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Dickensian Death and Disarray: The Railways as Agents of Disorder

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Many of the well-documented transformations taking place in Victorian society were attributed at the time, and have been attributed since, to the introduction of the passenger railway network in 1830. Railways and their management asserted control over time and the British landscape, dominating, moving and embodying the industrial modernity that was encompassing the nation. A select number of literary works, from four canonical Victorian writers, have been assembled thematically for analysis alongside the Dickensian texts within this project. Utilising theories which interpret the significance of time, space and emotion, five literary texts are analysed comparatively in order to explore how Victorian writers contrastingly portrayed the altering of the Victorian population's perceptions of time and space as a result of the railways. This project seeks to build upon the literary interpretations made by both Charlotte Mathieson and Robin Atthill of both the railways and Dickens by placing the primary focus of analysis on the external experiences of the railways and how their depictions within literature expose the disorder imposed on the country by the indomitable force of the railways.

Introduction

Arising from the depths of the industrial smog that had been suffocating Britain for over fifty years, the world's first steam-powered passenger locomotive propelled itself on what this project suggests was an unremitting but variously understood and felt course of modernity on the 15 September 1830. As the first locomotives hurled themselves along the Liverpool and Manchester railway line, dazed travellers observed through their carriage windows, how 'the earth, with its iron stripes, seemed like a vast ribband unrolling itself' (Heather, 2015). Increasing mechanisation had stimulated the Industrial Revolution, and it continued to transform countless aspects of nineteenth-century culture.

Railways were initially conceptualised on the basis of their ability to efficiently transport goods throughout the country; however, entrepreneurial industrialists promptly 'discovered that there was money to be made from transporting people also' (McIvor, 2018). The progressive development of a complex rail network throughout Britain's diverse landscape began to challenge the population's perceptions of time and space. Alfred Russell Wallace emphasises the transformations of these perceptions as he notes that those who had 'grown up in the era of railways [. . .] hardly realize the vast change which we elders have seen, or how great and fundamental that change is' (1899, p. 3). In order for the locomotives to operate effectively, standardised time was introduced throughout the country to support the establishment of a railway timetabling system. Prior to the country-wide adoption of 'railway time', towns and cities relied on sundials to dictate the time, which resulted in multiple time variances across Britain. Greenwich Mean Time was therefore observed by the majority of railway companies by 1850 as a means of systematically organising the departures and arrivals of each locomotive. The imposition of standardised time emphasised the inexorable authority of the railways, as they demonstrated their potent dominance over the country by

governing such a fundamental concept as time. As the labyrinth of iron railroads expanded and ‘spread its tentacles across Britain,’ its influence likewise grew (Sanders, 1999, p. 63). Fuelled by utilitarian schemes, railway owners extended the industrial reaches of their locomotives, and indifferently carved up both urban and rural regions to facilitate the construction of thousands of miles of what Dickens contemporaneously referred to as ‘iron roads.’ Railway stations had progressively become the heart of Victorian urban infrastructures, and ‘profoundly influenced the internal flows of traffic’ (Kellett, 1969, p. 419). The significance of railway termini was exemplified in the development of communal substructures surrounding these buildings.¹ Despite the progressions in modern urban infrastructures, which railroad construction instigated, Andrew Sanders asserts that ‘distances gradually lost their significance and provinces their essential provinciality’ (1999, p. 63). The expansive railway network transformed the English landscape and generated an ‘inherently simplified ordering of space’ (Mathieson, 2015, p. 8). The populace’s spatial understanding of Victorian Britain was ultimately challenged during the nineteenth century, as the nation’s space contracted as a consequence of distances losing their ‘significance’. Importance was primarily placed on regions that boasted the presence of a railway station, yet contemporaries argued ‘what possible benefit can accrue to a town near which the railway passes, but where there is no station?’ (“A Plea for Ancient Towns against Railways,” 1843, p. 3). As the railway industry prevailed in subjugating and subdividing the nation, ‘from the very core of all this dire disorder, [the locomotives] trailed smoothly away, upon [their] mighty course of civilisation and improvement’ (Dickens, 2002, p.63).

¹ Windermere exists as an archetypal example of how entire communal substructures were developed around the introduction of a railway station to the area. Following the construction of the Kendal and Windermere railway line in 1847 (“Windermere and Bowness”, n.d), the town of Windermere was constructed in order to cater for the influx of tourists that the railway station generated.

This project considers the literary effects of the cultural, geographic, and technological changes in Britain felt with the introduction of steam trains and the passenger rail network. The expansive branching network of railways, which had reached 2210 miles in length by 1844, obtruded into countless aspects of Victorian life, and had consequently destabilised many widely accepted social constructs (“Railways in Early Nineteenth Century Britain,” n.d.). As aforementioned, previous perceptions of both time and space were altered predominantly due to a faster pace of life, instigated by the increased speed of travel, and as a result of new urban infrastructures being developed with railways at their core.

Fundamentally, my research demonstrates how Victorian literature exposes, through the utilisation of certain literary devices, the distinctive disorder and disarray of the country and its population culturally associated with the development of the railway network in the nineteenth century.

Following the introduction of passenger locomotives in 1830, attitudes towards rail travel and the consequences of its construction fluctuated throughout the Victorian period. The influences of railway construction on Victorian Britain were considered by historian John R. Kellett, to be ‘considerable enough in themselves to require no exaggeration’ (1969, p. 419). Tina Young Choi asserts the railway became ‘a symbol of a culture on the threshold of modernity’ (Choi, 2015, p. 252). The immense topographical changes incited by the ‘symbolic’ railways highlight how the ‘residential densities and development prospects of the central and inner districts of the Victorian city’ were dictated by the railway’s ‘choices and patterns of land use’ (Kellett, 1969, p. 419). The paths of locomotives are emphatically situated in Kellett’s work as sculptors of urban landscapes. Similarly, authors such as Simon Bradley and Amy Milne-Smith focus on the awe-inspiring magnitude of the developmental transformations occurring throughout Britain during the nineteenth century. Bradley primarily draws attention towards the geographical, social and economic impact of the

railways, and commences his comprehensive history of the railways with the remarkable ‘Railway Mania’ of the 1840s. High dividends on railway shares stimulated a huge increase in railway investment and the subsequent construction of hundreds of miles of railway line. Kellett describes how constructors ‘cut great swathes through the cities as completely as a blitz,’ and in doing so, increased the volume of railway traffic a ‘staggering’ amount around the mid-nineteenth century (Kellett, 1969, p. 419; Milne-Smith, 2016: p. 24). Hostility towards the imposing nature of the railways accompanied this ‘staggering’ influx of passengers, and Bradley observes how the railroad provoked resentment as a result of ‘their violations of natural beauty, [likewise] their imposition of London time on unwilling towns and cities’ (Bradley, 2015, p. 134). Contrastingly, Philip Bagwell sought to highlight the historical progressions of locomotives and observes: ‘When railways helped to open up new towns in the 1840s and 1850s their role was almost entirely constructive’ (Bagwell, 2002, p.120). The conclusions provided within this project acknowledge Bagwell’s viewpoint; however, they are primarily aligned with Bradley’s stance on the provocations of resentment incited by the construction of the railways.

Gradually, the influential reaches of the railways began to permeate the pages of Victorian literature. Although ‘Britain may lack the “great railway novel” found in comparative European cultures of the nineteenth century,’ the complexities of the railway experience were scrupulously depicted in a number of gripping narratives (Mathieson, 2015, p. 57). Charlotte Mathieson observes the centrality of railway journeys in a number of Victorian novels and her study of mobility within this century demonstrates how locomotive travel had an ‘important role in shaping both nation and narration’ (p. 57). The ‘vital and active presence’ of journeys throughout literature during the nineteenth century supports the foundations of Mathieson’s argument surrounding the ‘experience of space through the body in transit as a mode through which to re-perceive issues of the railway and modernity’ (pp. 1; 57). Certain

motifs and literary devices are utilised within a number of Victorian novels in order to convey the angst generated as a result of the tumultuous construction and operation of the railways. The significance of these motifs becomes apparent when understanding that the railway was ‘more than a simple mode of transport: for the Victorians it stood as both agent and icon of the acceleration of the pace of everyday life’ (Daly, 1999, p. 463). The altered Victorian perceptions of a hastening in speed towards death is observed by Mathieson, as she highlights how the repetition of sentence structure in Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* mimics the notion of a ‘progression towards “Death”’, yet she does so with a greater focus on the human experience within the railways and the ‘position of the body in the compartment’, rather than focusing on factors external to the railway carriage, which this project does (pp. 70; 67). Transformations in the understandings of time and space within the mid-nineteenth century are addressed by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, as his research focuses on the relationships between transportation and time, as spaces and distances progressively lost their significance. Schivelbusch emphasises that it was not the expansive network of railway lines that ‘annihilates space and time’ but the mode of high-speed transportation that annihilated ‘the traditional space-time continuum which was characterized by the old transport technology’ (Schivelbusch, 1978, p. 33). Schivelbusch’s understanding of the railway journey’s effects on perceptions of time informs the analysis within this research of Dickens’s depictions of railway journeys, and what they reveal about changes in time and space. In order to gain a more profound literary understanding of how perceptions of time and space altered in the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian literature, with rich connotations of societal disturbance, must be brought under scrutiny.

Charles Dickens was certainly the most predominant literary figure depicting the influence of the railways during the Victorian Period, and my research includes a focus on this unofficial railway laureate. John Mullan concurs: ‘few of the major novelists of the mid-19th century

immediately registered the influence of the railways' as they often based their works in the past. 'The exception [being] Dickens' (Mullan, 2014). Dickens was recognised for his true-to-life depictions of numerous areas of Victorian life. Andrew Sanders asserts that much like the locomotives in this period, Dickens was 'getting up steam' as the voice of a restless, energetic, unprecedented age (1999, p. 66). David Martin concludes from Dickens's journalism that 'Charles Dickens was not exactly an enthusiastic patron of the emerging English railway system,' which this research evidences primarily through the analysis of Dickens's fictional works (Martin, 2017, p. 427). *Dombey and Son*, along with *Mugby Junction*, the collection of short stories that Dickens assembled for publication in 1866, remain as the foremost examples of how the railways transformed society within the nineteenth century. *Mugby Junction*'s fascination with death reveals, through both the demonising and personification of the locomotive, fear of the power and speed of these machines as death, much like the oncoming locomotives, came 'unsummoned and unannounced' (Dickens, 2005a, p. 5). Within *Dombey and Son*, Dickens chronologically depicts the gradual remodelling of urban landscapes that had similarly been imposed upon many towns and cities by what Dickens labelled 'ridiculous inventions' (Dickens, 2002, p. 64). Dickens's elaborate depictions of how the fictional Staggs's Gardens transforms from a site of 'dire disorder' to a neighbourhood where 'palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond' is admired by Robin Atthill as he notes that 'It is this eye for significant detail, and an extraordinary sensibility to atmosphere, that makes Dickens's writings about the railway so convincing' (Dickens, 2002, p.63; p.205; Atthill, 1961, p. 134). Atthill's references to Dickens's 'eye for significant detail' becomes a focus of the analysis within this project, and facilitates the investigation of the more profound connotations of societal disorder embedded within Dickens's fictional works. The way that Dickens portrays the transformed and transformative British landscape

raises questions about conservationism, the environment and the change of attitudes surrounding nature and the environment between the Romantic and Victorian Periods.

Considered to be one of the most influential poets of the Romantic Period, William Wordsworth's influence extended beyond the literary period in which he was famed and into the Victorian Period, when he was made Poet Laureate in 1843. Wordsworth's works are instrumental in developing an understanding of the attitudes towards the environmental impacts of railway construction, despite the fact that he was 'seen by some to be out of touch with the modern era,' as Andrew Maunders observes (2010, p. 443). Wordsworth spent the majority of his life living in the Lake District, and the impending threat of a railway line being constructed there in 1844 incited his 'almost single-handed public campaign to keep the railways from entering the inner sanctum of the Lake District' (Hess, 2012, p. 116). In his sonnet published in the *Morning Post*, Wordsworth condemns the railway's 'assault' on natural landscapes as 'he believed that nature should be appreciated for its own sake, and not as a resource to be exploited' (Maunders, 2010, p. 443). The utilitarian approach to railway construction and its disregard for the environment is exemplified in Wordsworth's sonnet and subsequent construction of the Windermere railway line in 1847. Scott Hess questions Wordsworth's motive for protesting the introduction of railway travel into the Lake District and suggests that Wordsworth appropriates the voice of nature within his sonnet 'in order to support his own cultural position; and his demonization not only of modern work and the city but also of the working-class people associated with them' (Hess, 2012, p. 116). Wordsworth eloquently conveys his stance on the intrusive railways due to his incorporation of intensely emotive language. Analysing emotive responses to the railway phenomenon within literature has been crucial in critical comprehension of the societal impact of enforced modernity throughout the Victorian Era, and my work responds to the insights of Maunders and Hess by acknowledging their research on Wordsworth as a leading figure in nineteenth-century

environmental conservationism in order to support this project's conclusions surrounding the profoundly utilitarian foci of railway construction.

