in the moment: he wrote songs of the future to be sung in the act of protest. These songs often had a utopian outlook, imagining a better future, but they also were more immediately connected to problems of the day. Morris's songs were a utopia in motion, in the moment, alive, a utopia demanded and attempting to be enacted. Christopher Waters explains that Morris first wrote in this fashion in 1878, when composing a song for a working man's choir to be sung in a workers' demonstration (127). Although Edward Carpenter wrote the banner song of the socialist cause, "England, Arise!" Morris's songs were highly popular (132). In nine socialist songbooks that Waters examined, Morris's songs made up 8% of the titles. He was the most prolific writer in these books, and his songs are unique in being less sentimental and more tied to concrete details of a socialist future (Waters 133-137).[185] According

[185] Morris is not unique in writing songs for socialism, and Waters points to earlier instances of song being used in protest. These songs appeared to have long afterlives, with many songs by the late Romantics appearing in songbooks at the end of the nineteenth century, for instance (Waters 133).

to Waters, Morris's most popular song was "March of the Workers" (140). The song proclaims the continual movement of the workers, with each stanza and the chorus ending in the phrase "marching on" (*The Pilgrims of Hope*). The lyrics advocate readers or listeners to join the marching host. And, when sung at a demonstration, the lyrics state, performatively, the action of what the singers are doing. Morris's songs were not only important within his small sect of socialism, but circulated widely, even influencing US-based organizations like the Women's Socialist Union and Knights of Labor (Waters 142). Morris's protest songs called for people of different groups to envision a better future, regardless of the particular outrage which inspired their marches.

The potential for these songs to create a performative utopia is best seen in the case of Morris's "A Death Song," written for the funeral of Alfred Linnell, a man who died on Bloody Sunday (Morris *Alfred Linnell*). Waters says the song both "develop[s] an image of working-class unity and determination in the wake of Linnell's death" and "depicts Morris's own bitterness at the refusal of the ruling class to listen to the arguments workers like Linnell had been making" (138). Waters believes that "A Death Song" is Morris "at his most pessimistic" (140). The song's repeated refrain suggests the possible death of more socialists in a struggle with the rich: "Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay, / But one and all if they would dusk the day." The first three verses establish that the song is directed against the wealthy, decrying that the rich have not listened and will not listen to the voices of discontented. Yet the song is another attempt to speak and to act in a unified manner behind a single cause. The fourth and final verse sees the body of Linnell as reaching the utopia of heaven, prefiguring the possibility that those present could escape the carceral confines of London in their own lives. Gathered around Linnell's grave, mourners would have sung, "Here lies the sign that we shall

break our prison; / Amidst the storm he won a prisoner's rest." Then, before repeating the refrain, the stanza looks to the coming day and the singers ask for another day's work toward a socialist utopia: "But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen / Brings us our day of work to win the best." In embodying his utopian vision in song and action, Morris seems to presage the hopeful words of contemporary abolitionist Jackie Wang: "When we act in accordance with the prophetic dream, the dream comes to directly constitute reality" (318).

This song seems designed to inspire a utopian performative, and we can consider the song alongside Robin Bernstein's suggestion that poems can produce long-lasting utopian tremors. Bernstein explains that after Nikki Giovanni finished reading her poem "We are Virginia Tech" during convocation after the Virginia Tech Massacre, the poet's "we" statements become proclamations more than wishes or hopes. Bernstein notes that this utopian moment was not fleeting, but managed to be long lasting, revitalized when Virginia Tech members wore clothing bearing the poem's lines or whenever they occupied the stadium where the convocation was held, particularly in subsequent sports games. To what extent could Morris's poem enact utopia in his present moment, as people sang his song, in the growing dark on Linnell's funeral proceedings?[186] Beyond the single performance, we can see the enactment of utopia in the way the song was printed in booklets, sold to benefit Linnell's orphans. Those pamphlets contained the musical arrangement for the song and could be played long after mourners had left the funeral. Even if the song was never repeated aloud, the utopia could be briefly reflected and reiterated every time people went by Trafalgar Square. Would mourners, now passersby, recall the violence that killed Alfred Linnell and dream of a world beyond carcerality?

