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Victorian Representations and Transformations: Sacred Place in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

Aaron Adams

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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I hereby declare this thesis has not been previously submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree

Aaron
Adams
30 May 2010

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Summary

Victorian literary criticism has within it a longstanding tradition of inquiring about the degree to which literature of the period reflects the realities of nineteenth-century Christian faith. Many of these studies are admirable in the way that they demonstrate the challenges confronting religion in this period of dynamic social, cultural, economic, political, and scientific change and growth. Similarly, this study will examine the critical intersections between nineteenth-century Christianity and literature.

However, this project is unique by virtue of the methodology used in order to access both the expressed and latent perspectives on Victorian faith at play within a given text. I propose that that a spatial, place-based reading has heretofore been largely ignored in critical explorations of nineteenth-century faith and literature. While, literary criticism utilising concepts related to spatiality, geography, topography, and place have increased within recent decades, these critical works are largely silent on the issue of the narrative representations of "place" and the expression and understanding of Victorian Christianity.

This project suggests a model for just such a reading of nineteenth-century texts. More specifically, this thesis proposes that by reading for sacred place in the Victorian novel one is able to explore the issue of Christianity and literature from a unique and neglected point of narrative and critical reference. Using Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* as primary texts, this study demonstrates that a careful exploration of sacred place within a particular narrative reflects an author's and, more broadly, a culture's perceptions of a faith. Reading Victorian religion from the vantage point of place acknowledges that place is itself an inescapable and fundamental medium through which individuals and cultures

mediate the most mundane and the most exhilarating of their personal and collective experiences and beliefs. Similarly, faith, especially in nineteenth-century England, is a dominant and pervasive metaphysical ideology that is connected to and possesses repercussions for virtually all aspects of individual and social life. A critical reading that unites place and faith – these two fundamental paradigms of human experience and understanding – will inevitably provide fertile soil for a productive reading of the texts under consideration.

Chapter I
Reading Place and the Sacred in Victorian Literature

At the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, media attention began to gather around the issue of historic church buildings throughout England.[1] While the theological, ecclesiastical, and social implications of declining church attendance within England have been thoroughly discussed, the effect of a shift in the way in which society interacts with the loss of its most sacred places has largely been ignored. Indeed, the decline in attendance bears directly upon the existence of many of the nation's historic church buildings. Crispin Truman, Chief Executive of the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) suggests that of the more than 15,000 parish churches, a "huge number depend on dwindling congregations" to maintain their viability as places of worship.[2]As church members disappear, churches in both rural and urban areas face declining revenue – oftentimes leaving them searching for the finances to support essentials such as heating and maintenance. Faced with this dilemma, many have begun to consider the prospects of an England devoid of its naves and spires – of an England without the spatial embodiment of the sacred. The possibility of losing these buildings has generated so much interest precisely because the debate is fundamentally not about the churches themselves. The issue is not simply economic and institutional, but is enmeshed with the very essence of the nation's cultural and religious life. More to the point, these churches – these physical places – are in jeopardy precisely because the faith from which they once derived their power, status, influence, and authority no longer possesses the cultural

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[1] It is important to establish from the outset that this thesis and its concerns are focused almost exclusively on England and, as such, does not include Scotland, Wales, or Ireland.

[2] BBC News Online Edition, "One Church A Week Faces Closure," 19 January 2005 (accessed 13 August 2006); available from http/://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4187127.

significance here at the dawn of the twenty-first century. This connection between faith, culture, and place has not emerged in a vacuum, nor is it particular to this moment in history. Rather, the secularisation of culture that has left these churches without congregations and, by extension, without the means by which to support their basic maintenance has deep historical roots in England. While atheists, agnostics, and doubters populate each era of Christian Britain, it has become generally accepted that the emergence of doubt as a discernable cultural trend in Christianity in England can be traced to the nineteenth century. It is not surprising then, to discover that, although churches were central to the cultural and geographical landscape of that era, an extended examination of Victorian depictions of sacred place reveals an emerging willingness to question the cultural hegemony of the Christian faith. Throughout the nineteenth century, the subtle representation of these places by artists, writers, and journalists were part of a movement that signalled the beginning stages of a cultural interrogation of traditional Christian orthodoxy and faith.

This study seeks to explore and give definition to the various ways in which sacred place is depicted in two Victorian novels, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). I will suggest that reading for sacred place provides a unique and interdisciplinary critical paradigm through which one can examine authorial and social perspectives on religion and culture. However, before one can more fully discuss the novels under consideration and, beyond that, why they were chosen, it is important to establish the nature of the inquiry. To that end, this chapter will undertake to examine the concept of place within philosophical, social, and scientific inquiry and, from those various disciplines, develop a definition and functioning theory of place that will define the parameters of a "reading of place" within these two novels. Of course, a very specific "kind" of place – the sacred – is

under consideration in this project and, as a result, the discussion of place will be extended to establish parameters for what constitutes sacred place in this study.