During the 1860s, one of the literary protégés of Charles Dickens became the leading figure within a new literary genre entitled 'Sensation fiction'. Wilkie Collins, along with other Sensation novelists at this time, were developing novels, which Pamela Gilbert defines as being 'distinctively transgressive in that [they were] thought to appeal directly to the "nerves," eliciting a physical sensation with [their] surprises, plot twists, and startling revelations' (2011, p. 2).² Novels within this genre were additionally described to be 'attuned to the spirit of the popular culture of its moment' (Sweet, 2014). Collins's novel *No Name* confronts contemporary cultural concerns such as illegitimacy, identity, gender roles and railway travel. Daniel Martin suggests that Collins incorporates the railways into the novel in order 'to cause a sensation, or even to merely keep a plot in motion' (2011, p. 188). Railways within *No Name* are instrumental in the development of the narrative, as Mr Vanstone's death as a result of a railway crash triggers 'the train of circumstances' surrounding the protagonist losing her legal identity (Collins, 2004, pg. xxvii). *No Name* contradicts Collins's reputation as a Sensation writer, as his recognition within this genre stemmed from 'his ability to hide secrets within elaborate plots' (Bolos-Reichert, 2009, p.22). From the outset of the novel, Collins makes his readers aware of the unambiguous nature of the narrative. Although his depictions of both railways and 'railway spaces' alike lack the characteristic mystery of Sensation fiction, they do provide rich interpretations of both the railway's topographical effects on Victorian Britain and the population's place in that topography.³ My work thus takes a different track to the literary interpretations made by Martin, Gilbert and Bolus-

² Notable Sensation novelists include Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ellen Wood.

³ 'Railway spaces' is a term referred to by Charlotte Mathieson to denote any location created by, or with any relation to, the railways.

Reichert of Collins's status as a sensation writer by applying greater emphasis on the significance of places within *No Name*, rather than human 'sensations'.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon was another pioneer of the Sensation fiction genre. Arguably one of her most critically acclaimed novels, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), 'took the lead in foregrounding this dialectic between freedom and enclosure, privilege and confinement that structure[d] the lives of upper-middle-class women' (Tromp, Gilbert & Haynie, 2000, p. 3). The fluidity of movement during the nineteenth century is explored by Braddon within *Lady Audley's Secret*, where the identity of her female protagonist is brought into focus. Eva Badowska notes Braddon's 'fascination with the possibility of tracelessness' within the novel, as Lady Audley utilises the expansive railway network in order to pursue a more lucrative future (2009, p. 170). Lady Audley's journeys across England, although left undescribed, symbolise the numerous avenues of opportunity made accessible by the increase in mobility during the Victorian Period. Additionally, Braddon's experimentation with space and time in *Lady Audley's Secret* demonstrates Braddon's 'deep-seated engagement with the state of the nation' (Mathieson, 2015, p.1). Unlike many 'railway novelists',⁴ Braddon does not depict the hastening of time through the swift speeds of the locomotives, instead she uses metaphor and architecture to do so. Audley Court is described as an accumulation of many rooms and architectural styles where 'Time' is said to be 'adding a room one year, and knocking down a room another year' (Braddon, 2006, p. 2). Badowska emphasises how the novel compellingly depicts the Victorian populace's preoccupation with the unrelenting passing of time: 'the novel is alarmed not so much about the destruction of modernity by the past, but rather by the possibility that modernity itself will keep on crumbling, falling rapidly to ruins, leaving us (at best) in a land of museums or (at worst) in a wasteland of discarded toys' (2009, p. 158). Badowska's elucidation on the presence of a 'destructive modernity'

⁴ Referring to authors who described the railways' construction, operation and influences within their texts.

within Braddon's work, along with Choi's interpretation of how the railways symbolised modernity, are significant for analysis within this research, as conclusions are made on the destructive impact of railways and how their depictions similarly allude to apprehensions of overwhelming modernity within the Victorian period.

In order to develop a profounder understanding of the nuanced sociological effects of the railways that are elaborated within the works of Charles Dickens, William Wordsworth, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins, a number of complementary theoretical standpoints were taken during the research and analysis of their respective texts. The primary literary sources for this research have been analysed thematically, via the railways, using literary geography, theorisations of environmentalism and affect theory to explain the texts' connections to each other that extends beyond their rudimentary relation of publication within the Victorian period. The interdisciplinary theoretical approach of literary geographies was fundamental in the analysis of the changes in understanding and functionality of space, subsequent to the introduction of passenger locomotives. Angharad Saunders highlights how the synthesis of the two disciplines 'gives recognition to the flows and elisions between the textual and the spatial – the complex of production and reception spaces and practices, which irrevocably shape a text's geographies and meanings' (2010, p. 437). When applying this theory to Wilkie Collins's *No Name*, for instance, it becomes possible to appreciate the possible readings of his topographical and architectural depictions of Victorian Britain. Collins's portrayal of York railway station and the way in which the 'iron course of the railroad strikes its way through arches in the old wall,' exemplifies the intersection of the historical and the modern (2004, p. 154). Considering this in conjunction with literary geography's exploration of how 'text and space, fiction and location might be understood as inseparable and co-productive,' and the ways in which Collins describes interactions within this narrative space, enables interpretations about how *No Name*'s narrative represents the

societal and topographical impact of railways (Hones, 2011, p.686). Through the application of theories outlined within literary geographies on the literary texts analysed within this research, a conservationist and environmentalist subtext is also outlined, using discourses sometimes unavailable to the authors and contemporaneous readers of these works but discernible to twenty-first-century readers and critics looking to place literature in a longer history of ideas about the space we inhabit today. Environmentalism is considered a ‘very broad concept’, yet its fundamental ‘beliefs in the value and fragility of the environment’ provide the second chapter with a reference point for the damaging ecological and environmental aspects of the railways (Brown, McKean & McMillan, 2018). Wordsworth’s remonstrative sonnet against the construction of a railway line in the Lake District is assessed with acknowledgement of environmentalist principles in order to demonstrate how, much like Romantic depictions of nature, Victorian literature also ‘turn[s] toward[s] nature as a powerful critique of modernity’ (Hubbell, 2017, p. 1). The origins of Victorian environmentalism are accredited to the ‘symbiosis of eschatological premonition and historical imagination’ throughout the nineteenth century (Barton, 2001, p. 530). Victorian fascinations with eschatology and the unrelenting, forward movement of time, a drive manifested in the forward thrust of the locomotive, are also explored within the texts through their allusions to the mechanisms of human life and funereal depictions of railway travel. The mechanical connotations that exist within Dickens’s work are interpreted as both a symptom of the industrial age, and a possible consequence of his own experiences with locomotives. My research takes account of advances in affect theory to interpret Dickens’s representation of railways within *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction*. Affect is described by Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth as a ‘visceral force’ that can ‘drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension’ (2010, pg.1). A textual analysis of the two novels reveals a greater preoccupation with the funereal and paranormal within *Mugby Junction*

which was published subsequent to the Staplehurst railway crash that Dickens was involved in. The emotional motivation that Dickens may have had for writing *Mugby Junction*, corresponds with the principles of affect theory as they provide a means of interpreting ‘the various possible locations of emotion in literature’ (Hogan, 2016, p. 2). These distinct theoretical perspectives propel the analysis of literary representations of societal disorder and apprehensions towards modernity within these literary works’ narrative discussion of time and space.

The first chapter of this project primarily focuses on the works of Charles Dickens, and uncovers a subtext of Victorian anxieties about the overwhelming forces of modernity and the disordering of perceptions of time, through the analysis of portrayals of the railways within Dickens’s work. The emotive stimuli behind Dickens’s monstrous and murderous depictions of railway journeys are scrutinized using affect theory and contemporary understandings of Victorian metaphors in order to expose the embedded social commentary surrounding the population’s growing fears towards how the railways were symbolically accelerating the pace of life. Rather than solely focusing on the speed of travel as the origin of altered perceptions of time, the first chapter seeks to demonstrate how depictions of railways in *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction* position the cause of these alterations within the unstoppable and transformative forces of modernity. Hellish descriptions of the locomotives and preoccupations with death within these two texts are likewise examined and reveal how the anxieties extend beyond the mere hastening in the pace of life and into fears of the impending and inevitable death of both the individual and a way of life. Focus subsequently shifts onto the railway’s disordering of space within the second chapter and makes conclusions on what certain portrayals of ‘railway spaces’ reveal about the transformation of society’s understanding of space. Initially, the chapter contrasts the works of William Wordsworth and Charles Dickens, with the intention of revealing the utilitarian

motives behind railway construction, and resulting absence of conservational consideration. Following such comparisons, the effects of structural and environmental changes being portrayed within *Lady Audley's Secret* and *No Name* are considered in relation to narratives using an understanding of literary geographies. The chapter aims to examine what fictional narratives reveal about the railway's disordering effects on space in the physical world; contrastingly, how spatial changes in the physical world affect notions and uses of space within narratives.

Dickens and the Triumphant Industrial Monster

The power that forced itself upon its iron way—its own—defiant of all paths and roads, piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging living creatures of all classes, ages, and degrees behind it, was a type of the triumphant monster, Death (Dickens, 2002, p. 261).

Despite their role in industry, transport and urbanisation, this research suggests that the railways forged a path of disorder throughout Victorian society and diverse British landscapes. Countless literary works within this period demonstrate how the ‘railroad disordered the Victorian world in ways that strain our imagination today and very nearly baffled theirs at the time’ (Smith, 2012, p. 499). The destruction and reshaping of British landscapes paved the way for a mode of transport that reached speeds never thought to be possible. Mechanisation within this period of notable technological advancements, from the early nineteenth century onwards, saw many fears arise, specifically surrounding the redundancy of human labour. As Nicols Fox explains, many of the discontented working class ‘under the Luddite banner, raised whatever weapons they could muster [. . .] in furious reaction to the installation of new technology that was taking their jobs and disrupting their lives’ (Fox, 2002, p. 25). Although the Luddite movement occurred around the turn of the nineteenth century, its actions were a significant component within the overarching mentality of opposition and pessimism within the working classes directed towards the introduction of modern machinery. Such pessimism can be seen as plaguing aspects of Victorian culture within the pejorative portrayals of the railway’s disturbance of perceptions of time, within an era of unprecedented and difficult to comprehend technological changes.

A divided Victorian society responded in various ways to the prospect of unprecedented changes to daily life, with Charles Dickens being the leading literary figure in depicting the numerous social changes. His true-to-life portrayals of various elements of Victorian society demonstrated that Dickens was, like the locomotives, ‘getting up steam’ as the voice of a restless, energetic, unprecedented age’ (Sanders, 1999, p. 66). As the ‘voice of an age’, Dickens produced some of the most insightful fictional accounts of railway travel and its influences upon Victorian culture. In a somewhat different fashion to the Luddites, Dickens’s method of remonstrance was in the form of fictitious narratives that focused on how individuals adapted to the increasingly mechanised society in which they were living. As the Luddites ‘raised whatever weapons they could muster’, Dickens raised his pen, and gave both contemporary and modern readers an insight into the vicissitudes of Victorian Britain (Fox, 2002, p. 25). Several of Dickens’s works contain references to railway travel and the impact that the introduction of locomotives had during the period of his writing. Most noteworthy were *Dombey and Son*, published in 1846, and *Mugby Junction*, which was a collaborative collection of short stories, published twenty years later in 1866. Although the two texts were published twenty years apart, Dickens’s attitudes towards the railways remained unwavering. Similar to the ways in which the observations made out of a fleeting railway carriage shone light on the atrocities of impoverished areas of Britain, Dickens was celebrated for unabashedly providing a literary insight into the railway’s consequent altering of society’s understandings of time and space. Through morbid connotations, which are embedded throughout both texts, Dickens paints a less than perfect image of life within the Victorian era as ‘Death’ becomes a perpetual theme, slicing through the text and disturbing vivid descriptions of the British landscape.

Dickens's aptitude for interpreting social unrest and the toxicity of a modernising Victorian society is starkly apparent in the narration of James Carker's brutal death in *Dombey and Son*. Carker's death is the most poignant moment of the novel, and is in keeping with the callous contemporary reports of railway accidents. Whilst trying to escape the wrath of Mr Dombey, James Carker is faced with 'two red eyes, and a fierce fire, dropping glowing coals; an irresistible bearing on of a great roaring and dilating mass' (Dickens, 2002, p. 716). Most apparent in this scene is the demonic imagery utilised by Dickens to reinforce the widespread notion that railways were formidable, and most prominently in this case, unstoppable forces of machinery. The unstoppable nature of the locomotive is highlighted within *Dombey and Son* when the narrator observes that railways were 'piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging living creatures of all classes, ages, and degrees behind [them]' (2002, p. 261). Carker's death was not merely an over-dramatized component of Dickens's pessimistic narrative against the increasingly mechanised Victorian society, as many news outlets were also publishing rather gory accounts of accidents occurring on the railway lines. An instance in which the fictional narratives of Dickens coincides with non-fictional accounts of life on the railways is apparent within this report from the *Morning Post*. A soldier had fallen onto the rails after attempting to enter a different carriage when subsequently:

'All the remaining carriages passed over him. The train, which at the time was proceeding at full speed, it seems was not stopped to take up the body, it being known that a luggage train was not far in the rear. On the arrival of the latter at the spot, the corpse was found dreadfully mangled.' (Fatal Railway Accident, 1846)

Rather disturbingly, the account of this incident notes how the train which took the man's life merely continues on its journey, with a total disregard for the body of the young soldier which it had just 'mangled'. Evidently, it was more of a necessity for the locomotive to remain on schedule, and adhere to the standardised time that railways introduced, than to be

stopped out of concern about the fatality. Pejorative depictions of the railways were becoming increasingly common during the 1840s, in turn highlighting the troubling ways in which humans were becoming the collateral damage of this age, and caught ‘in the track of the indomitable monster’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 262).