[186] The *Birmingham Daily Post* on Dec 19, 1887 reports that, after the march and speeches, "a funeral ode, composed by Mr. Morris, was sung. The latter portion of the ceremony was conducted in comparative darkness. Lanterns were used to enable the clergyman to read the service" ("The Trafalgar Square Riots").

Whatever their effect on socialists in the late nineteenth century, the lasting strains of Morris's songs can still resonate with us today. His ballads, like those of Jack Sheppard, have an excarceral focus which transcend the normal structures of time. Morris dreamed of the future not only by attempting to contrast his present, but by drawing from the past. Morris even wrote a historical utopian novel, *The Dream of John Ball*, in which his protagonist time travels back to the peasant's revolt of 1381. Davidson explains that Morris "look[ed] back to history not for successful models to imitate but rather for failed visions of the future to take up; the utopian returns to the past not to understand what actually occurred but to recuperate disappointed dreams and unfulfilled hopes for the contemporary moment" (99). In his other utopian writing, Morris showed characters recycling songs of past revolutions, allowing them to be embodied and sung again to resonate with new moments. In *The Tables Turned*, the songs of the French revolution are revived for the Socialist revolution, changing words to better align with new thoughts.[187] In *News From Nowhere,* the old revolutionary songs survive on celebration days, and while the singers do not understand the specific circumstances they describe, they powerfully signify past suffering worth remembering.[188] As Robin Kelley suggests, in *Freedom Dreams*, turning to past movements can be a way to remember the power of dreaming (xii).[189] He explains the importance of dreams as a way to give order to the future: "Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever

[187] "La Marseillaise" plays towards the end of Jack Freeman's time in court just prior to the eruption of the socialist revolution. The utopian council sings a new version of "Carmagnole" about equality on earth to end the play. What used to be a violent French Revolutionary song was rewritten to insist upon the "world's wealth for all and every one" (31).
[188] Morris has singers perform Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and fail to understand on a personal level the meaning of poverty in the song, so far are the terms of poverty removed, but the importance of protest remembered (92).
[189] Kelley is interested in the black radical imagination, as he subtitles his book, and does not specifically deal with Morris or his time period. However, he does briefly mention Morris in the introduction as one possible inspiration from the past, labeling him a "romantic renegade socialist" (4).

maneuvers and tactics, but a process that can and must transform us" (xii). Kelley embraces the word "utopia," and explains that "the map to a new world is in the imagination, in what we see in our third eyes rather than in the desolation that surrounds us" (2-3). In reading Morris's work in an abolitionist lens, his writing provides greater understanding of the late nineteenth century, but it also presents a challenge: to answer his call, to repeat his hopes of change, to dream our own utopias, and to work toward their coming.

CODA

In Reading gaol by Reading town

There is a pit of shame,

And in it lies a wretched man

Eaten by teeth of flame,

In burning winding-sheet he lies,

And his grave has got no name.

-Oscar Wilde, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol”

I am sick of writing this poem

but bring the boy. his new name

his same old body. ordinary, black

dead thing. bring him & we will mourn

until we forget what we are mourning.

& isn’t that what being black is about?

-Danez Smith, “not an elegy for Mike Brown”

Six lines of verse, written on different continents, over a century apart, these two epigraphs remark on different moments, different dead bodies, but they share a common focus: horror at the state-sanctioned murder of citizens at the hands of the state. In both poems the suddenness of death is shocking, but the death itself not altogether surprising. They are not the first body. They will not be the last. While carceral logics do not always end in death, they always hold the threat of violence and wield it to shape the lives of the unlucky victims and the distressed expanses of citizenry affected by the billowing ripples of carceral control.