Place and Theory: Toward a Centred Reading

While a survey and history of the concept of place is not central to this study,[3] a cursory overview of the key critics and theories on the topic will yield a better understanding of the historical and contemporary ideas regarding the notion of place and, more specifically, assist in identifying the key perspectives that underlie the theory of place used in this critical inquiry. In the pages that follow, theories of place will be divided into three categories.[4] Admittedly, categorising critics and their work into specific ideological camps is fraught with potential pitfalls. Many critics, regardless of discipline, have found theoretical commonality at one point or another with colleagues whose ideas, on the surface, seem to be at odds with their own. However, it serves the purpose of this brief critical survey to identify the broad trends that have characterised the study of place for over two thousand years. For each of the three conceptualisations of place that follow, threads of critical insight that bear a particular relevance to this research project will be examined more fully.

Descriptive

The descriptivist approach to place is one that systematically studies the variations of different regions. Nearly two thousand years ago, the Greek geographer Strabo (64 BC-24 AD) wrote his seminal seventeen-volume work *Geographica* (17 - 23) largely to communicate the differences that characterised the inhabited and what he deemed to be historically important parts of the world to the leaders of the Roman

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[3] For an excellent, albeit philosophically driven, history of space and place see Edward S Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[4] These categories were developed in Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 51.

Empire. Though his work did not gain notoriety until the late fifth century, his descriptions of Europe, Asia, and Africa signalled one of the earliest systematic examples of the descriptivist approach to place. As the formalised study of geography took root, the descriptivist perspective emerged as the dominant paradigm at work within the discipline.

More recently, the twentieth century saw upheavals in the way in which descriptive geographers understood their methodology. Noted geographer Richard Hartshorne (1899-1992), in his *Perspectives on the Nature of Geography*, argues, "[T]he integrations which geography is concerned to analyse are those which vary from place to place."[5] Hartshorne's search for the variances that occur "from place to place" is noteworthy for its importance as a landmark statement from the heretofore dominant mode of descriptivism, a perspective characterised by its emphasis on the description of the differences between places.

However, the decade that followed its publication witnessed the ushering in of a period in which Hartshorne's traditional models of descriptivism began to be called into question. Many geographers, aware of the view that had emerged within the academic community that geography itself was unscientific and lacked applicability to the advancement of society, sought ways to legitimise the discipline. Individuals such as Brian Berry and Peter Haggett[6] sought to redefine the field by introducing the notion that geography did more than simply describe different regions, but that, fuelled by a cultural emphasis on empiricism, the application of the scientific method, and quantitative tools, the discipline could establish laws which could determine how

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[5] Richard Hartshorne. *Perspectives on the Nature of Geography* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1959), 159.
[6] See Brian Berry, *Geography of Market Centres in Retail Distribution* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967) and R.J. Chorley and Peter Haggett, eds., *Frontiers in Geographical Teaching* (London: Methuen, 1965).

humanity would live and act within a specific region. This perspective enjoyed considerable critical success until, in the 1970's, many within the discipline, undoubtedly influenced by the growing influence of poststructuralism, questioned its reliability on epistemological grounds.

Though the descriptive approach to the study of place has weathered considerable internal and external critique, it is important to note the movement's unifying commitment to an observational perspective on place. While methodology and, in some ways, ideology varied, Strabo, Hartshorne, and Haggett, all sought to examine and record the distinguishing characteristics of one geographical region over and against another. Additionally, Strabo and Haggett, though separated by nearly two millennia, did not observe these geographical variations as ends unto themselves. Rather, both linked their observations of a particular region to the culture and behaviour of its inhabitants. In so doing, these two adherents to the descriptive approach to place demonstrate another characteristic common to the movement, that being the manner in which the geographical characteristics of a region influence or are influenced by those that occupy it. Recognising this anthropological turn, many descriptivist geographers became known as "cultural geographers." Here, then, one can witness the tendency of geographical study to blur the lines between the hard sciences, the social sciences, and even the humanities – a reality that oftentimes serves as a source of embarrassment for those within the discipline and ridicule from those without. Though the definition of place and the methodology employed in this research project will rely more heavily on the final two approaches to place detailed below, the descriptive approach possesses an interdisciplinary quality that bodes well for a project that relies on the applications of multiple fields of academic study.

Social Constructionist

> Place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. This is the baseline proposition from which I start. The only interesting question that can be then asked is: by what social process(es) is place constructed?[7]

David Harvey, one of the foremost critics within place theory, begins with the notion that place is another expression of the ongoing struggle between those persons or entities possessing power and popular prestige, and those who do not. For Harvey and other many other social constructionist theorists, place is, plainly put, an embodiment of the human tendency to include and exclude – to define who is inside and "of us" and who is outside and "not of us." That this perspective argues that place is built, manipulated, and maintained by individuals and systems reveals its structuralist underpinnings[8] and is a clue to its genesis within the quantitative revolution that began amongst adherents to the descriptive approach in the 1960's.

The social constructionist's emphasis on a political reading of spatial theory has led to its adoption by critics whose theories focused on both people and groups marginalised by mainstream culture. Indeed, noted place-critics Judith Butler (queer theory), bell hooks [sic] (critical race theory), and Doreen Massey (gender criticism), have all built their arguments upon the foundational elements of social constructionist theory.[9] Perhaps the most influential figure in the movement, however, has been David Harvey, and his theories in particular are formative in the place-reading applied

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[7] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell: 1996), 293-294.

[8] It is important to note that the social constructionist theory of place, like many theoretical models dependent upon structuralism at their inception, has evolved to accommodate the more recent critiques levelled by advocates of poststructuralist ideologies.