Mechanisation in this period largely related to the transition between undertaking tasks using ‘man-power’, to completing the same tasks, supposedly more efficiently, with machines.

Exploring the mechanics of this age in motion reveals a great deal about the anxieties surrounding the inevitability of technological change in this period. Not only does Dickens directly address how the locomotive ‘rolls and roars, fierce and rapid, smooth and certain’, he directly incorporates the motion of railway travel into the structure of his sentences (2002, p. 262). Prior to James Carker’s horrifying demise, Dickens describes how:

He heard a shout—another—saw the face change from its vindictive passion to a faint sickness and terror—felt the earth tremble—knew in a moment that the rush was come—uttered a shriek—looked round—saw the red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight, close upon him—was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him round and round, and struck him limb from limb, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air. (2002, p. 718)

Dickens’s utilisation of the hyphen here, rather than totally fragmenting the sentence, interpolates a poetic metre into the text. This textual rhythm appears to mimic the clunky, mechanical movements of the steam train. Robin Atthill similarly identifies the poetic nature of Dickens’s portrayal of ‘the monster of the iron road’, when he notes that ‘there is an almost delirious excitement in Dickens's prose when confronted by this new phenomenon of speed’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 276; Atthill, 1961, p. 132). The echoing of the rhythm, movement,

and constancy of this imposing locomotive force emphasises the unremitting nature of this technological phenomenon. Similarly, the unrelenting and systemic nature of the railways is reinforced in the opening pages of *Mugby Junction*, when the passing of a train is portrayed through a succession of short, incisive sentences. With urgency, the station guard notifies the traveller of the oncoming trains and warns him to ““Stand clear, sir, if you please. One. Two. Right!” Lamp waved. Signal lights ahead already changing. Shriek from engine. Train gone’ (Dickens, 2005a, p. 3). The concise utterances mimic not only the haste of an oncoming train, and the necessary abruptness of the business of the railway, but also the hasty invasion of this travel phenomenon into Victorian culture. All one could do during this period was stand back and observe such drastic transformations materialising within Britain.

Motion and travel are both significant in both *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction*. Rarely is a stationary locomotive referred to in both of these two texts; furthermore, Dickens observes ‘away, and still away, onward and onward ever’ of the trains (2002, p. 262). The continuity and boundlessness of these trains connote the immeasurable movement of time, as they move ‘onward ever’ as if they would never cease. Likewise, the depiction is comparable to the cyclical nature of modernity, technological advancements, and the consequential societal responses. The way in which Dickens details the slaughter of James Carker, how he was ‘whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him round and round’, is symbolic of how Victorian society was caught up in the ‘mill’ and the seemingly boundless limits of a technologically evolving civilisation (2002, p. 262). Not only does the action of being spun ‘round and round’ connote imagery relating to machinery, but it is also suggestive of clockwork and time. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, Dickens was certainly not the only prominent literary figure who was inferring connections between time, machinery and humankind. Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s novel, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, contemporarily labelled as a piece of sensation fiction, similarly refers to the interconnectivity of man, machine and

time. Braddon refers to the monotony of life as an ‘unflinching regularity in the smaller wheels and meaner mechanism of the human machine, which knows no stoppage or cessation’ (2006, p. 139). Much like railways and technological change in this period, the rhythm and flow of life knew ‘no cessation’. So many developments in technology and transport were occurring at this time that it does not come as a surprise that machinery, and the notion of an unstoppable force was a popular topic of discussion in both fiction and non-fiction works. Although considered a Romantic poet, Wordsworth’s reputation extended into the Victorian period, as he would often contribute his opinion on societal matters through poetry into the literary world. Within one of his most famous literary works, *The Prelude*, Wordsworth notes the ebbing and flowing of life throughout the busy London streets during his time of residence there:

The endless stream of men and moving things,

From hour to hour the illimitable walk

Still among streets, with clouds and sky above,

The wealth, the bustle and the eagerness. (Wordsworth, 2001, p. 109)

All three writers appear to utilise the metaphor that connects man and life with that of machinery, in particular, clockwork within their writing. Both time and life are boundless and unrelenting, and both speeding along hastily to their final termini. Whilst Dickens recognisably makes direct connections between, trains, movement and death, Wordsworth constructs rather obscure associations between movement and death. He notes the constancy of life, the ‘endless stream of men and moving things,’ then goes on to reflect upon the clouds and the sky, a rather more peaceful reflection on the pace of life towards death, unlike Charles Dickens. Continuously, Dickens makes links between railway journeys and one’s

voyage towards death, especially within *Dombey and Son*. Dickens observes that Mr Dombey:

Found no pleasure or relief in the journey. Tortured by these thoughts he carried monotony with him, through the rushing landscape, and hurried headlong, not through a rich and varied country, but a wilderness of blighted plans and gnawing jealousies. The very speed at which the train was whirled along, mocked the swift course of the young life that had been borne away so steadily and so inexorably to its foredoomed end. (2002, p. 261)

By likening railway travel to that of one's 'inexorable' journey through life towards their 'foredoomed end', Dickens appears to be employing a teleological approach to reinforce his own attitudes towards the 'triumphant monster.' Teleology refers to a journey towards an inevitable ending, in religion this would be 'Judgment Day', in the case of technology it is rather unclear as to where invention 'ends'. Both Dickens and Wordsworth note a constancy of movement in life and society, which coincides with Devin Griffiths' interpretation of teleology. Griffiths notes the importance of teleology 'to any study of natural or social systems in time,' and how it 'allows us to imagine change and study its ends' (2018, p. 907). Surprisingly, Dickens more so than Wordsworth, exhibited a morbid view of trains and the rapidly changing society in which he was 'inexorably' bound. The connections which all three authors make between machinery and man is highly suggestive of an anxiety towards a lack of control, through the continued use of terms such as 'illimitable', 'no cessation' and 'inexorably'. As Amy Milne-Smith compellingly suggests, railways 'were simultaneously the ultimate symbols of progress and technological triumph [yet] a focus for the anxiety and horrors of modern life' (Milne-Smith, 2016, p. 24). However, rather than attributing Dickens's views solely on the rapid and broad cultural changes that were occurring

throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of specific biographical influences on an author's writing must also come into question.

Dickens's emotionally-charged depictions of both the building of the railways and railway journeys, arguably stem from his own experiences with locomotives. This is not to suggest a straightforwardly biographical approach to Dickens's fiction, but rather takes into account the advances in affect theory to interpret Dickens's representation of railways. Largely centred around emotion, affect theory contains a large spectrum of subjects. Most interesting, in terms of the work of Charles Dickens, would be the emotion that motivates the writing of one of his works, and the sensations even beyond comprehensible emotion he evokes in his readership. Affect theory seeks to emphasise how 'literature is animated by emotion, both at the level of what it concerns and at the level of how readers respond' (Hogan, 2016, p. 3). By acknowledging the emotions that 'animate' both *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction*: horror, dread, fear and anticipation, it becomes apparent that such emotions were a motivation for Dickens, consciously or unconsciously, due to his experience of them.

Whilst returning home from France with his mistress Ellen Ternan and her mother on 9 June 1865, Dickens was caught up in a terrible railway accident. After having a near-death experience, trapped within a carriage that was teetering precariously over the edge of a railway bridge, it comes as no surprise that his description of the railways became increasingly more scathing. Although escaping the crash relatively unharmed, Dickens suffered psychologically, and wrote to a friend, Thomas Mitton stating 'I am a little shaken, not by the beating and dragging of the carriage in which I was, but by the hard work afterwards in getting out the dying and dead, which was most horrible' (Dickens & Hartley, 2012, p. 392). Following this tragic event, which left ten people dead and forty injured, Dickens's attitude towards the trains took a rather distinctive, and sinister, turn. After tracing the emotional register that Dickens integrated in his work, it becomes apparent that the

motives Dickens may have possessed coincided with the principles of affect theory, suggesting that emotion and the forces behind emotion that we cannot name can be the unconscious driving force for certain creative actions. Gregg & Seigworth, assert that:

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension. (2010, p. 1)

Arguably, the trauma that Dickens endured during, and after, the Staplehurst railway accident, were the driving forces behind his collaborative collection of short stories based on railways. Similarly, his noticeable change in perspective on the railways was almost certainly a consequence of his brush with death. Prior to the incident, he openly presented his pessimism towards locomotives to his readers, yet simultaneously acknowledged the benefits that such machinery was bringing to Victorian Britain. Within *Dombey and Son*, he proclaims:

As to the neighbourhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its straggling days, that had grown wise and penitent, as any Christian might in such a case, and now boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation. (Dickens, 2002, p. 205).

Dickens highlights apprehension towards this technological phenomenon, yet within the same statement, he praises those who embraced such change and observes that they have ‘grown wise’ in doing so. Notably, this optimistic outlook on the positive social changes in which this new mode of transport brought transformed into disparaging accounts of railways and railway junctions. Dickens’s writing took on a funereal tone and even referred to the

procession of carriages as a 'vast weird funeral' within *Mugby Junction* when he describes the scene as:

A place replete with shadowy shapes, this Mugby Junction in the black hours of four-and-twenty. Mysterious goods trains, covered with palls and gliding on like vast weird funerals, conveying themselves guiltily away from the presence of the few lighted lamps, as if their freight had come to a secret and unlawful end. (Dickens, 2005a, pg.5)

Through the incorporation of such pejorative and powerful lexis into his description of the junction, suggesting the supernatural, the uncanny and the uncomfortably strange, Dickens asserts his stance on the railways but in a way that suggests an unease that cannot quite be named or understood, a force other than conscious knowing. This reproachful yet fearful tone continues within the collection of short stories found in *Mugby Junction*. *The Signal-Man* is a supernatural account of a visitor to Mugby Junction who is convinced that he saw a spectre calling out for help from within one of the railway tunnels. Dickens utilises the popular gothic theme of the supernatural in order to convey his angst and to reinforce the common link between death and the railways, which he displays within *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction*. The ways in which Dickens relates death and railways in his narratives reveals the anguish and fear felt by society due to this life-changing cultural phenomenon of modernity. Death, as a reoccurring motif, was prevalent throughout many mid-nineteenth century novels that addressed the introduction of railways. The supernatural and morose depictions of railway travel reveal contemporary fears about 'the monster of the iron road' and its unnatural voyages through the carved-up British landscapes (Dickens, 2002, p. 276). Analysis within chapter two of this project applies a greater focus on the spaces in which the railways travelled; however, this chapter primarily studies the portrayals within literature of

how the locomotives travelled through these spaces. Such depictions are particularly prominent within *Dombey and Son* and the collection of short stories entitled *Mugby Junction*. Monstrous and lurid imagery, depicting the ferocious ways that the railways forged new paths throughout Victorian Britain, features on many pages within both of the texts. Although these machines revolutionised travel, the archetypal angst of the Victorians engulfed the many literary outlets that were providing commentary on the technological phenomenon. Locomotives are likened to beastly creatures within *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction* in order to compound common pejorative societal beliefs surrounding travel at such unearthly speeds. Although most certainly very mobile, Dickens breathes life into these iron beasts through his striking, and frequent, use of personification. He endeavoured to depict the liveliness of the railway stations by noting their life-like attributes. Dramatically, the arrival of an oncoming train rumbles Mugby Junction into life as it ‘suddenly, trembled violently, and opened its gas eyes. “She’s got up!” Lamps announced, excited’ (Dickens, 2005a, p. 8). Ironically, the station worker is objectified and merely given the name ‘Lamps’, which both conveys his role at the station and highlights his expendability. Similarly, the objectification of humans, and personification of railways, demonstrates that the railways, even though constructed by humans, had rather worryingly become far more powerful than any human capabilities. In a seismic manner, the ground shudders as Lamps exclaims, ““She’s got up!”” Applying a female gender to the station, whilst describing the earthquake movements of an oncoming train, is notably symbolic of Mother Nature. This comparison, although ironic due to the solely human conceptualisation of the railways, posits the railways as an unrelenting force, as the locomotives and Mother Nature are both capable of leaving a trail of destruction behind them. Additionally, use of the sinister adverb ‘violently’ reiterates Dicken’s opinions and descriptions of the train as a monstrous and powerful figure within the age of industrialisation.