After four chapters steeped in the particulars of nineteenth-century British literature and peppered with twenty- and twenty-first century American penal abolitionist thought, this coda will read together Oscar Wilde and Danez Smith[190] as a way of commenting on the carceral and excarceral potentialities and limits spanning those two poles of time and space. Having demonstrated in this dissertation the way that Victorian literature was shaped by and in turn shaped carceral policies and imaginations, this coda asks two questions: do these texts and historical moments matter in twenty-first century America? and, how do generic and political pressures continue to play a role in shaping contemporary literature on carceral topics?

Reprising a Ballad, Twelve Decades Later

The study of literature and history is often structured by time periods and nations. This dissertation is no exception, confined to both the nineteenth century and the United Kingdom. The field of carceral studies, however, is based in logics. Defining this academic field through a set of logics, or concepts, rather than time periods or locations, allows scholars to connect a wide

[190] In my doctoral studies at the University of Michigan, I crossed ways with Danez Smith, not as two doomed ships in a stormy, shameful day, but as students of literature, in Michael Awkward's class on black male death in 20th century American literature.

variety of disparate systems, such as slavery, setter colonialism, imprisonment, and anti-immigration policies. Scholars link together these topics through the amorphous figure of the carceral state. Many of these institutions, policies, and practices have remained roughly the same throughout modern UK and US history, such as the continual use of prisons, but other carceral forms have shifted while the logics remain the same. Dennis Childs establishes the importance of core, constitutive logics when describing the value of linking carceral apparatuses across time in the US: "the racial capitalist misogynist state has subjected millions of black people and other racially and criminally stigmatized peoples to conditions that render the differences between past and present modes of domination virtually indecipherable, if not completely nonexistent" (12). By labeling the American state as "the racial capitalist misogynist state," Childs points to the fact that the shifting institutions of the state are perhaps less important than the prevailing logics, like racial capitalism and misogyny. Attending to the specific policies and practices of the field is an important component of understanding carcerality, but the linkage between these aspects is elucidated when we attend to the logics. And perhaps, the level of logics is also where activists need to intervene. As an online article for Latinx Spaces explains, "institution and ideology of the PIC [prison-industrial system] are symbiotic," and to counter the whole system, people need to attend to the ideology as well as the institutions ("Carceral Colonial Logic").The field must attend to these logics if it hopes to disrupt them.

The continuity of carceral—and excarceral—logics does not diminish the need to attend to time, however. It is significant that Oscar Wilde was writing about execution after the Bloody Code had been reduced by the 1823 Judgement of Death Act and before death penalty for murder was eliminated for all causes in the UK in 1998 ("Last Woman"). It also matters that my first-year students at the University of Michigan read "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" in 2020, a year in

which the federal government of the United States executed ten people, the most people it had executed in a year since 1896, two years before Wilde published his ballad (Guiliani-Hoffman). In understanding how logics unfurl in the world, it is important to pay attention to both the unchanging overtones and the newly arisen conditions. The power in learning about literature from the past is in navigating these tensions.

Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" serves as a helpful text to acknowledge the power and limitations of studying nineteenth century literature and carceral politics in the twenty-first century. As I have argued in this dissertation, building on scholars like Meredith McGill and Michael Cohen, the ballad form is a powerful instrument for traversing time. In its repeating form, readers can feel and hear the recurring resonances, but so too do the differences stick out. For instance, Wilde repeats a similar stanza three times throughout the poem, in the first, second and fourth sections:

I never saw a man who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

Which prisoners call the sky,

And at every drifting cloud that went

With sails of silver by.

…

I never saw a man who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

Which prisoners call the sky,

And at every wandering cloud that trailed

Its raveled fleeces by.

…

I never saw sad men who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

We prisoners called the sky,

And at every careless cloud that passed

In happy freedom by.