[9] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Between-the-Lines Press, 1990), and Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

to the novels in this research project. Among the first geographers to combine the framework of Marxism into discussions surrounding and including issues of place, Harvey views place as a social construct in which a conflict between market-based oppression and locally driven revolution is played out spatially.

To understand Harvey's political theory of place, it is important to point out that, for Harvey, place implies a certain level of bound permanence that occurs within the broader context of space. This permanence stands in stark contrast to the mobility of capital that can travel across space, changing hands and changing places, with a simple transaction. For Harvey, a struggle between "place bound fixity and spatial mobility of capital"[10] takes place in which the former gives way to the latter. In so doing, "old places . . . have to be devalued, destroyed, and redeveloped while new places are created . . . Those who reside in place . . . become acutely aware that they are in competition with other places for highly mobile capital."[11] Individual places are pressured to transform, to become financially viable, or risk being passed over in the onrush of global capital. In so doing, the inhabitants of a place are no longer allowed to have "their place" shaped by locality, history, and tradition, but must succumb to the demands of the market. In this way "the cathedral city becomes a heritage centre . . . [and] the old industrial centre is deindustrialized."[12] What is implicit in this place-dynamic is that the longstanding relationships and associations individuals and societies have with a place give way under the impersonal market forces driven by accumulation rather than connection.

Harvey's social constructionist theory of place does, however, include the possibility for marginalised groups, subject to the powerful and distant forces of

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[10] Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 296.
[11] Ibid., 296-297.
[12] Ibid.

market capitalism, to construct a place of their own. This response to displacement offers "some kind of resistance to or rejection of any simple capitalist (or modernist) logic of place construction."[13] According to Harvey, oppressed communities usually construct these places outside of the mainstream culture dominated by the demands of the market in order to provide their own sense of community and to express their own values. This construction of a new place and a new identity is often in an attempt to escape from or counter the prevailing movement or values of the market. Harvey identifies these place constructions as instances of what he calls militant particularism, an effort that "seizes upon the qualities of place [and] reanimates the bond between the environmental and the social."[14] The places created by militant particularism can exist tangibly, as in the case of communes and organic farms, or can be imagined, as in the case of national or cultural monuments erected with a memory and meaning that transcends the physical structure. Whether these places are physical or imagined, their value is in creating an alternative place for connection and expression for those displaced by the forces of market capitalism. Harvey's attention to the role of industrialisation, market capitalism, and the movement and migration of people groups bears direct relevance to a study focused on Victorian England, a period and place characterised by the rapid emergence of industry, foreign and domestic markets, and a massive population shift from rural communities to urban centres.

The social constructionist perspective on place is buoyed by the degree to which the principles that support the theory are evident in society. Phrases such as "from the wrong side of the tracks" or "feeling out of place" have entered the cultural vernacular and identify the extent to which the idea of place boundaries being enacted

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[13] Ibid, 302.
[14] Ibid, 306.

to exclude the outsider have been ingrained in the collective consciousness of Western culture. Similarly popular attitudes toward displaced and homeless persons are scrutinised by social constructionist theories of place. The homeless and the refugee are simultaneously derided or pitied precisely because they are caught in a state of double-ostracisation; they are not "of us," but, what is worse, they do not belong to "any place." Echoing the social constructionist approach to place, anthropologist Liisa Malkki has written of the human tendency to ascribe particular moral qualities to individuals based upon the places they inhabit.[15] Malkki's point is illustrated by a World War II study that describes the perceived moral consequences of homelessness:

> Homelessness is a serious threat to moral behaviour . . . At the moment the refugee crosses the frontiers of his own world, his whole moral outlook, his attitudes towards the divine order of life changes . . . [The refugees'] conduct makes it obvious that we are dealing with individuals who are basically amoral, without any sense of social or personal responsibility . . . They no longer feel themselves bound by ethical precepts which every honest citizen . . . respects. They become a menace, dangerous characters who will stop at nothing.[16]

For Malkki and others, this report reflects a society in which individuals without a place are perceived as morally corrupt based upon that lack of place-connection. This, then, illustrates a moral component to the politics of spatial exclusion. Cultural outsiders are not only prevented from accessing a particular place of privilege, but also, especially if they are without another place to call their own, are labelled as "dangerous characters" because of the fact that they were excluded. This pattern results in an unending cycle of spatial exclusion, moral vilification and practical

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[15] Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of People and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44.

[16] K.C. Cirtautas, *The Refugee: A Psychological Study* (Boston: Meador Publishing, 1957), 70, 73, quoted in Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of People and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," 32.

justification that serves to perpetuate the economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious segregation within society.

Social constructionist place theory has provided critics with an awareness of the intersections between political, social and economic behaviour and spatiality. As such, the model is dependent upon a view of place as arising out of the social forces at play on a local, national, and global level. Social constructionists theorise place as an access point at which the desire of individuals and groups – especially those that exercise social control and power – to marginalise and exclude those perceived to threaten their traditions, cleanliness, prestige, resources, or homogeneity can be spatially realised. In order to perpetuate this spatial segregation, places are built and destroyed, borders are drawn and redrawn, and individuals are localised and displaced. This emphasis on the social origins and implications of place provide a fascinating host of literary critical possibilities. Reading place in this way provides a narrative context in and against which characters act, reveal themselves, and extend the plot.