Far from stationary, these iron beasts were powering through British landscapes and simultaneously developing and dividing predetermined notions of time. Rather than promoting the integration of the trains into daily life, Dickens portrays these locomotives as tortured souls screaming their way through the towns, cities and countryside of Victorian Britain. As the anthropomorphic ‘gas eyes’ of Mugby Junction were opening, the train carrying Mr Dombey, in the paralleled Dickensian railway novel, tore across the country ‘with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, and no trace to leave behind but dust and vapour: like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death!’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 262). Dickens likens the shrill sound of the train’s whistle to that of an angst-ridden shriek; a form of battle cry coming from the iron beast roaring along the tracks. Appealing to the auditory senses of his readers, the many different cries and rumbles of the locomotive in motion are described in significant detail. This industrial shriek had now merged into the Victorian London soundscape of ‘clanging bells, cracking whips, clattering carriages, clamoring hawkers and cabmen, roaring crowds [and] barking dogs’ (Picker, 2003, p. 42). Allusions towards the soundscape of towns and cities operate in turn with the monstrous portrayals that Dickens includes in both of the texts to form an image of an unearthly beast; the symbol of modernity. Initially, within the earlier chapters of *Dombey and Son*, the full force of the railways is not fully demonstrated by Dickens. Nuances of the destructive nature of the locomotive are addressed largely in terms of the environment. Progressively, Dickens introduces the effects of the railways, from the ‘earthquake’ in Staggs’s Gardens, to the roaring of the great machine ‘fierce and rapid’ through the English countryside. The brutal death of James Carker is the culmination of all of these chilling depictions that Dickens systematically placed throughout the novel. Foreboding Carker’s tragic end, the repetition of ‘Death’ in ‘triumphant monster, Death! [. . .] remorseless monster, Death! [. . .] indomitable monster, Death?’

emphasises the lethal nature of these innovative engines. Much like a large portion of the population at this time:

[James Carker] stood, shrinking from [the train], as if it were not safe to look. A curse upon the fiery devil, thundering along so smoothly, tracked through the distant valley by a glare of light and lurid smoke, and gone! He felt as if he had been plucked out of its path, and saved from being torn asunder. It made him shrink and shudder even now, when its faintest hum was hushed, and when the lines of iron road he could trace in the moonlight, running to a point, were as empty and as silent as a desert. (Dickens, 2002, p. 716)

Most striking, especially to the contemporary Victorian readership, is the satanic reference in describing the train as devilish in both form and movement. The Anglican Church was losing its tight grip on the populace, as the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 appeared to be 'incompatible with [Christian] religious beliefs, [. . .] because it is inconsistent with the Bible's narrative of creation' (Ayala, 2007, p. 163). Most notable were the findings of Charles Darwin that challenged the religious beliefs of people around the globe when he asserted his theory of evolution. Not only did the Christian members of Victorian society have to fear the dismantling of the very foundations of which their religion was founded upon (the creation of man), they now had to be weary of an evil and satanic force of modernisation that would serve to disrupt the lives of millions for a considerable number of years. Dickens additionally establishes a false sense of security within his readers when it appears that James Carker has avoided the wrath of the 'fiery devil' and only narrowly escaped the clutches of death. The eerily quiet tracks outside the inn, 'as silent as a desert,' were suddenly disturbed by the vigorous trembling of the earth as Carker was met with the 'red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight' which hastily stole his life from him (Dickens, 2002, p. 718). Tormenting screeches, fiery red eyes and the ability to strike down

any mortal being made railways seem like a very realistic threat. By attributing such threatening and intense characteristics to the machines, through intuitive use of personification, Dickens brings these contraptions to life. As if awakening a monster, Dickens's depictions of the locomotives portray him as a figure similar to Victor Frankenstein. Powerful imagery and perceptive descriptions of how animated these machines behaved during transit compels the reader to visualise the train as a monster. Although Dickens certainly had no influence in the creation of the railways, he was an authoritative figure within the literary world, and consequently he made the unbelievable concept of high-speed travel seem very real to his readership.

A by-product of the industrial age, ashes proved to be just as fatal, if not more so, than the locomotives themselves. The heavily polluted skies of the new industrial age were teeming with ash. The gloomy particles showered down upon the bustling towns and cities surrounding the sizeable factories and machines responsible for this smog. Members of the public who were all too familiar with the unforgiving nature of this residue were the workers themselves. Although fears were mounting over the possibility that manual labour was growing evermore redundant, a monumental workforce was required in order to construct the foundations of this revolutionary mode of transport. Astonishingly, during the two-year publication of instalments of *Dombey and Son*, Simon Bradley highlights how within the year 1847 'investment in railways [...] accounted for almost 7 per cent of national income' (2015, p. 10). Redundant workers now found themselves able to maintain an occupation within a more reliable and profitable work sector. Mrs Tox questions Mr Toodle, the husband of Paul Dombey's nurse, about his occupation as she inquires:

And how do you like it, Sir?

'Which, Mum?' said the man.

‘That,’ replied Miss Tox. ‘Your trade.’

‘Oh! Pretty well, Mum. The ashes sometimes gets in here;’ touching his chest: ‘and makes a man speak gruff, as at the present time. But it is ashes, Mum, not crustiness.’

(Dickens, 2002, p. 18)

As an impoverished railway worker, Mr Toodle would have had little protection against the tuberculosis-causing ashes that were an unavoidable consequence of his work with coal-burning machinery. Even after 30 years since the introduction of the 1840 Railway Regulation Act and the legal requirement for railway inspectors to be deployed across the country to assess the quality of the railway construction, ‘around 800 workers’ alone were still dying every year due to the continuous construction, maintenance and running of the locomotives (“Making Britain's Railways Safer”, 2015). Dickens was certainly regarded as the voice of the poor and impoverished and not only did he bring to light the possible dangers behind an ever-modernising society, he gave a voice to those who were directly affected, even it was by means of a fictional outlet. Dickens was also a prolific journalist, and frequently wrote about his experiences on the railways. He exemplifies the incomprehensible speed of the locomotive as he announces ‘Here we are—no, I mean there we were, for it has darted far into the rear’ (2005b, p. 347). Additionally, Dickens draws attention the lethal smog created by the locomotive’s coal-burning engines when the route of the train carries him past ‘dust-heaps, market-gardens, and waste grounds’ (p. 347). Not only was this by-product just as lethal as the machinery that produced it, in the case of James Carker, it also aided in the concealment of his untimely death. Dickens observes that the train tracks ‘like the way of Death, [are] strewn with ashes thickly’ (2002, p. 262). It was after these trains tore along the tracks that a trail of dust and ash would settle on the surrounding areas. Ironically, the same ashes which were deposited on the railway lines after James Carker’s death, masked the pools of blood and soaked it up as if to not leave a trace of the fatal occurrences of that

night. Mangled fragments of his lifeless body ‘lay heavy and still, upon a board, between four men, and [...] others drove some dogs away that sniffed upon the road, and soaked his blood up, with a train of ashes’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 718). Little care was given to those who stood in the pathway of these indomitable beasts, and like ‘vast weird funerals’ these locomotives glided along smoothly towards a new epoch of modern civilisation, claiming many innocent lives along the way and erasing those deaths in the process (Dickens, 2005a, p. 4). This symbol of a new era of totalising modernity was certainly not looking promising, especially through the eyes of Dickens, as it struck down any feeble human that dared to obstruct its course.

Although many fatalities occurred due to the introduction of the railways, the constant repetition of the term ‘death’ does not necessarily solely signify literal loss of life. The sombre tone adopted by Dickens in both of these texts suggests this is also the mourning of a way of life, rather than for the people who were killed in this process of modernisation.

Railways shaped many different aspects of British culture and civilisation. These ‘triumphant monsters’ offered more to society than merely a more efficient mode of transportation. Trains were ‘a disruptive innovation that transformed how people lived, establishing modern patterns of urban and suburban life. [...] few areas of life were untouched by the railway’ (Milne-Smith, 2016: p. 24). The building of the railways was arguably the most influential societal phenomenon since the Industrial Revolution. Reaching speeds of up to 30mph, trains revolutionised cross-country travel and greatly altered the way individuals went about their daily life. Communities became increasingly fragmented, as travel became easily accessible to the masses and citizens from all classes of society were able to descend into all corners of Britain. This heightened level of accessibility transformed the home lives of hundreds of thousands of people, as trains enabled professionals to seek work all over the country.

Consequently, this created a mobile workforce that could continue the work of those who had

made the Industrial Revolution such a success for commerce. Such surges of traffic throughout the country made travel a prevalent topic within the literature of the time, with Dickens, once again, being one of the figureheads of this countrywide discussion.

Travel by horse and carriage had been the norm for those living in England for millennia, so it comes as no surprise that pieces of literature concerning modes of transport experienced a dramatic increase in publications when a new form of transport seemed to initiate a new era. Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* was published only seven years after the introduction of the railways. The text appeared to romanticise travel by horse and carriage in a decade where railway lines were branching out across the country, like a destructive ivy of industrialisation, forcing its way into the cracks of an outdated style of living. In contrast to the dark and dismal imagery which Dickens assigns to the railways, *The Pickwick Papers* aims to reassert the life and vivacity of travel by horse and carriage by developing a narrative primarily centred around the adventures of the Pickwick Club, prior to the popularisation of railway travel. Dickens begins the novel by outlining the minutes of a meeting held by the Pickwick Club and informs the reader that the primary focus of the club is to navigate around England in pursuit of knowledge, whilst documenting the entirety of their journey. Whilst discussing the anticipated outcomes of the gentlemen's travels, the minutes of the meeting deliberate over the:

Inestimable benefits which must inevitably result from carrying the speculations of that learned man into a wider field, from extending his travels, and, consequently, enlarging his sphere of observation, to the advancement of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning. (Dickens, 2009, p. 1)

Set before the first passenger railway line opened between Manchester and Liverpool in 1830, *The Pickwick Papers* highlights how travelling further afield was primarily reserved for

the wealthiest members of society and specifically focuses on the ways in which travel could further the bounds of one's knowledge. In contrast to the optimism underpinning the central theme of travel within *The Pickwick Papers*, Mr Dombey's reflections on the journeys undertaken by railway take a significantly more pessimistic view of travel as when he:

Looks out of his carriage window, it is never in his thoughts that the monster who has brought him there has let the light of day in on these things: not made or caused them. It was the journey's fitting end, and might have been the end of everything; it was so ruinous and dreary. (Dickens, 2002, p. 263)

One must admire the way in which Dickens seamlessly acknowledges both the beneficial transformation and disorder introduced by railway travel. He initially asserts that the railways were not the cause of the 'miserable habitations below', they in fact 'let the light of day in on these things', yet also establishes an almost apocalyptic viewpoint on a train journey, noting that it 'might have been the end of everything' (Dickens, 2002, p. 263). Such a contrast in viewpoints on travel were more than likely down to the ten-year separation between the publishing dates of both texts. *The Pickwick Papers* was published in 1837, just under ten years before the first instalment of *Dombey and Son* was published in 1846. Within both of these decades, the modern passenger railroad had expanded from merely the one line between Manchester and Liverpool in 1830, to over 7000 miles of track in England and Scotland. Travel was no longer reserved for the wealthy to 'enlarge [their] sphere[s] of observation', it had become a lot more accessible to some of the poorest in society, with most locomotives having carriages divided into class systems offering tickets at different prices (Dickens, 2009, p. 1). The growing efficiency of travel made traversing the country less of a marvel as years passed.

Railways not only induced fear in those who were passengers on them, they were also seen as a threat to those who had businesses outside the urbanised cores of commerce that surrounded the newly built railway stations across the country. Connections between large cities ensured that goods could now move more efficiently across the country. Likewise, newspapers were sent ‘hot off the press’ swiftly to all corners of Britain, making the country more connected than ever. However, this rapidly modernising era of technological advancement left behind all of those who refused to be carried along in its ‘steam winds’ and ‘iron tides’ (Dickens, 2005a, p. 6). A character who fell victim to the ‘iron tides’ of modernity was Solomon Gills, whose name reflects his maritime occupation. Owner of the Midshipman, a nautical instrument shop, Solomon Gills suffered as his business was slowly dwindling. Accompanied by his nephew, Walter Gay, he dwells over the successes of his past and notes:

“When that uniform was worn,’ pointing out towards the little Midshipman, ‘then indeed, fortunes were to be made, and were made. But competition, competition—new invention, new invention—alteration, alteration—the world’s gone past me. I hardly know where I am myself, much less where my customers are.” (Dickens, 2002, p. 40)

Not only does Solomon refer to the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of many new inventions in this era, he also alludes to the travelling, and subsequent loss, of his customers. Repetition within this sentence emphasises the angst and turmoil that small business owners experienced during this period. Solomon is portrayed as rather bewildered, as his speech is bordering on incoherent. As discussed previously, the mass change brought on by the railways was inexorable, and those who did not take advantage of this would most likely be in a similar situation to Solomon Gills who realises belatedly ‘the world’s gone past me.’ A business that seemingly took advantage of the railways was W. H. Smith and Sons, whose first outlet was opened in 1848 at Euston Station, ‘selling cheaply priced novels. The firm

sponsored two-shilling reprints of successful novels. Special ‘railway editions’ were marketed by other publishers for reading on trains’ (Mullan, 2014). Adapting businesses in such a way that supported this monumental transition in commerce saw cities bustling with a newly mobile customer base. Florence Dombey observed this influx of life into tired and often run-down cities, as she noticed that upon arriving at the City:

The roar soon grew more loud, the passengers more numerous, the shops more busy, until she was carried onward in a stream of life setting that way, and flowing, indifferently, past marts and mansions, prisons, churches, market-places, wealth, poverty, good, and evil. (Dickens, 2002, p. 617)

Cities of such contrasts were certainly the most ‘convenient place[s] to live for being joined at will to all sorts of agreeable places and persons’ (Dickens, 2005a, p. 43). Unlike Solomon, who has had to suffer the impact that the railways took on his business, Florence sheds light onto a thriving and bustling city centre which ‘roars’ with life. The stream of life that Florence refers to is not only in keeping with the notion of an unstoppable force of modernisation; it also displays the interconnectivity between humans, nature, travel and civilization. Within both *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction*, Dickens merges descriptions of motion, modernisation and destruction with natural forces in an especially interesting way. Rather than an artificial occurrence, the introduction of the railways is portrayed as a natural adaptation of society.