In the first two repetitions, readers can feel the monotony of the prison, the long stretched out feeling of melancholy, repeated in the same small gestures and actions. The clouds may change, from ship sails to fluffy sheep. They may drift, wander, or trail, but on they move while the men stay in place. But in the third iteration, it is not one doomed man looking at the sky, but all of the imprisoned men, including the author, who includes himself among "We prisoners." The clouds are no longer passing fanciful, gossamer things, but loaded with meaning. They pass by careless in their happy freedom, unacknowledging the men beneath them that are sentenced to imprisonment or capital punishment. Wilde moves from a single man's observation to that of many men, as the clouds and stanzas layer over each other. This move towards a collectivity

speaks to the possibilities of time in creating meaning out of recurrent patterns, to those looking carefully.

I have taught this poem twice in first-year writing classes at the University of Michigan. Both times the students expressed to me that they found the poem powerful and relevant, even more so as we discussed the context of discrimination against sexual orientation behind the poem. Understanding a text in its own time often opens up deeper connections than the text alone provides. But both times I taught this ballad, I asked my students to listen to the rhythms they felt in the poem after we had attended to the poem in its original context. I had my students create a blackout poem from a small section of the longer ballad (see Figure V.1). They focused in on the words that jumped out to them. They broke the poem out of its ballad form, its own internal logic and pacing, to recognize how it spoke to them. The exercise was not long enough for them to create masterful images. But it was long enough for them to attend carefully to Wilde's words and their own particular absorption of the poem. This reader-response exercise, while distancing the poem from the formal trappings of ballads, reinscribed the logic of the ballad, paying homage to what has come before by recycling, reviving with a difference.

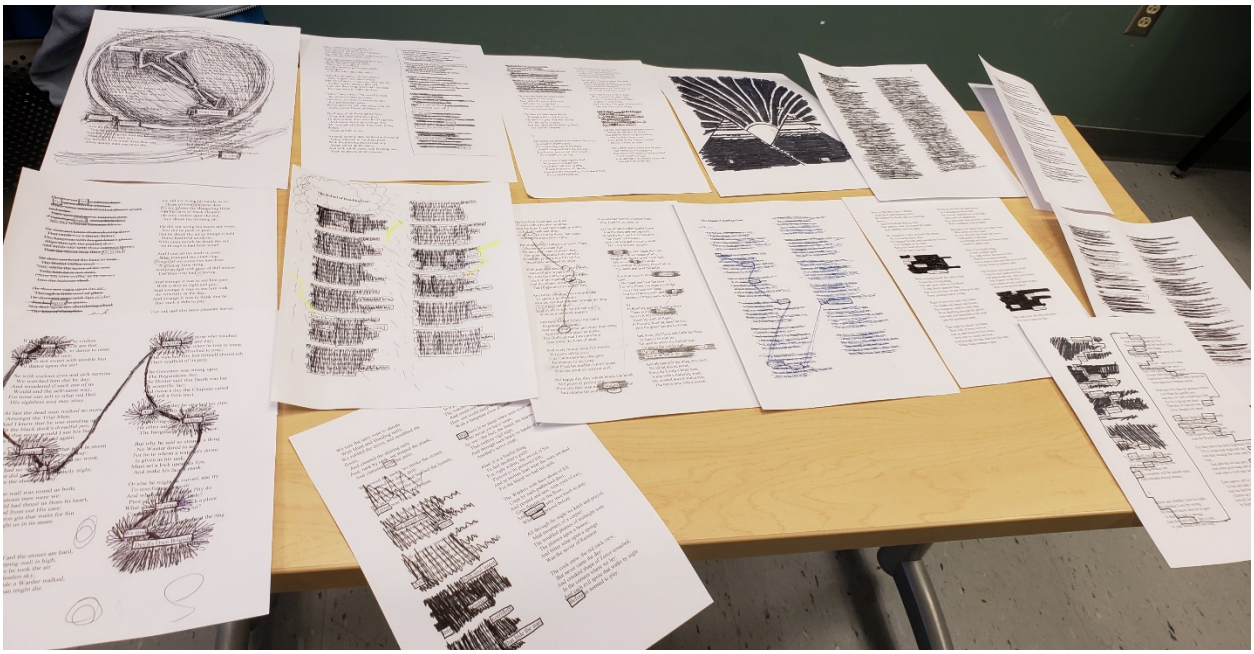

Figure V.1. Student blackout poetry of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Author's photograph of student work from English 124 in Winter 2018.