Phenomenological/Humanistic

The discussion of social constructionist theory began with a quote from David Harvey in which he explains, perhaps speaking in hyperbole, that he is only interested in place insofar as he can investigate the social forces that created it. The phenomenological or humanistic approach to place is markedly different for, as the name implies, the perspective seeks to understand place as intrinsically tied to the foundations of human morality, experience and consciousness.[17] In that way, it examines the human desire for and reaction to place.

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[17] Within the realm of place studies, the demarcation between "phenomenological" and "humanistic" is not absolute so the terms will be used interchangeably.

Similar to the way in which the work of political philosopher Karl Marx was influential in the formation of social constructionist place theory, the humanistic approach has found particular resonance for its reading of place in the work of twentieth century philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's concepts of *dasein* – or dwelling – and "being in the world" support the notion that humanity does not simply encounter place, but that place is absolutely vital to an individual's sense of identity and continuity. Heidegger's description of a metaphorical farmhouse in the Black Forest has become a seminal passage in the understanding of the phenomenological reading of place.[18] Life and death, gods and mortals, all are embodied in Heidegger's *dasein*/dwelling in the Forest. For Heidegger, life is fundamentally placed. Place is not an auxiliary modality of human existence. It is, rather, fundamental to authentic human existence. To live authentically is fundamental to Heideggerean philosophy. For Heidegger, authenticity is "a form of existence [consisting] of a complete awareness and responsibility for your own existence."[19] In order to live in full awareness and control of oneself, it is absolutely essential that one understand that one functions within a specific place. Thus Heidegger is able to forge a vital link between place and ethics.

However, while Heidegger's discussion of authenticity and the morality of place are foundational to the humanistic perspective on place, it is important to contextualise it by understanding the instinctual role of place in life as experienced by individuals on a day-to-day basis. This is best achieved through an understanding of the chief concept within phenomenology: intentionality. The word "refers to the 'about-ness' of human consciousness. That is to say that we cannot . . . be conscious

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[18] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 22.
[19] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).

without being *conscious of something.* Consciousness constructs a relationship between the self and the world."[20] The construction that occurs here is much more primal than that which takes place within the social constructionist mode of place discussed earlier; it builds the very definition of the self. Put another way, the phenomenological understanding of place use intentionality as the framework for understanding the nature of place as essential to the ways in which individuals exist, understand, and function in the world. Noted place theorist Edward Relph details the philosophical progression from Heidegger's metaphorical farmhouse in the forest to the real life experience of individuals:

> Places are thus incorporated into the intentional structures of all human consciousness and experience. Intentionality recognises that all consciousness is consciousness of something – I cannot do or think except in terms of something . . . Human intentions should not be understood simply in terms of deliberately chosen direction or purpose, but as a relationship between man and the world that gives meaning. Thus the objects and features of the world are experienced *in their meaning* and they cannot be separated from those meanings, for these are conferred by the very consciousness that we have of the objects . . . [It] might be said that all consciousness is not merely consciousness of something, but consciousness of something in its place, and that those places are defined largely in terms of the objects and their meaning . . . Places are . . . basic elements in the ordering of our experiences of the world.[21]

Place, then, cannot be escaped. It is essential to the composition of what many consider to be the distinguishing characteristic of humanity – consciousness. In a contrast to the social constructionists, humanist/phenomenological theories suggest that place is not primarily created by social forces, but emphasize instead the idea of place as a building block for the experiential and cognitive paradigms by which each individual lives his or her life. In essence, it suggests that place is not derivative of ideology, but that ideology is an expression of a life mediated through experience of and in place. Individuals, after all, conceptualise everything from their family – home

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[20] Cresswell, *Place*, 22.
[21] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 42-43.

– to their job – workplace – to their faith – heaven/hell – as possessing, among other things, a distinct quality of being in a place. Place provides the axis for the expression of human awareness and desire. The abstract is actualised in the context of specific places in which those abstractions become experienced "reality."

Consciousness, it is argued, cannot be disconnected from the concept of place, since consciousness is always about experience and experience never occurs apart from place. Logic would follow that the creation of place stems directly from the individual and basic need to authentically encounter the world in which one lives. Building that line of reasoning even further, the intensity of an individual's encounter with, or experience of a place is determined by their active participation in the actions that define the meaning or function of that place. Place is not then primarily a differentiation of one location over another, but is both necessary and universal to the way life is conceived, and therefore, lived.

A Centred Theory of Place

After this brief outline of the terrain of place studies, it becomes important to incorporate the various theories into a framework for a literary analysis of sacred place in the Victorian novel. While establishing theoretical boundaries is helpful when attempting to define the various critical perspectives, a responsible theory of place must inevitably acknowledge that these theories, though different in respect to their emphases, are interdependent. Robert Sack alludes to this dynamic when he writes

> Indeed, privileging the social in modern geography, and especially in the reductionist sense that 'everything is socially constructed,' does as much disservice to geographical analysis as a whole as privileging the natural in the days of environmental determinism or concentrating only on the mental or intellectual in some areas of humanistic geography. While one or other may be

> important for a particular situation at a particular time, none is determinate of the geographical.[22]

While Sack himself tends toward the humanist approach to place, his call for a balanced approach to the discipline is significant. He argues against the extremes of "mental or intellectual" exclusivity in the phenomenological approach as well as the "reductionist sense that 'everything is socially constructed.'" While both are important in particular situations, none, in and of itself, fully defines the nature of place. Here, then, one finds that the critical tools used to analyze place in the descriptive, social constructionist, and the phenomenological/humanist perspective all possess the ability to add depth to a well developed reading of place. The readings are intrinsically interdependent and, as Sack suggests, each becomes important in "particular" situations and times.