Portrayals of bucolic landscapes and the insistence that one should be more in touch with nature, only partially carried over into Victorian literature from the Romantic Period. Emphasis was now on how individuals were adapting to a reinvigorated, industrialised, and more mobile British society. Richard Altick eloquently summarises this and observes ‘the blunt fact was that Nature, in its special Wordsworthian sense, itself seemed to be dying, the

victim of the new science. Impulses from a vernal wood were drowned out by the clatter and roar of machinery' (Altick, 1978). Wordsworth's 'vernal wood', whose knowledge he favoured over scholars and 'sages', seemingly had little more to teach as technological minds became preferential in an age which was bristling with mechanical innovation. This 'vernal wood', which originally appeared in Wordsworth's 1798 'The Tables Turned', transforms within Charles Dickens's *Mugby Junction*, into a modern focus of knowledge: the railway junction. Dickens utilises elements of the Romantic genre by assigning naturalistic characteristics to modern sensations. Evolutionary growth and development underpins the descriptions of the multitude of trajectories 'branching' off from the railway junction when Dickens observes:

[. . .] Mugby Junction was a Junction of many branches, invisible as well as visible, and had joined him to an endless number of byways. For whereas he would, but a little while ago, have walked these streets blindly brooding, he now had eyes and thoughts for a new external world. (Dickens, 2005a, p. 29)

Now able to access considerably more locations than ever thought possible, the traveller in *Mugby Junction* marvels at this concept. Dickens outlines how the railways are placed in the modern world and the rapid ways in which these changes took place. When describing the multitude of railway lines as 'branches', Dickens not only details the physical construction of the tracks laid out on the ground, but additionally connotes the growth and development of the railway lines by equating them to branches on a tree. Within *Dombey and Son*, Dickens highlights how the railway line's branches extended beyond the landscape, and into the dialect and minds of the Victorian populace. Mr Toodle analogises the railways as a means of expressing his confusion and explains:

“I comes to a branch; I takes on what I finds there; and a whole train of ideas gets coupled on to him, afore I knows where I am, or where they comes from. What a Junction a man’s thoughts is,” said Mr Toodle, “to-be-sure!” (Dickens, 2002, p. 494)

The branches of railway lines become an idiom in the colloquial dialect of Mr Toodle, and demonstrate how the expansiveness of the railway branches, which have previously been highlighted to connote ‘growth and development’, now prove to be an overwhelming concept for Dickens’s character. The railway’s influence is portrayed here as not only expanding across the British landscapes, it is likewise observable within the minds and conversations of the British population.

Dickens amalgamates nature and industry into an undeniably commanding force and, at times, a deadly one. Following his near-death experience, trapped within one of the crumpled carriages of the train involved in the Staplehurst crash, Dickens recounts how humanity and industry physically fused into one twisted mass of flesh and metal. Devastation consumed the site of the crash and in one of his many letters asserts that ‘no imagination can conceive the ruin of the carriages, or the extraordinary weights under which the people were lying, or the complications into which they were twisted up among iron and wood, and mud and water’ (Dickens & Hartley, 2012. p. 393). Use of such a striking and crude adjective as ‘twisted’ evokes violent imagery within this scene, and is consequently rather symbolic of a clash between nature and machinery. The locomotives are portrayed as monstrous machines that have both a disregard for human life, and for nature’s forces. Mr Dombey is journeying within one of the carriages of a ‘triumphant monster’ as Dicken’s details how it is ‘breasting the wind and light, the shower and sunshine, away, and still away, it rolls and roars, fierce and rapid, smooth and certain’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 262). The trains are portrayed as powerful and overwhelming forces that even commence an assault on nature. Light and sunshine are diminished by the locomotives and ‘everything around is blackened’ as though the idyllic,

pastoral beauty of the British landscape was descended upon by the black fog of industrialisation (Dickens, 2002, p. 262). This power struggle is distinguishable in *Dombey and Son*, where nature seems to surrender against the relentless force of industry. Whilst exhibiting the many transformations that have occurred within Staggs's Garden, it is discerned that 'there was even railway time observed in clocks, as if the sun itself had given in' (Dickens, 2002, p. 205). Allen MacDuffie considered cities to be organism-like, 'needing to feed continually on [their] external environment in order to survive' (2014, p. 8). This 'organism' had little concern for the natural world, as Dickens corroborates when admitting 'the sun itself has given in', instead it fed off of consumerism, capitalism and industrialism. Intriguingly, Dickens associated the rapid metamorphosing of British towns and cities with natural disasters and elemental imagery. Action and commotion infuse the scenes of destruction and lifelessness as Dickens utilizes metaphor and personification to portray the building of the railways as vivaciously as possible. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the initial chapters of *Dombey and Son*. Camberling Town, in which Staggs's Gardens is situated, was at the core of the destruction that Dickens lengthily describes. Being set in the initial stages of countrywide railway construction, the novel reveals:

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. (Dickens, 2002, p. 63)

Through using the metaphor of the earthquake to expose to his readers the impact of the demolition of Staggs's Garden's inner-city landscape, Dickens is in turn associating such changes to those of a force of nature; unavoidable and unstoppable. In reference to the

unrelenting nature of both the motion of the trains, and the introduction of the trains as a cultural movement, Dickens reinforces the notion of this unstoppable force when he gives the railway's movement attributes of a natural disaster. The apocalyptic landscape that Dickens illustrates appears void of life and brimming with devastation, Dickens must therefore reassure the reader that 'in short, the yet unfinished and unopened Railroad was in progress' (2002, p. 63). Contrasts presented throughout both texts offer a comprehensive insight into the contemporary cultural phenomena, for which Dickens was often celebrated.

Dickens's funereal depictions of the 'triumphant monsters' and their lethal and destructive journeys through Victorian Britain illustrates societal apprehension towards both the railway's construction and its operation. The Victorian populace were forced to battle with new perceptions of time as high-speed travel and an enforced standardisation of time resulted in eschatological panic. Dickens was renowned for, 'under the appealing guise of compelling fiction, provid[ing] astute social commentary' throughout his time as a writer (Fox, 2002, p. 74). His observations of the indomitable speed at which railway lines expanded across the country, and at which locomotives thundered along the iron roads, emphasised the increased pace in life and subsequent accompanying concerns about death. Monstrous portrayals of the mechanical dominance of the passenger locomotives brings an already menacingly animated force of modernity, to life. Numerous allusions towards the deadly capabilities of the railways compounds the societal trepidations surrounding the fatal consequences of travelling at unprecedented speeds. As the railway's supremacy is illustrated through the supernatural and fatal imagery within Dickens's work, it is the railway's effect on the natural world that is most revealing about how the railways not only disordered Victorian understandings of time, but space as well.

‘No nook of English ground secure?’ Trains and Literary Geography in Dickens and Beyond

Where the old rotten summer-houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond. [...] Bridges that had led to nothing, led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks. The carcasses of houses, and beginnings of new thoroughfares, had started off upon the line at steam’s own speed, and shot away into the country in a monster train. (Dickens, 2002, p. 205)

Pastoral landscapes, and scenes of untouched natural beauty, were considered by the Romantics as sacred and integral parts of the English countryside. Revered Romantic poets denounced the seizing of the untamed English environment under the tyrannous regime of modernity. William Blake ardently articulated how ‘A Robin Red breast in a Cage Puts all Heaven in a Rage’ (Blake, 1863). Likewise, Lord Byron enthused about the pure beauty of the unspoiled parts of Britain and notes how ‘There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,’ and ‘There is society where none intrudes’ (Byron, 1818). Once impervious to the impending threat of modernity, these bucolic regions of England were being progressively encroached upon by the industrial modernity sweeping through the country during the late eighteenth century, and all throughout the nineteenth century. Anna Seward makes potent direct references to the invasion of industry into the countryside in her 1790 ‘Sonnet to Colebrooke Dale’, as the metallic din of industry ‘Drowns the wild woodland song’ in the village in which she writes. Seward reinforces Dickens’s observations of the ‘lurid smoke’ that trails along after the ‘fiery devil’ of mechanisation, in her protest of the billowing columns:

Of black sulphureous smoke, that spread their veils

Like funeral crape upon the sylvan robe

Of thy romantic rocks, (Seward, 2008)

A shift occurred within the Victorian period, as Victorian positions on nature and the environment were forced to adapt alongside the transformation of Britain's geography and industry. The environmental paradigm of Romantic literature, shaped and conformed to by the likes of Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth, is nuanced within the literature of Victorian writers; however, popular writers such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë favoured offering readers insights into the harsh realities of poverty and the social injustices of the Victorian era, rather than depictions of bucolic landscapes.⁵ Dickens distinctively focused his efforts on exposing the hidden misery that plagued industrial London. Jesse Taylor acknowledges the influence Dickens had on contemporary beliefs surrounding London and its inhabitants, as he observes that Dickens's novels 'create an explicitly fictive world that renders legible otherwise invisible dynamics at work in the vast assemblage of Victorian London' (Taylor, 2016, p. 28). Ironically, the focal point of the unrest that was depicted by many writers during this period was responsible for the increased distribution of literature throughout the country. Railways not only facilitated the distribution of popular texts throughout this period, they also influenced 'advances in newspaper production [that seemingly] matched a quickening in the pace of life for the millions of people who read newspapers in the late 19th century' (Tucker, Unwin & Unwin, 2018). Notably, the increased distribution of literature during this century 'contributed to the breakdown of rural isolation' and created a wider readership across all classes (Tucker, Unwin & Unwin, 2018). Additionally, the increasingly widespread circulation of newspapers

⁵ Gaskell and Brontë were focusing their efforts on using their novels as a platform to highlight 'confining gender roles, sexual inequality, and other forms of Victorian patriarchal oppression' (Kucich, 1990, p. 187).

and periodicals within this period provoked the emergence of the sensation fiction genre in the 1860s, the importance of which is analysed further along in this chapter. As previously discussed, the railways offered more than solely a means of traversing the country more efficiently; the effects of their construction, movement and influence is traceable in almost every aspect of Victorian life. This inescapable phenomenon compelled '[William] Wordsworth as [an] environmentalist', who abhorred the modernity of inner-city life, to denounce the intrusive nature of the railways and consequently situate himself as the figurehead of a movement towards preserving sacred natural sites across the country (Gill, n.d.). Wordsworth's criticism of the railway's construction facilitated the analytical uncovering of a credible link in the geographical discussions contained in the texts analysed throughout this chapter. Wordsworth's correspondences with the Prime Minister surrounding railway construction, *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Dombey and Son* by Charles Dickens and *No Name* by Wilkie Collins all dissect the influence the railways had within suburban, environmental and social spheres. Ordinarily, the distinct nature of the genre, writing style and literary form under which each of these texts would fall would ordinarily inhibit their cross-analysis; however, these elements add to the interest of the analysis and provide a broader spectrum of attitudes towards the industrial modernisation of England in this time.

Analysing texts across a relatively broad literary spectrum can be problematic; however, utilising theoretical approaches within the fields of environmentalism and literary geographies facilitates such analyses and reveals parallels and contrasts that are often overlooked. Observing literary works from an environmentalist standpoint allows for the analysis of how both human and nature interact, be that harmoniously or in conflict with one another. Environmentalism originated in America within the '1960s, [and] is generally understood to have its more immediate origins in the conservationist and preservationist

movements of the late 19th century' (LaFreniere, 1990, p.41). Notions surrounding nature and humanity were in a state of turmoil during the Victorian period as their strong links to religion were being dismantled by the scientific discoveries of the age. Consequently, the possibility that the creation of the earth may not have been the result of an omnipotent being's design provided mankind with a certain level of authority over the earth. Humankind now ostensibly had the power to construct its own future, rather than entrusting it to a deity. Victorians were by no means oblivious to the damaging effects that industrialisation had on the environment. Writers such as John Ruskin endeavoured to educate his contemporaries on the subject of the environment and gave a lecture entitled 'The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century', which newspapers at the time criticized because Ruskin 'seemed merely to blame air pollution on the Devil; however, what Ruskin was blaming was the devil of industrialism [. . .]'. (Day, 2005, p. 917). Both the environmental and geographical effects of travel via locomotive and the construction of railway lines, stations and junctions are all present within the texts being analysed throughout this chapter. Such effects are recognisably significant and operate as the premise of the literary work, or in some way influence the plot or nature of the narrative. The principles of literary geographies are applied to the analysis of *No Name* and *Lady Audley's Secret* in order to explore the texts' treatments of space and spatial metaphor. The broad interdisciplinary field of literary geographies fundamentally studies 'the relationships between words and spaces' (Saunders, 2010, p. 437). It is this relationship that proves most interesting when analysing the topographical and architectural impact of the locomotive industry from a conservationist and environmentalist standpoint. A spatial subtext becomes apparent throughout each of these texts as Wordsworth, Dickens and Braddon are all observed to highlight the meaning of space and the railway's function within such spaces. As John Kellett observes, railway building 'profoundly influenced the internal flows of traffic, the choices of site and patterns of land use, the residential densities and

development prospects of the central and inner districts of the Victorian city [. . .]’ (Kellett, 1969, p. 419). Observing such patterns of movement and manipulation of the land facilitates the analysis of the Victorian understanding of transformative spaces and the incessant travelling through time and space that the building of the railways intensified.