In writing this dissertation, I approached my texts with the same spirit: primarily situating them within their own moment, but also acknowledging the ways in which my reading practices, my training in the field of carceral studies, informs my understanding of the text. At times, these resonances appear only in the footnotes. At times, they occupy the space of the main text. In both cases, these marks speak to how my own writing is a product of both generic expectations and political exigencies. Like the texts I analyze, my work aims to build from what is known in making its own contribution to an ongoing conversation. These signposts argue to my reader how I, as a reader, researcher, and teacher, see the Victorian world's literature and politics as in pressing conversation with my current moment. This focus on contemporaneity is not to deny the possibility of this analysis extending beyond the year 2021 when this text is finalized and fossilized in the ProQuest Dissertation database. Rather, it is with the hope that detailing the specifics of my moment of writing will unlock new resonances for researchers coming to these texts years down the line.

At the same time, I recognize that Victorian literature does not serve all of the needs of a twenty-first century American student, researcher, or teacher. Likewise, my project is limited in its scope, barely venturing into the dynamics of race or gender within carceral logics and policies. In closing this project, I will step over the threshold of two centuries, to examine the value of my methodological approach with a poem of my own time: Danez Smith's "not an elegy for Mike Brown."

Searching for New Forms

Smith's poem falls into a collection of poets writing in conversation with police violence and murder. Together, they draw upon and work with accepted generic standards of poetry—of capturing the feeling of a particular moment—but each with their own twist adding something new, asking readers to sit with some different element of the horror we are witnessing. Poets.org, the website of the Academy of American Poets, has even curated an anthology of these poems entitled "Black Lives Matter." In this online collection, Ross Gay issues one beautiful sentence, "A Small Needful Fact," about a detail in Eric Garner's life, his work for a Horticultural Department. Amanda Johnston in "Facing US," shows the confrontation of Black protesters and White police, purposefully echoing the form and language of Yusef Komunyakaa's "Facing It" about the Vietnam War. Toi Derricotte leans into anaphora to enumerate "Why I don't write about George Floyd." Unlike a ballad telling a long, repeating story, these pieces are beautiful individual fragments, offerings, that sound the same chord. They crystallize the emotions of the particular political moment.

Turning to Smith's poem itself, the poem echoes Wilde's in some key regards, though it speaks to its own concerns. The speakers of Wilde's and Smith's poems do not name the victim

of the state's "justice." Both move outward from an individual moment to talk about a larger issue affecting many people through the visibly unequal hand of justice. For Wilde, this broad message is universalizing, pointing to large truths to grapple with what justice looks like if "each man kills the thing he loves…yet each man does not die." For Smith, the problems of justice are rooted in the racialized nature of the so-called justice system. He points out this discrepancy by turning to an example from epic poetry of the past: "a white girl / was kidnapped & that's the Trojan war. / later, up the block, Troy got shot / & that was Tuesday." This comparison is wrought in both the generic expectation of allusions and the political moment, on the heels of #BlackLivesMatter becoming a movement in 2013. This movement calls for attention to Black lives, often in comparison to how White lives are treated. Rather than think about all lives, a universal situation, the movement differentiates the particular, intensified problems of justice for Black people in America and beyond.

Smith calls attention to and pushes back against generic expectations in his poem. He titles his piece "not an elegy for Mike Brown." This title marks the poem as a response to Mike Brown's murder, but denies that this poem is only about Mike Brown. The title also claims that this poem is not an elegy, not a classical form with expected formal structures dating back to Greek poetry. He points out the long history of eulogizing the dead in order to eulogize the dead himself, but also to break from it. The poem has an excarceral spirit, perhaps hoping that stepping outside of a formal pattern and acknowledging a violent political pattern will make way for a different future. Smith does not use the required metrical form of an elegiac stanza, nor does he rely on common components like lament, praise, and consolation. In this way, the poem pushes back about the right way for poets to use language in responding to death. The poem claims that language has a role to play, an alternative perhaps to responding to death with war: "I