An analysis of any literary text provides a variety of "situations and times" that call for different ways of reading place. A strict social constructionist reading of place does not take into account the question of *why* place is such a powerful tool for social manipulation. Similarly, an understanding of place focusing too exclusively on the phenomenological perspective runs the risk of meandering into philosophical abstractions whilst avoiding the real life implications of such theories. Bringing these two ideas together, and allowing each to rise to the surface at various time throughout the analysis, completes the ideological and theoretical deficits inherent in each. The phenomenological argument, by highlighting the fundamental role of place in the construction of consciousness, gives the social constructionist the ability to account for the strength of places as a means of social inclusion and exclusion. And, while the phenomenological is chiefly concerned with the experience of place, the social

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[22] Robert David. Sack, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 2.

constructionist perspective allows that experience to be drawn out from a focus on the individual to the wider social context in which individuals interact with each other, systems, institutions, and those places. What is more, the reciprocal relationship between the social and the philosophical is not an isolated occurrence, but is instead an ongoing dialectic between the two, each finding constant resolution in the other.

The theory of place used within this study will, then, be a part of that ongoing dialectic between social constructionist and phenomenological theories of place, each taking prominence over the other at different points in the analysis. Before addressing the texts under consideration in this study, there are two important aspects of this inquiry that must be addressed. A discussion of place must begin by differentiating the term itself from the closely related word "space." To do so is important precisely because the two terms are often linked and yet the difference between them is of vital importance. Space and place are both concepts that are rarely discussed in informal cultural discourse though their occurrence and influence in the way we articulate and conceive our surroundings is readily apparent. Driving through the countryside, one marvels at the "wide open spaces" or explains to a friend on the phone that the flat he or she is thinking of buying "seems to have so much space to live in." Likewise, a man may ask his neighbour if he and his wife would like to "come around to our place" or tell his visiting relatives the he must take them to dinner at a "lovely little place in the city."

While the phrases above are anecdotal, they do offer significant insight into the distinctions between these two terms. Space possesses materiality, but it is not personalised except in the realm of possibility. Space is open, moving and available, for it encompasses what Eric Dardel calls, "geographical space," including everything from the cliffs and fields that constitute humanity's natural surroundings to the build

environment that fills the urban centres.[23] This has led some place theorists with markedly political readings on the topic to compare the concept of space to the fluidity of the global market economy in which capital can change hands and locales in a matter of seconds. Space is location, but location without attachment.

Though often used interchangeably, place is something else altogether. In *Moby Dick*, the narrator, describing a far away island from which one of the characters came, suggests that the island "is not down in any map; true places never are."[24] While space is taken up with the visible and open surroundings that an individual may encounter, place, as Melville beautifully and succinctly highlights, is much more elusive, private, and closed. Place is owned space; place is owned by virtue of an investment of meaning, reinforced by time and memory, on the part of a person or persons. Edward Relph writes that "space provides the context for places, but derives its meaning from particular places."[25] Space is made up of places, and yet places would not exist without space. The distinction is in the value – spiritual, cultural, emotional, or otherwise – attributed to a particular locale. For the purposes of this study, it is important to recognise that the meaning/value that transforms space into meaningful place need not be the experience of a single individual. Indeed, there exists a cultural consciousness that exits on a global, national, local and even familial level that informs the ways in which we identify particular locations as places as opposed to space.

A Paradigm for Sacred Place

This study, however, does not simply seek to examine the role of place, but of sacred place in particular. Many studies of the nature of sacred place have already

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[23] Eric Dardel, *L'homme et la Terre; Nature de la Réalité Geographique.* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), 35.
[24] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale* (London: Penguin, 2003), 61.
[25] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 2.

been written and any attempt to break any new ground on the topic would stretch beyond the limits of this study. It is, however, important to understand the parameters of this inquiry into sacred place and to differentiate between place in general and sacred place. Of course, this is no simple task; noted philosopher of place Yi-Fu Tuan is correct when he asserts that for "many of us [the word 'sacred'] brings to mind certain images such as a temple, a shrine, or the consecration of a bishop, but if we are to understand the true meaning of 'sacred' we must go beyond these traditional culture-bound images to their common experiential ground." [26] Tuan's assertion here underscores potential challenges inherent in a meaningful discussion of sacred place. It is important, then, to take time to establish a paradigm for sacred place that will allow this research project to move forward. In the sections that follow, I will seek to establish a working definition for sacred place and, in so doing, distinguish it from the much broader category of place generally.