Rapid progressions of the railway’s influence during the mid-nineteenth century resulted in the construction of thousands of miles of railway lines. By 1844, the ‘Railway Boom’ saw over 2000 miles of railway lines in operation throughout the country. With no signs of such expansion slowing, unsurprisingly, resistance towards such precipitous physical and societal transformations began to emerge. A literary campaign against the encroaching of the railroad into ‘the loveliest spot that man hath ever found’ ensued as William Wordsworth endeavoured to protect his beloved untouched retreat from the ‘rash assault’ of the locomotives (Wordsworth, 2008, p. 278; Sonnet, 1844, p. 3). Remarkably, as Scott Hess emphasises: ‘Wordsworth conducted an almost single-handed public campaign to keep the railways from entering the inner sanctum of the Lake District, a mile above Bowness along the shore of Windermere’ (2012, p. 116). To environmentally conscious individuals such as Wordsworth, untouched regions of Britain’s countryside were considered, what we today would term, ecological sanctums and offered an escape from the imminent modernity and industrialisation that seemed to take over the rest of the nation.⁶ The presence of a railway line would not only disturb the natural beauty of the area, its preliminary construction would undoubtedly disconcert the organic flora and fauna of the region. Conversely, once in place, improved access to an area of immense natural beauty would encourage many members of the public to appreciate the splendour of the Lake District, something that Wordsworth had actively encouraged within his poetry. Such discontent concerning the topographical effects of the railways is observable throughout the mid-nineteenth century. A concerned columnist

⁶ The term ‘ecological’ was not in use until later in the 1870s (OED)

wrote '*A Plea for Ancient Towns against Railways*' as the threat of modernity was ever-increasing. The writer incredulously inquires 'what possible benefit can accrue to a town near which the railway passes [...]?' Similarly, the article highlights how railways are advantageous for large towns and cities; however, such advantages 'are obtained at the expense of other places' (1843, p. 3). Although news coverage of the railroad phenomenon was plentiful, surprisingly, very few literary figures were directly addressing the negative consequences brought about by the construction and operation of the railways. Writers such as Dickens, Braddon and Collins all made references to such effects in a number of their fictional literary works, yet it was Wordsworth who pioneered 'arguably the world's first modern environmental protest' (Hess, 2012, p. 116).⁷

On 15 October 1844, William Wordsworth penned a letter to the then President of the Board of Trade, William Gladstone, expressing his unequivocal opposition to the proposition of a railway line being built between Kendal and Windermere. Wordsworth implored in vain, that Gladstone must endeavour to impede the construction of the railway line in his beloved Lake District. In an attempt to utilise his position as Poet-Laureate, Wordsworth accompanied the letter with an incensed poem that lamented the possibility of an industrial 'assault' on the pastoral landscape. The Poet-Laureate was considered to be out of touch with the modern age, hence his resentments towards his source of literary inspiration, the Lake District, being infiltrated and monopolised. Wordsworth introduces his sonnet with the interrogative lines:

Is there no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure

⁷ The qualifier 'modern' is important here: as Todd Borlik and Clare Egan point out, the ecological protest ballad has a long history.

As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish; how can they this blight endure? (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3)

The violent imagery that Wordsworth utilises in order to personify the railways, and their schemes of unfathomable destruction, portrays the modernisation of Victorian Britain as a form of attack against the landscape. Wordsworth's ardour towards the matter is explicit in the opening of the sonnet, as it implies that the railway's 'assault' on the countryside is in some way criminal. Once venerated by Romantic writers, the sacred and pure setting of the Lake District was now both being capitalised on by railway shareholders and being modified in such a way that nature's design was forced to meet the needs of man. Wordsworth was aware of both the environmental effects of the railroad construction and how 'travellers' would consequently treat the area once the trains were in operation. Wordsworth continues:

And must he too his old delights disown
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat, bright scene, from Orrest head
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance! (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3)

Convenience and practicality are brought into question, as the 'utilitarian lure' of railways being constructed so close to the lakes is questioned. Although the poet strongly advocated man having a connection with nature, and appreciating the purity and beauty of it, Wordsworth also portrayed 'nature as a sphere of high culture, which would be violated by the infusion of "low" or popular culture' (Maunder, 2010, p. 443). His elitist tone is indicative of the true motives behind his efforts to inhibit a railway line being built through the area. Not only would the foot traffic cause visual and auditory pollution of the pristine landscape, it would disturb the tranquillity to which he had retreated from the bustle of

suburban life. Those who would travel on the locomotives through this region would have a ‘rapturous glance’ of the bucolic scenery, yet Wordsworth’s apparent conservationist elitism reveals that visual ownership rights to the Lake District do not extend to the masses entering the area via railway carriages. However, such an awe-inspiring sight was rather difficult to obtain if one was traversing the iron roads leading from industrialised towns and cities. Dickens exemplifies this in *Dombey and Son* as passengers get ‘glimpses of cottage-homes, of houses, mansions, rich estates, of husbandry and handicraft, of people, of old roads and paths that look deserted’ (Dickens, 2002, p. 262). The iron roads were impervious to class and creed, as they weaved throughout the entirety of Britain, bringing swift and convenient travel to those who wished to journey on them. Wordsworth explicitly expressed his aversion to the equality of access to the Lake District that the railways would encourage, and alludes to ‘nature as a sphere of high culture, which would be violated by the infusion of “low” or popular culture’ (Hess, 2012, p. 116). As author and fictional character alike were bearing witness to these incomprehensible changes, Wordsworth remonstrated against the ‘indomitable monster’ and exclaimed:

Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of nature; and if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds, ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong! (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3)

Humanity’s inability to safeguard the ‘beautiful romance of nature’ is harshly emphasised by Wordsworth’s observation that humankind must be heartless if they allow the destruction of this natural ‘nook’ of English ground. Consequently, forces of nature are implored to rise up against man and protest the impending destruction of pristine areas of the Lake District. Wordsworth ‘regarded nature as a living, animated force in danger of being overtaken by industrialism’ (Maunder, 2010, p. 443). He personifies both industrialisation and

environmental forces and pits them against one another within the bucolic landscape of the Lake District, whose natural beauty was increasingly threatened by the plans for the construction of a railway line there. Nature was evidently fighting a losing battle, as many city dwellers revelled in the delights of high-speed transportation. A Victorian columnist, who pleaded for the protection of '*Ancient Towns against Railways*' dejectedly admits that 'it is conceded on all hands, that where speed is required in draught, the horse cannot compete with mechanical power' (1843, p. 3). To Wordsworth, the railway embodies everything iniquitous and destructive about the industrialisation of Victorian Britain. Although his appropriation of the voice of nature is argued by Scott Hess to have been utilised 'in order to support his own cultural position,' Wordsworth's unwavering stance on the environmental impact of industrialisation positions him as 'the virtual patron saint of ecologism, for he put himself squarely in the green tradition by teaching his readers to look at, dwell in and respect the natural world, and to be sceptical about material and economic "progress"' (Hess, 2012, p. 116; Pepper, 1996, p. 195).

Intriguingly, the opening lines of Wordsworth's poem are referenced by Charles Dickens in his novel *Dombey and Son*. Where fact meets fiction, Dickens exploits contemporary remonstrations concerning railway construction in order to highlight the tangible threat that this mode of transport posed upon society. Tremendous transformations occurred within the many neighbourhoods that happened to be in the vicinity of railway stations. The fictional location of Staggs's Gardens 'had been cut up root and branch' to make way for the new iron branches of railroad. The narrator in *Dombey and Son* laments 'Oh woe the day when 'not a rood of English ground'—laid out in Staggs's Gardens—is secure! (Dickens, 2002, p. 205). Dickens appropriates Wordsworth's famous lines 'is there no nook of English ground secure from rash assault?' (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3) in an attempt to compel contemporary readers to recognise that it was not only the picturesque countryside being carved up to make way for

the railways, this destruction was similarly occurring within the suburban areas of the country. However, Dickens modifies lines from Wordsworth's sonnet and most fascinatingly replaces the term 'nook' with 'rood'. There are numerous definitions of both terms, yet the references to both location and measurements of space intensify the importance of Dickens's modification. A nook can be considered as 'a place or spot having the character of a recess shut in by rocks, trees, etc.; a secluded or sheltered place among natural or garden scenery,' which may often be located in 'any one of the corners or ends of the earth.' (Nook, n.d.). Such definitions are in compliance with Wordsworth's outlook on the Lake District being a natural sanctuary, located out of the reach of city dwellers, and tucked away within the untouched landscapes of Britain's countryside. The strict measurements relating to a 'nook' of England also demonstrate Wordsworth's uncompromising stance on the development of railways lines in this area. Similarly, the classification of a nook being 'a measure of land area equal to 20 (or 12½) acres (approx. 8.1 or 5.1 hectares)' reinforces the notion that William Wordsworth's condemnation of the railways was one dimensional as it solely focused on the construction within the Lake District, and not on the railway's nationwide effects. In contrast, the ambiguous unit of measurement referred to by Dickens, a 'rood,' relates to:

A unit of length used esp. for land, fences, walls, etc., originally the same as a rod (rod n.1 8a), 16½ feet (approx. 5.03 metres), but in later use usually either seven or eight yards (approx. 6.4 and 7.3 m). (Rood, n.d)

The indeterminate measurement reflects the population's uncertainty on how extensive the railroad's construction would be. Significantly, the scope of the area denoted by a 'rood' is noted to deviate by up to 2 metres when Dickens refers to Staggs's Gardens as a 'rood' of England. Although a relatively minor increase in dimensions is demonstrated in the alterations of terminology between the two pieces of literature, it serves to highlight the

greater understanding of the expanding geographical modifications instigated by the developments of this innovative modern form of transportation. Similarly, between the years 1844, when Wordsworth published his sonnet against the construction of a railway line through the Lake District, and 1846, when Dickens began publishing the monthly instalments of *Dombey and Son*, the comprehension of the spatial effects of the railways had already increased. In reading Wordsworth's sonnet alongside *Dombey and Son*, Dickens's fictional approach towards highlighting the topographical effects of the railways renders Wordsworth's conservational plea as one-dimensional. Unlike Wordsworth, Dickens would often take a bilateral approach to portraying social concerns within his literary works. Depictions of Staggs's Gardens being 'cut up root and branch' hold pejorative connotations, which Dickens counters with how this remodelled community, which once detested the imposing nature of the railway construction, now 'boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation' (2002, p. 205). Staggs's Gardens is central to the environmental impact rhetoric that Dickens weaves throughout the novel, as its name, location and structural transformation embody the impact that railways had during this era.

Staggs's Gardens is a fictional squalid neighbourhood, nestled into the suburb of Dickens's London. The development of this 'little row of houses' within *Dombey and Son* complements the main plotline; however, it also branches out into its own subplot, as Dickens illustrates the archetypal paradigm of the railway's effects on inner-city London. Although expressing the local objections to Staggs's Gardens being 'uprooted', Dickens took a holistic view on the transformations of small suburbs, and other areas of the country alike. Dilapidated homes lined the streets of this fictional neighbourhood prior to the 'first shock of the great earthquake' (Dickens, 2002, p. 63). Each home was decaying and situated 'with little squalid patches of ground before them.' One would think that such an area would welcome the possibility of change; however, 'Staggs's Gardens was regarded by its population as a sacred

grove not to be withered by Railroads' (Dickens, 2002, p. 64). Although situated in an urbanised area of Victorian Britain, the residents of this poverty-stricken street held the same values as Wordsworth in relation to the possible annihilation of the place in which they called home. The 'sacred grove' that the narrator refers to is also reminiscent of Wordsworth's understanding of nature being sacrosanct. The impending construction of such a monstrous feat of engineering compelled Wordsworth to implore that nature should 'plead for [its] peace' (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3). Similarly, Dickens observes of the decimation of the 'sacred grove':

Nothing was the better for it, or thought of being so. If the miserable waste ground lying near it could have laughed, it would have laughed it to scorn, like many of the miserable neighbours. (Dickens, 2002, p. 64)

A voice is given to both the individuals who were living through such extraordinary changes throughout Victorian culture and civilisation, and to the terrain that was taking the brunt force of the locomotive's wrath. Analysing both Wordsworth's sonnet and Dickens's novel *Dombey and Son* comparatively in this way, highlights the fact that Dickens was undoubtedly aware of the nationwide consequences, both geographically and socially, of introducing such a revolutionary marvel in travel within such a relatively short amount of time. Dickens appropriates the voices of both man and nature in order to underpin his narrative of the railway boom, and to compound the subtext included within the narrative that outlines the full force of this technological epoch.

The noteworthy appellation of Dickens's 'rood' of England is indicative of the subordinate environmental subtext that discreetly runs throughout *Dombey and Son*. The title given to the neighbourhood, Staggs's Gardens, implies the existence of some form of vegetation or flora; however, as Dickens makes the reader aware, this certainly is not the case. Similar to many locations throughout London, the origin of this name may be obtained from the site that

existed previous to the fabrication of dwellings here. A notable example of this being Covent Garden, which ‘derives its name (“Convent Garden”) from the presence there in the Middle Ages of a garden belonging to Westminster Abbey.’ (“Brief History of Covent Garden,” n.d.). Symbolically, the very foundations of Staggs’s ‘Garden’ had been ‘cut up root and branch’ and the allusion to an ecological oasis imprisoned within the urbanised confines of Victorian London is similarly uprooted (Dickens, 2002, p. 205). Not only does the reference to a garden highlight the presence of topographical transformations, which were a significant component of Victorian apprehensions towards modernity, it similarly alludes to the blighting effects of a vastly increasing population, along with growing industrialisation, on rural areas of Britain. As mentioned in the first chapter, Dickens observes that the devastation caused to the terrain was similar to that of an earthquake, as the first shock ‘had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre’ (2002, p. 63). Although it has been demonstrated that analogies made by Dickens between the forces of nature and the railways portrayed the locomotive industry as an ‘indomitable’ force against society, it must also be noted how the physicality of the ‘earthquake’ is expressive of the tangible consequences imposed upon the geography of Britain during this era. Writing throughout the period known as the ‘Railway Boom’ in 1846, Dickens was able to observe retrospectively how the railroads infiltrated every aspect of Victorian life, yet he makes sure to emphasise the naivety of the lower classes who believed their ways of life would be impervious to such phenomenon. The underprivileged inhabitants of Staggs’s Gardens were ‘confident [. . .] of its long outliving any such ridiculous inventions’ which renders the apocalyptic descriptions of the aftermath of railroad construction in this area appear exceptionally more bewildering to the occupants of this neighbourhood (Dickens, 2002, p. 64). Dickens adopts a dialectical approach to the issue of the railway’s presence in Victorian Britain and juxtaposes brutal attacks on the landscape

in order to procure sites for the modern railroad, with a celebratory tone for the architectural improvements made in conjunction with improved mobility.