at least demand a song. a song will do just fine." Yet despite the promise, or at least the hope, that a song will help, the poem itself ends grateful for something beyond a poem. The final line notes the God-given sweetness of smoke in Missouri, celebrating the fiery protests against Mike Brown's death. In a performed version of this poem, preserved online through Button Poetry, Smith reads an alternative ending that further suggests the insufficiency of language alone ("Danez Smith"). He ends the poem on a gruesome note, claiming "a head" would do, too, and gesturing like he is pulling up a severed head by its hair.

Poetry, of course, is not the only contemporary way of processing aspects of the criminal justice system. As with nineteenth century forms of writing, the media options of the twenty-first century shape and limit the way carceral and excarceral stories are told. The novel form allow for interconnecting relationships spanning time and space, whether it is Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* or Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys.* Film more frequently focuses on an individual hero's journey, not unlike the exceptional, innocent Brierly, as in *The Shawshank Redemption* or *Just Mercy.* Even when carceral topics are not centered, the carceral structures contemporary stories, whether it is the policing and inevitable prisons in superhero movies or encounters with the law in biopics. And like the nineteenth century pieces I focused on, twenty-first century American art explores boundaries of generic expectations and moves from one genre to another. We can think about the mini-series, a cross between film and television, like Ava DuVernay's *When They See Us*, or a collaboration like Reginald Dwayne Betts with visual artist Titus Kaphar in the poetry collection *Felon* and the exhibit "Redaction."[191] Perhaps none of these forms are fully sufficient to combat political problems, but each form attempts to grapple in

[191] For more information on Betts and Kaphar's collaboration, see MoMA's website on the redaction exhibit, entitled "Redaction."

its own way with the same questions of justice and character that filled the Victorian literary world.

To close, I want to end, on one last poem. While Smith points to the way the form of poetry fails to be sufficient to grapple with its political moment, this does not deny poetry has often had a use in pushing back against twenty-first century carceral contexts. Poetry has been a major source of expression for those confined within prisons. Here at the University of Michigan, we have a program called the Prison Creative Arts Project, which has students and community members facilitate arts programs within Michigan jails, prisons, and youth detention centers. In addition to these workshops, the program has run a literary journal, *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, for eleven years, publishing prose and poetry by people imprisoned in Michigan.[192] The topics are not all related to prison topics, but often these pieces challenge the status quo of carceral reality. Patrick Kinney's "THIS IS NOT" in the eighth volume of *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* speaks to how the act of writing in a carceral setting, beyond the content of the poems itself, is an excarceral act:

This is not a poem
It's not a sonnet
It's not a written piece of verse

It's not a prose inscription
arranged poetically
It's not an essay of few words

[192] I have had the pleasure to co-facilitate four semester-long workshops with the program, and I helped read submissions for the volume of *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* discussed here.

It's just an origami

handcuff key

no folding required

Kinney speaks to the fact that many poets in the collection write in free verse, not following established poetic forms. Less shaped by knowledge of poetic form, the shape of their poems shape to fit a keyhole and try to temporarily unlock them from their confinement. This metaphor of an "origami / handcuff key" was lifted to form the title of the entire collection of creative writing—*Origami Handcuff Keys*—such that all of the submissions by incarcerated people serve as their own individualized attempts to unpick a lock, even if words alone will not grant them freedom.

Prison Forms: Genre and Excarceral Politics in Victorian Literature does not unlock any handcuffs or prison doors. Yet I hope that in the exploration of excarceral potentiality in Victorian literature, it has provided some possible origami instructions:

how to fold the pages of a Victorian text to see the carceral logics at play

how to excavate the intersecting demands of genre and politics on a text

how to trace connecting logics across various generic forms

how to investigate the interplay between periodicals and literature as it creates a country's imagined community

how to use a contemporary lens to reveal but not distort the past

how to read about the past and think towards the future

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