Affective Dimensions of Sacred Place

Time was taken earlier in this chapter to differentiate between space and place. One will recall that a given space is transformed into place when an individual or group experiences a kind of attachment to a particular locale. Put another way, place and space are fields of perception – existential categories imposed upon a given physical locale based upon the nature of experience with and within that locale. However, once the move from space to place occurs, one would be hard pressed to make the argument that all places are the same. Indeed, places elicit varying degrees of personal investment based upon a variety of factors. The length of time spent in a particular place, the nature of experience with a place, and the force of social opinion

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[26] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Sacred Space: Explorations of an Idea," in *Dimensions of Human Geography: Essays on Some Familiar and Neglected Themes*, ed. Karl W. Butzer (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography, 1978), 84.

regarding a certain place all contribute to the level of connection between the individual and a given place. This connection is characterized by a dynamic reciprocity:

> [T]he individual does more than experience and 'record' the physical environment. The person's needs and desires may be gratified to varying degrees, and there can be little doubt that physical settings vary from one time to the next in their capacity to satisfy these needs and desires. Out of these 'good' and 'bad' experiences emerge particular values, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about the physical world – about what is good, acceptable, and not so good – that serve to define and integrate the place-identity of the individual.[27]

Place is, then, both a thing and a phenomenon; place is an external representation of an internal human dynamic. As I suggested earlier in this study, individuals use place to understand the world, others, and the self. Place becomes a tool for the fulfilment of "needs" and "desires," for the development of "values" and "beliefs." While this interplay between individual and locale occurs with place generally, I would suggest that it is uniquely heightened when the focus shifts to questions of place and the sacred. For the religious believer, the shift from space to sacred place offers the individual the opportunity to satisfy needs and desires in a way that differs from all other kinds of place-attachments. Religious faith poses questions of divine mystery, purpose, and transcendence. What is more, religious belief, perhaps more than any other existential conviction, requires its adherents to embrace the ambiguity of personal belief without tangible proof of the veracity of that belief.

These insights are vitally important for an understanding of sacred place. The "needs and desires" that find fulfilment in sacred place mirror the human impulse toward religious faith: an attempt to grasp the organizing principle of existence itself. Put another way, the heightened sense of attachment individuals experience with

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[27] H.M. Proshansky, A.F. Fabian, and R. Kaminoff, "Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3, no. 1 (1983): 59-60.

sacred place is born from the desire to see "the picture [individuals] have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order."[28] Sacred place, then, acts as a kind of sacrament. It imbues the physical locale with transcendent importance; sacred place becomes the actualization of spiritual and theological belief and provides an invaluable way in which the believer can tangibly experience his or her faith. This experience of sacred place is highly charged for the religious individual, group, or culture, eliciting a set of affective responses that are unique to sacred place. These spatial encounters yield "a certain distinctive set of dispositions . . . moods and motivations . . . moods we lump together under such covering terms as 'reverential', 'solemn', or 'worshipful . . . The moods that sacred symbols induce, at different times and in different places range from exultation, to melancholy, from self-confidence to self-pity."[29] In this way, sacred places temper the ambiguities and tensions of religious faith by providing an experience of divine reality within the spatial field.

Social Dimensions of Sacred Place

Sacred place is highly personal in the way in which it orders an individual's priorities, experiences, and emotions. However, the degree to which sacred place acts upon an individual is inextricably linked to the broader social reality in which the person lives and the place exists. As I asserted in my theory of place in general, the way in which place orders the very foundation of human experience is precisely the reason why culture has used and continues to use the power of place to social ends. Sacred place is unique not only in its ability to allow the faithful to encounter the

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[28] Clifford Geertz, "Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.
[29] Geertz, "Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion," 8-11; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

numinous but, by virtue of its spatio-representational position within the theologically-conceived cosmic order, it becomes a place of distinction and demarcation. In this way, sacred place does not only act upon an individual, but it becomes an *act* of community; it solidifies a code of character and practice that reifies the boundaries of a given religious tradition. Geographer David Sibley, who, like Michel Foucault (1926-1984), asserts that sacred place is paradigmatic for the idea of place divided based upon the politics of exclusion and identity, suggests that "built environments assume symbolic importance, reinforcing a desire for order and conformity . . . [I]n this way, space is implicated in the construction of deviancy. Pure spaces expose difference and facilitate the policing of boundaries."[30] By virtue of its tangibility, the spatial field provides individuals with the means by which to establish boundaries that are more readily visible and enforceable than the fluid and elusive boundaries of faith, belief, honor, and fidelity. Put another way, sacred place allows individuals within a given religious community to experience moral and ethical boundaries in a physical as opposed to an existential sense.

The social dimension of sacred place is, in part, an effort to establish a kind of order, a kind of purity, an idealized place in which there exists a standard of belief, behaviour and identity. In her excellent work dealing with boundaries, identity, and the sacred, Mary Douglas writes, "ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between *within* and *without*, *about* and *below*, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of

[30] For Foucault on the centrality of sacred place see Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22, 23, 24.; David. Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 86.

order is created."[31] The establishment of sacred place, then, is an act of spatio-social consecration in which individuals "inside" are those who believe and conduct themselves according to the codes of a given religion. These boundaries ensure a moral and theological homogeneity – a safe place in which the faithful can avoid the risk of spiritual and even physical defilement.

This erection of boundaries that separate from and distinguish between sacred and non-sacred/profane/secular places constructs a vital sense of belonging and community by asserting a distinct identity. In his critique of culture, sociologist Keith Tester asserts that "without boundaries, without direction and location, social and cultural activity would itself be a simply pointless thrashing about in the world."[32] Place, location, and boundaries provide the individual with a spatial matrix for the limits of the self – an idea of who he or she is *in relation to* others. The work of distinguishing the self is the work of identity formation but this work is always relational – in relation to others and to place.[33] Individual identity built through encounter with a given sacred place is echoed, never erased, with the communal identity built by an agreed upon knowledge of and experience with that sacred place.