Dickens establishes a microcosm of industrial change through the depictions of the immeasurable transformations taking place in Staggs's Gardens. Emphasis is placed on the gradual decimation of entire regions of England as a consequence of the construction of railway lines and its many terminals. Once the railroads had subjugated this 'rood' of England:

There was no such place as Staggs's Gardens. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer-houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond.

(Dickens, 2002, p. 205)

Paradoxically, the development of the 'Garden' is now celebrated, and likewise the financial investment that accompanied it. By integrating the contradictory stances on railroad construction into the novel, Dickens seeks to highlight the angst that overwhelmed Victorian society as they continued to fear the unfamiliar territories of industrialisation in which they were being involuntarily forced into. Palatial structures now lined the streets 'where the rotten summer-houses once had stood,' and the ostentatious granite columns stood authoritatively, underpinning both the facades of the building and the very foundations of a neoteric and prosperous transportation industry. Grand columns, the remnants of which illustriously symbolised the falling of ancient empires, now marked the demise of an antiquated way of life. Although largely implied within *Dombey and Son*, the architectural remains of bygone eras stood as a reminder to the Victorian populace of changes that had since passed. Dickens's multiple references to the structural, environmental and spatial effects of the locomotive industry often portray his ambivalence towards the issue; however,

he intuitively utilised the phenomenon of the railways as a metaphor for the transformation and development ‘of the nation, in an era in which imperialism and the globalising effects of capitalist modernity were reforming the idea of national identity’ (Mathieson, 2015, p.1). Philological studies of Victorian texts similarly observe that the metaphors developed within fictional texts during this literary period were reflective of ‘the concerns of their age’ (Weaver, 2015, p. 334). Rather than solely exploring the allegorical significance of locomotives within fictional texts during the mid-nineteenth century, similar scrutiny on the geographical and spatial impact of the railways reveals comparably thought provoking results.

Figurative structural layers are peeled back within the narratives of both *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *No Name* in order to reveal both the changes that occurred prior to the age of mechanisation and in consequence of the emergence of industrialism. Portrayals of architecture within literary texts provides an invaluable insight into the locomotive’s destructive nature, as it forges a path of iron roads through the country. Contemporary fears surrounding the increasing threat of modernity in this period are trivialised, as the existence of the many transformative epochs that preceded the ‘Railway Boom’ are foregrounded through the emphasis on architectural developments. Mary Elizabeth Braddon depicts both topographical and architectural progressions and notes how such changes ‘must have been the handiwork of that good old builder, Time’ (Braddon, 2006, pg. 2). Although Braddon does not directly refer to railways in this portion of her novel, she does however, reinforce the capitalist narrative of modernity and change by emphasising the expedient transformations of this era. Braddon exemplifies the commodification of culturally and historically significant structures throughout Victorian Britain when she documents the architectural alteration of a contemporary mansion in her novel *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Adaptations in the structural layout

of Audley Court, which had figuratively been made by ‘that good old builder, Time,’ consisted of:

Adding a room one year, and knocking down a room another year, toppling down a chimney coeval with the Plantagenets, and setting up one in the style of the Tudors; shaking down a bit of Saxon wall, allowing a Norman arch to stand here throwing in a row of high narrow windows in the reign of Queen Anne (Braddon, 2006, p. 2).

Each wall and architectural feature that Braddon describes as being displaced by contemporary modifications, contributes to the allegorical depictions that she composes in order to highlight the transformation of British culture through time. The importance of architecture does not solely pertain to the present day, it was similarly significant during the Victorian Period, where its importance was bolstered ‘by the creation in 1834 of the Institute of British Architects’ (“Victorians: Architecture,” n.d.). As each layer is forcefully sent ‘toppling down’ on account of ‘Time’, the structures which have been deemed desirable remain standing, consequently exposing the palimpsestic nuances within Braddon’s allegory. The anxieties towards the concept of change, that Victorians expressed so openly, becomes undermined by the evidently visible distinctions in various structures from different architectural periods. Victorians were constantly surrounded by, and attempting to adapt to, the many changes imposed on them by the passing of the Industrial Revolution and subsequent introduction of the railways. Although Braddon portrayed ‘Time’ as being merciful on occasions, railways were not so sympathetic, as their impacts on the revered fragments of English heritage, both natural and artificial, were nationwide.

Historical architecture intersects with the contemporary infrastructure of the railway industry in *No Name* by Wilkie Collins. Primarily, *No Name* addresses the precarious subject of illegitimacy and inheritance, and utilises the railways and travel as a means of developing the

plot. After the female protagonist, Magdalen Vanstone, absconds from her family's household, she encounters the questionable Captain Wragge at York railway station. Prior to the encounter between both characters, Captain Wragge arrives at the railway station and the narrator explains how the iron railways pierced through the historical fortifications that once protected the city of York. Whilst in pursuit of the missing Magdalen Vanstone, Captain Wragge:

Reached the spot where the iron course of the railroad strikes its way through arches in the old wall. He paused at this place—where the central activity of a great railway enterprise beats, with all the pulses of its loud-clanging life, side by side with the dead majesty of the past, deep under the old historic stones which tell of fortified York and the sieges of two centuries since. (Collins, 2004, pg. 154)

Once more, palimpsestic allusions are made to the historical remains of empires that preceded the industrial Victorians. They serve as a reminder to contemporary readers that the death of bygone eras was, and remains, a mere consequence of the unrelenting force of time. The nature in which the railways have infiltrated the historic city of York are likened to that of the 'sieges of two centuries since.' Collins depicts how the modernistic iron railroads intersect and run concurrently with remnants of the ramparts of York, thus demonstrating that those who were assembling the railway lines, and the buildings associated with it, favoured convenience over conservation. Evidently, the narrative of disregard for conservation was extensive throughout Victorian publications. Wordsworth and Collins alike adopt this narrative through the vehement depictions of the railway's disregard for both natural and urban landscapes, as the locomotives 'strike' and 'assault' their surroundings throughout their construction and subsequent journeying. Wilkie Collins mourns the 'dead majesty of the past,' whilst simultaneously recognising the advantageous nature of the railroads and their construction, as one of his characters, Andrew Vanstone ponders concernedly 'How can I

manage it?’ whilst debating the most efficient method of transport. Mr Vanstone subsequently concedes “‘No time for driving; I must do it by railway’” (Collins, 2004, p. 76). Collins employs a similar dialectic approach to Dickens in how they mutually address the contentious issue of increased mobility throughout Victorian Britain from multiple perspectives. The source of such contention, stemming from the railway stations, ‘where the central activity of a great railway enterprise beats, with all the pulses of its loud-clanging life’ (Collins, 2004, p. 76).

The heart of the nation, the railway stations, beat ‘with all the pulses of [their] loud-clanging life’ (p. 76) and distributed the lifeblood of mechanisation throughout Britain. These buildings were central to the shift in Victorian perceptions of space and travel throughout the nineteenth century, an age where space, both locally and globally, was being re-defined. The personification of the railway station draws attention towards Collins’s demonstration of the interconnectivity between man and machine, a concept which has been previously elaborated upon in the first chapter. Additionally, whilst equating the pulsations of the crowd in this hive of activity to that of a heartbeat, Collins emphasises the centrality of the railway stations, which were located at the core of numerous towns and cities across the country. Towns and cities that had been instrumental in the development of mechanisation throughout the industrial revolution⁸ were now becoming world-renowned centres of industry, largely due to the introduction of railway travel. Liverpool and Manchester were both archetypal models of modern industrial cities in which their ‘wealth was manifested physically in a plethora of grand architectural landscapes’ and boasted early examples of the ‘characteristic urban infrastructure of the modern city, most notably the world’s first inter-city railway’ (Sykes,

⁸ Catherine Eagleton and Artemis Manolopoulou observe that ‘More efficient ways of weaving cotton helped Manchester become the most important British centre of the cotton industry (often called ‘Cottonopolis’) and the world’s first industrial city.’ (Eagleton & Manolopoulou, 2010, p.1). Similarly observe that Liverpool was also an integral part of the industrialisation of Britain as its ‘proximity to Manchester was crucial to its development as one of the most important English ports.’ (p.2).

Brown, Cocks, Shaw & Couch, 2013, p. 299). Urban infrastructures within the nineteenth century transformed in order to satisfy the needs of a mobilised populace. As the expanse of railway lines soared during the mid-nineteenth century,⁹ so too did the desire to travel. Tourism came at a cost to the landscape, as William Wordsworth had anxiously predicted in his protest of the Kendal and Windermere railway. Wordsworth's very own 'Nook of mountain ground' in the Lake District surrendered to the overwhelmingly influential forces of modernity and innovation in 1847 (Wordsworth, 2008, p. 278). Once the railway terminal had been built in Windermere in 1847, a railway resort was effectively developed, consisting of the 'Windermere Hotel built by 1849; newsroom, library and picture gallery by 1855. Windermere quickly became [a] magnet for day-trippers from [the] industrial towns of Lancashire' ("Windermere and Bowness", n.d.). Notably, since the construction of the railway lines, the 'economy of both [Windermere and Bowness] has been based on tourism.' ("Windermere and Bowness", n.d.). Wordsworth's remonstrative efforts were observably futile, and the utilitarian motive that he strongly abhorred had evidently conquered the area and infiltrated the 'beautiful romance of nature' (Sonnet, 1844, p. 3). Such a discernibly ineffective protest by Wordsworth demonstrated the dominance of the wealthy landowners and railway shareholders over Britain, and likewise emphasising how voiceless the population were against vast infrastructural changes that were occurring. Urban Victorian environments, and an increasing number of rural environments, were witnessing the transformation of their municipal infrastructure as railway stations now dominated towns and city centres. The centralised location of what may be observed as the foundations of Victorian mobility, offered both 'the prosperity of an area, [by] creating jobs and serving as a

⁹ "Railway expansion at this time was rapid. Between 1826 and 1836, 378 miles of track had opened. By the time the South Eastern Railway opened as far as Dover, in 1844, 2210 miles of line had been opened, making travel around the country faster, more comfortable and less expensive." ("Railways in Early Nineteenth Century Britain," n.d.)

centre for regeneration,' and an intersection at which any and all creeds of humanity would congregate (Walker & Rowlinson, 2016). The centrality of such a chaotic structure elicited the use of railway stations, and trains alike, throughout a considerable amount of Victorian literature.

Similar to how railways and their many termini became topographically and socially centralised throughout Victorian Britain, their influence and centrality permeated the pages of a great number of literary texts. Locomotives consequently became key components of both the plots and subtexts of many Victorian novels. As the Victorian populace gradually became accustomed to the transformative spatial conditions of Britain during the nineteenth century, the meanings and uses of narrative spaces were also being explored and developed through the medium of railways. Sheila Hones observes how narrative space during the nineteenth century was generally assumed to have 'no other function than to supply a general background setting': it was something 'to be taken for granted rather than requiring attention', 'far less essential than the temporal directedness of the plot' (2011, p.685). However, developments in the understanding of literary geographies and their significance, especially during times of notable cultural phenomena, emphasised the possibility of uncovering profound literary connotations within the use and depictions of space within literature. Throughout this century of the reimagining and redefining of boundaries across Britain, the railways established 'an inherently simplified ordering' of such spaces (Mathieson, 2015, p. 8). Charlotte Mathieson attributes the subdividing of land to the outline of railway maps, as they were 'restricted in featuring only those places on the railway route, revealing no other features of local variation in space or those places that remained 'off' the network. [...] the railway map created a new sense of 'railway space' as similarly simplified through the networking capabilities of the railway.' (p. 8). Identifying the demarcation of

‘railway spaces’ consequently facilitates an opportunity for analysis in terms of how such established ‘spaces’ function in both society and literature.

Certain locations within literary texts often provide more than merely a backdrop to a plot; they can become pivotal and plot-defining moments in a storyline. Angharad Saunders emphasises the associations between language and location by suggesting that literary geographies ‘gives recognition to the flows and elisions between the textual and the spatial – the complex of production and reception spaces and practices, which irrevocably shape a text’s geographies and meanings’ (2010, p. 437). Such a pivotal moment arises in Wilkie Collins’s novel, *No Name*, which utilises the ‘railway space’ in order to form the premise of the entire novel. The title *No Name* refers to the exploration of illegitimacy within the novel and how the protagonist and her sister, Magdalen and Norah Vanstone, are left with ‘no name’ after the sudden death of both of their parents, who failed to legalise their marriage. Andrew Vanstone, Magdalen’s father, had been travelling to Grailsea on business via railway, when he was involved in a railway accident that resulted in his death. Collins omits the details of the railway accident within the novel and alternatively informs the reader of the tragedy through the arrival of a Grailsea railway station employee at the Vanstone residence. Tentatively, the gentleman confesses “I am sent here on a very serious errand. [. . .] Serious to all in this house.” (Collins, 2004, p. 81). Consistent with the conventions of sensation fiction,¹⁰ Mrs Vanstone’s reaction to the dreadful news was both evocative and animated as:

She stood, the spectre of herself. With a dreadful vacancy in her eyes, with a dreadful stillness in her voice, she repeated the man’s last words:

¹⁰ The genre of sensation fiction was ‘distinctively transgressive in that it was thought to appeal directly to the “nerves,” eliciting a physical sensation with its surprises, plot twists, and startling revelations. [. . .] These novels typically featured ordinary upper - or middle - class families in domestic settings experiencing startling emotions and occurrences, and were up to date in their subject matter, often taking up themes recently of interest in the newspapers’ (Gilbert, 2011, p. 2).