The identification, possession and regulation of a sacred place, while constituted by individual experience, are rarely the result of individual actions alone. In part, sacred place is an attempt to impose a divine framework over the experienced

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[31] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), 5.
[32] *The Life and Times of Post-Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1993), 8.
[33] Interestingly, the relationship between spatial boundaries and individual and group identity has been researched and discussed by many within the social sciences, including Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, "Questions about Identity in International Relations," in *International Relations Theory Today*, ed. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 279-305; Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6-23; T. K. Oommen, "Contested Boundaries and Emerging Pluralism," *International Sociology* 10, no. 3 (September 1, 1995): 251-268; Robert R. Alvarez, "The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 447-470.

social order – to insist that the sacred can be realized in the spatio-temporal reality in which humanity lives. This imposition of a personal, social and ideological religious framework over and, and at times against, a particular place is, at its most basic level, an act of narrativisation. Places are repositories of meaning and, as such, hold layers of narratives. Foundational to the important work of philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) is the way in which narrative is an instinctual human response – or working-out – of the experience of time. He begins his three-volume *Time and Narrative* by boldly asserting that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organised after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence."[34] For Ricœur, humanity narrativises experience in order to make sense of individual and communal perceptions of reality. However, while Ricœur's work emphasizes the temporality of narrative, he cannot deny that narrative, and indeed temporality, are inextricably linked to the spatial order:

> The spatial and temporal planes of expressing point of view are of prime interest to us. It is first of all the spatial perspective . . . that serves as a metaphor for all other points of view. The development of a narrative always involves a combination of purely perceptual perspectives, implying position, angle of aperture, and depth of field.[35]

For Ricœur, the narrative contextualization of human experience requires perspective, a quality with undeniable spatial implications. What is important about Ricœur's argument for the purposes of this study is that narratives are fundamentally place-based. If human experience is narrativised and narratives are placed-based, then it seems logical to infer that places are, by nature, constructed by narrative.

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[34] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.
[35] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 94.

These insights have important implications for the nature of sacred place. The essential nature of a given sacred place is wrapped up in the narrative stratification that has, in a sense, coded the meanings of that locale. Catherine Brace writes that, "all religions construct space and time through their own specific ontological commitments, and so it follows that, in order to understand the nature of religious landscapes, representations and practices, work must be contextualized within a temporal and spatial framework that is cognisant of these commitments."[36] The contextualization of sacred place within "a temporal and spatial framework" is, in a Ricœurean sense, narrative. Put another way, sacred places tell stories – oftentimes competing stories – of meaning.

It is important to turn briefly to these narratives of sacred place. As I have suggested, these narratives can be complementary but are most often in a constant struggle for primacy in an attempt to define the nature of a sacred place. The effort to control the "spatial discourse" of a sacred place is uniquely heightened by the fact that, as Brace suggests, the narratives of sacred place are intimately connected with questions of transcendence; to a large extent, the narrativisation of sacred place inevitably defines the terms by which an individual or community defines the personal or group sense of identity and, ultimately, experiences the divine. In his excellent article on the identity of community, Matthew Kurtz suggests that

> Where identity is presumed, it becomes the encouragements of linear history and prevailing memory in the reproduction of a category. Where history is presumed, it becomes a momentary ontological grounding that says, 'something like this really happened'. Where identity is performed, it becomes a momentary, fluid, and potentially novel arrangement of categories and distinctions always contingently put into play. Where history is performed, it becomes an always indeterminate claim that articulates past events within the present. Such a dialectic of representation might be useless in a project

[36] "Religion, Place and Space: A Framework for Investigating Historical Geographies of Religious Identities and Communities," *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 31.

> working toward resolution, synthesis, and stability. However, if one's objective is to denaturalize a powerful image like that of settled community, then this dialectic subtly relocates methodology in historical geography such that a 'community' can clearly oscillate, without a point of equilibrium, between its being presumed in remembrance and performed in re-membering.[37]

Kurtz implies that identity is not something that is native to a given place; instead, as I argued earlier, the identity of place is something that is derived from the tension between both complimentary and competing narratives of spatial identity. This pattern of identity from conflict is never-ending as places are conformed to a particular spatial identity – what Kurtz calls a spatial identity "presumed in remembrance" -- while competing narratives attempt to "re-member" the identity of place through "performance."

Henri Lefebvre: A Framework for Working with Sacred Place

What is intriguing about this dialectic – as Kurtz rightly calls it – is that it does not seek to define the nature of place, but, instead, to explore the competing modalities of understanding and experiencing place. Such work is vitally important to establishing the paradigm of sacred place in this study. The notion of spatial dialectics and the sacred has been addressed in the work of noted philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) Lefebvre proposes a triad of spatial modalities that interact dialectically throughout history, culture, and even within a single moment of perception:

> Relations between the three movements . . . are never either simple or stable . . . Are these moments and their interconnections in fact conscious? Yes – but at the same time they are disregarded and misconstrued. Can they be described as 'unconscious?' Yes again, because they are generally unknown, and because analysis is able . . . to rescue them from obscurity.[38]

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[37] "Re/membering the Town Body: Methodology and the Work of Local History," *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, no. 1 (January 2002): 53.
[38] *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 46.