“Seven passengers badly hurt; and two—”

Her tortured fingers relaxed their hold; the book dropped from them; she sank forward heavily. Miss Garth caught her before she fell—caught her, and turned upon the man, with the wife’s swooning body in her arms, to hear the husband’s fate.

“The harm is done,” she said; “you may speak out. Is he wounded, or dead?”

“Dead.” (p. 82)

The distress and horror conveyed by Collins in the concluding lines of the tenth chapter accentuates the lethal consequences of the ‘iron roads’, and places a greater focus on the horrific aftermath of railway tragedies, rather than on the gruesome details of the locomotive disasters themselves. In omitting the railway crash from the narrative, Collins allows readers to connect with the emotional consequences of tragedy on railways. The impact of ‘railway spaces’ on the plot is explicitly evident within this chapter as it is both jarring, with the harrowing adjective ‘dead’ concluding the chapter, yet instigative, as it initiates the development of the plot and foregrounds the railways influence on the narrative. Collins ensures that the ‘railway space’ is merely nuanced here and the focus is principally on the emotions aroused by the interactions between human and machine. The railway setting therefore functions as a vehicle for plot progression in *No Name*, and this literary ‘space’ consequently proves to be an essential element to the narrative.

Spaces created by the railways are explored further in *No Name* when Captain Wragge arrives at York railway station and discovers a missing person poster during his observation of the mass influx of commuters within the terminal. The merging of the railway lines into one terminal is described alongside how ‘three different lines of railway assemble three passenger mobs, from morning to night, under one roof; and leave them to raise a traveller’s riot’ (Collins, 2004, pg. 150). Collins displaces the order and civility of the station through

his anarchised depictions of the accruing hordes of travellers. The growing and expansive nature of the railways, which Charlotte Mathieson also alludes to,¹¹ is condensed through the narrator's depictions of the claustrophobic and bustling interior of the station, which exemplifies the consequent contractions made in the concept of global space through the introduction of more efficient ways of travel. This complex network of railway lines that are referred to, alongside their numerous termini, allowed the Victorian traveller to reach almost all regions of the country, offering a new sense of autonomy to the population. Dickens (2005a, p. 11) epitomises this liberation through his character 'Barbox Brothers' in *Mugby Junction*, who announces 'Where shall I go next? [. . .] I can go anywhere from here.' However, the freedom that many were seeking had its limitations, as demonstrated through the character of Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*. Magdalen's escape to York after the death of her parents resulted in her disappearance being reported to the police and subsequent poster campaign being arranged for her safe return. Here, the railways operate as a means of escape, yet the very interconnectivity of railroads that facilitated her escape, also resulted in her discovery. Angharad Saunders notes that within literature, 'traditional metaphors of space – movement, home and exile – may well conceal more implicit and complex geographical metaphors.' (Saunders, 2010, p. 448). Likewise, Saunders suggests the possibility of revealing 'the nature of a text – its hidden vistas, alternative stories and contrary politics' through certain analytical approaches towards metaphors of 'circulation, labyrinth and palimpsest.' (p. 448). Collins situates the 'railway space' as a means of escape through his characters' journeys within the labyrinthine network of railway lines that branched across the country. Within *No Name*, the railways, although at times considered riotous, can be

¹¹ Mathieson notes how the railways contributed to 'the movement of people around the nation and the resultant growth of sites of touristic significance' (2015, p. 4). Similarly, she refers to the urban impact of the railways and how they encouraged the 'growth of the suburbs and commuter towns – as well as more fluidity of movement between cities for reasons of business and trade' (p. 7). Finally, she likewise makes reference to the railway's influence on industry and states that the 'railways also played a crucial role in the expansion of Britain's industry' (p. 8).

observed as embodying the opportunistic environment of industrialised Victorian Britain. Similarly, Collins demonstrates the progression of female mobility¹² and slight slackening of gender constraints as Magdalen is able to escape the harsh familial realities of her life at home in pursuit of a career on the stage in York.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* similarly adopts the theme of 'railway space' being utilised as a mode of escape, as the antagonist of the novel, Lady Audley (formerly Helen Talboys), flees her domestic role in search of both a new identity, and an affluent future. Although the narrative largely concentrates on the theme of identity, it similarly foregrounds a 'dialectic between freedom and enclosure, privilege and confinement that structures the lives of upper-middle-class women' (Tromp, Gilbert & Haynie, 2000, p. 3). Robert Audley, the protagonist and pursuer of Lady Audley's true identity, traces her movements via railroad across the country in search of evidence that would assist in the locating of his absent companion, George Talboys. Crucially, Robert Audley must uncover Lady Audley's past in order to locate George, and must do so via the railways. Literary geographies acknowledge 'how the setting itself advances the plot,' and the incorporation of the railways into the narrative of *Lady Audley's Secret* epitomises this (Mayhew, 2015). As Robert Audley is swiftly transported throughout the country, to locations both factual and fictional, such as London, Southampton, Hull, Dorsetshire and Wildernsea, readers likewise benefit from the fleeting nature of the locomotives as the exposure of Lady Audley's identity draws ever closer. Due to the manner in which the locomotives facilitated Helen Talboys's escape, railways in *Lady Audley's Secret* operate as vehicles for the progression of the narrative as they were consequently central to the fundamental theme of the story: identity.

¹² Although at times dangerous for an unaccompanied female passenger, the 'railways represented a 'space of possibility' for women, with the lower costs of travel and the provision of ladies' compartments enabling a new generation of more independently mobile women' (Mathieson, 2015, p. 60).

The construction of the railways within Britain may have ‘forge[d] a new sense of national identity’; however, it is notably through Lady Audley’s journeys along such railway lines that primarily observed and compelled the numerous identities she procured throughout the narrative (McIvor, 2018). Robert Audley gradually uncovers the many identities of Helen Talboys¹³ as he strips back the palimpsestic layers of ‘scraps of railway labels and addresses which were pasted here and there upon the [bonnet-box]. It had been battered upon a great many different lines of railway, and had evidently travelled considerably’ (Braddon, 2006, p. 161). Each label and address demarcated a new identity and life that Helen Talboys had embarked upon, each time escaping the realities of her true, impoverished identity. It becomes apparent that the ‘railway space’ is not only symbolic of identity within the nation space, but that it is comparably symbolic of the progressive and fluctuating journeys through life.

Victorian perceptions of space were gradually evolving with the expansion and influence of the railways. Evaluating examples of literature by authors who were celebrated in both the Romantic and Victorian period, highlights the shift in attitudes towards the treatment of landscape, fundamentally due to railroad construction and increased mobility. Initial observations of the topographical transformations portrayed within the highlighted texts reveal the increasing utilitarian lures of the land and the dominance of capitalism throughout the period. Following the observations of how the transformations of space are depicted within the separate texts, scrutinising the way in which Victorians interacted with the newly transformed spaces reveals additional apprehensions about the landscape. Through an

¹³ Lady Audley was born Helen Maldon and subsequently became Helen Talboys after her marriage to George Talboys. Upon seeking improved future prospects, Helen changed her name to Lucy Graham in order to conceal her identity. Once she had married Robert Audley’s uncle, she became Lady Audley. She finally adopted the name Madame Taylor prior to her admittance into a ‘mad house’ in Belgium, after George Talboys had been discovered wounded at the hands of Lady Audley.

understanding of literary geographies, it is possible to see how increased mobility is suggestive of freedom, yet the depictions of 'railway spaces' throughout the nineteenth century reveal that mobility figuratively caused space to constrict and become claustrophobic. Significantly, the interactions between historical and modern architecture emphasises concerns surrounding the temporality of the present day. Eva Badowska draws attention towards this anxiety and observes how ultimately, the Victorians were consumed 'by the possibility that modernity itself will keep on crumbling [and] falling rapidly to ruins' (2009, p. 158). As modernity continues on its indomitable journey towards an improved society, so too will the anxieties of generations that must accompany such modernity on its indiscriminating voyage through time.

Conclusion

Victorian railways were the ultimate symbols of innovation. Locomotives not only transported the British population into the many ‘nooks’ and ‘roads’ of the country, they likewise propelled them into a new age of modernity. Dickens is renowned for his social commentary on Victorian Britain and this research brings attention to his ambivalent approach towards the introduction of the railways. *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction* acknowledge the beneficial aspects of railway travel, as the new railway network encouraged the development of urban infrastructures, exposed inner-city poverty alongside its railway lines, and increased commerce and job prospects for those who were fortunate enough to live within a close proximity to a railway station. Literary critics often overlook Dickens’s optimism towards the changes made by the railways, as they primarily emphasise his increasing concern ‘with the social malaise of the new industrial-commercial world around him’ (Atthill, 1961, p.130). Contrasting the progressive changes alongside the disordering consequences of the railways comprehensively emphasises how drastically Britain changed throughout the nineteenth century, and how such change produces mixed and often contradictory responses. This research has utilised both critical and historical texts to demonstrate how Victorian literature explored the deeper-rooted anxieties, emotions and societal reordering experienced by the nation throughout the building and operating of the railways.

From a twenty-first-century perspective, it is tempting to view the early railways as imposing order and regularity in Victorian Britain: through the enforcement of standardised time upon the country, the creation of railway timetables, the construction of thousands of miles of railway lines, and a plethora of railway occupations being generated. However, this project reveals a profound disordering in perceptions of time and space through the analysis of works

by Charles Dickens, William Wordsworth, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins.

Charles Dickens's preoccupation with death and the railways in both *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction* exemplifies the trepidation felt by society towards railway travel and its instrumental role within the unrelenting modernisation of Victorian Britain. Time itself had been altered in order to facilitate the operation of the railways, yet it was the speed in which the populace hurtled across the country in these locomotives that provoked the greatest fears. Metaphors of deathly railway journeys and comparisons between humans, nature and machines are highlighted within *Lady Audley's Secret*, *Dombey and Son* and *Mugby Junction* to demonstrate the increased pace of life that was a consequence of more efficient travel throughout the country. Gruesome details of how the trains struck down individuals within the novels incites distress within readers, yet can be retrospectively observed as encompassing the dangers that railways and modernity posed to society and an antiquated way of life. Dickens's hellish portrayals of the fiery devil thundering along the railway lines allude to Victorian fears of the hastily approaching 'doomsday', as the indomitable murderous machines figuratively propel the population through time into a new era.

The manner in which the bodies of Victorian travellers were hurtled across the country in these 'monster trains' invokes fear in itself, yet it is the very space in which these locomotives were travelling that becomes a point of contention for the second chapter.

Furthering Charlotte Mathieson's research on the human experience within a locomotive, my research has put a greater focus on space in order to identify how physical and literary spaces are redefined by the railways in the Victorian era. Comparisons made between *Dombey and Son* and William Wordsworth's *Sonnet* against the building of the Kendal and Windermere railway in Chapter two exemplifies the importance of space as it reinforces the capitalist narrative of modernity in its emphasis of the expedient transformations of this era.

Wordsworth's portrayals of the railway's violent assault on the British landscape, when

compared with Dickens's seismic depictions of the railway's construction in Staggs's Gardens, highlights an environmental subtext that epitomises the railway's utilitarian motivations and its disregard for conservation. Topographical transformations within *Dombey and Son*'s Staggs's Gardens are paralleled with the revealing architectural modifications of Audley Court in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* in order to similarly highlight the increasing commodification of British spaces within the Victorian period and how architecture acts symbolically as palimpsest of the structural changes that predated the railway's introduction in 1830. Locations depicted throughout *No Name* and *Lady Audley's Secret* are positioned as symbols of the numerous ways in which the railways disordered the Victorian population's perceptions of space. Railway stations are consequently viewed as central in expressing the contracting space of the country, and are portrayed as microcosms of the country's inability to organise the mobilised population. The railway spaces challenge identity, as individuals struggled to position themselves in the newly-connected spaces of the country. Literary geographies highlights how the changes in spatial understanding extend beyond the literal world, and into the fictional locations of Dickens, Braddon and Collins.

The exploration of the relationship between words and spaces in literary geographies reveals a literary fascination with the past as a means of understanding the locomotive's standing within an increasingly modernising Victorian society. Problematic relationships between the present-day and the imposing forces of modernity endure, as the transformative railways continue to impact perceptions of time and space today. This project comes full circle, as the research undertaken on the railway's disordering of Victorian society becomes applicable to contemporaneous efforts to decrease journey times. The construction of the HS2 railway lines across Britain evokes similar anxieties to those felt by the Victorians, as the population likewise argues 'what possible benefit can accrue to a town near which the railway passes [...]?' ("A Plea for Ancient Towns against Railways," 1843, p. 3). The contemporaneous

relevance of this project compounds its significance as both an analysis of the industrial phenomenon of railway travel in the nineteenth century, and as a method of cognising the continuing modernisation of society through understandings of the past.

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