Lefebvre's triad and his theory of interaction between them are notable for this sense of dynamism. Indeed, Heidegger's phenomenology, with its emphasis on experience, was present in his work, though, admittedly, Lefebvre was not always positive in his reading of Heidegger.[39] At the same time, Lefebvre was a markedly political philosopher and his work on issues of spatiality was never far removed from the social sphere, a point evidenced from the title of his seminal work *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre's dual focus, then, echoes the theory of place articulated earlier in this study; Lefebvre conceives of place as both personal and social and, perhaps more importantly, proposes that these two aspects of place are in constant dialogue, the former informing the latter and vice versa, over the course of time. Lefebvre's theories of spatiality do not, of course, deal exclusively with the issue of sacred place. However, Lefebvre was keenly aware of the way in which religious belief was inextricably linked to the spatial order and, perhaps most importantly, the interdependent way in which his theoretical "realms" function demonstrate the tension that exists between religion as a private commitment with decidedly social implications. I will briefly introduce his spatial triad and then move to an explanation of its benefit to understanding the nature of sacred place within this study.

Lefebvre begins his discussion of place by introducing the realm of "spatial practice." This mode of spatiality refers to the ways in which individuals live within space in order to create meaning within that space.[40] This "practice" often takes place

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[39] For Lefebvre on Heidegger see Kostas Axelos et al., "Karl Marx et Heidegger," in *Arguments d'une Recherche.* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 93-105; Henri Lefebvre, "The Worldwide Experience (from *De l'Etat*, Vol IV, 1978)," in *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, ed. Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman (London: Continuum, 2003), 199-205; For Lefebvre on Heidegger see Stuart Elden, "Between Marx and Heidegger: Politics, Philosophy and Lefebvre's *The Production of Spac*e," *Antipode* 36, no. 1 (2004): 86-105.

[40] Lefebvre does not establish a differentiation between space and place; while he does not distinguish between these terms, he does make it clear that he is aware of the

with little awareness that a unique space – with unique implications – is being constructed. It "ensures continuity and a degree of cohesion . . . [This] cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and *performance*."[41] Spatial practice is

> the production and reproduction of specific places and spatial 'ensembles' appropriate to social formation . . . Through everyday practice, 'space' is dialectically produced as 'human space'. This production is not *ex nihilo* – as if space comes into being from a pre-existing, non-spatial practice that 'secretes' space. Rather a particular form of space, or spatialisation, is created out of the *matériel*, the bits and pieces of arrangements and territories that are our historical patrimony. It is our legacy to create our own spatiality . . . [42]

Particularly important in regards to Lefebvre's spatial practice is that the creation of these "human spaces" encompasses both the "everyday" routines of life as well as the more formalised practices reinforced by political, cultural, and institutional authority.[43] Individuals practice/perform in such a way as to create a "sense of place" within a given space for, as Lefebvre writes, "space commands bodies, prescribing and proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered."[44] In this way, spatial practice is highly personal *and* intensely social – even hegemonic.

Lefebvre, however, acknowledges the difficulty inherent in attempting to disentangle the various layers of practice occurring within a given social system. Lefebvre writes in opposition to the idea that practices that create social spaces can be easily "read" that "natural and urban spaces are, if anything 'over-inscribed': everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory. Rather

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fundamental difference between spaces that possess social meaning and those that do not. This distinction is, of course, the foundation for the difference between "space" and "place" in this study.

[41] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33.

[42] Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love, and Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1999), 162.

[43] It should be noted that Lefebvre was noted as a philosopher of the everyday and spent considerable energy developing this concept within his philosophical system. See Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1 (London: Verso, 1991); Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 3 (London: Verso, 2005); Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life.*, vol. 2 (London: Verso, 2002).

[44] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 143.

than signs, what one encounters here are directions – multifarious and overlapping instructions . . . That space signifies is incontestable . . . But what it signifies is dos and don't and this brings us back to power."[45] Spatial practice, then, is a kind of "language" that once interpreted holds the potential to reveal the systems of power within a given culture. Lefebvre, however, suggests that this kind of "reading" is relentlessly difficult to decipher given the tendency of spatial practices/signs to collapse in on themselves.

Lefebvre's second spatial modality is "representations of space." While all aspects of Lefebvre's triad are social, representations of space are, in a very important sense, conceptual in nature; they are abstracted from the social realm in that they are, as Lefebvre puts it, the accumulation of ideas "conceived" about space. Whereas spatial practice had to do with the space created by the *actions* of individuals and society, these spaces are the tangible, built representations of cultural knowledge, intellect, and ideology. As such, Lefebvre suggests that representations of space are the work of "scientists, planners, urbanists, . . . and social engineers" and is the "dominant space in any society."[46] These abstract conceptions about space become manifest in the concrete spatial order by "their intervention . . . by way of architecture. [This is] conceived of not as the building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for 'representations' that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms."[47] Lefebvre recognises that constructed space not neutral; it is the spatial realization of a system of thought about how reality works and, perhaps most importantly, the place of individuals, groups, and cultures within that reality. This is

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[45] Ibid., 142.
[46] Ibid., 38-39.
[47] Ibid., 42.

why Lefebvre suggests that representations of space constitute "the history of ideologies."[48] Knowledge and ideological content are made manifest in these built spaces and inevitably control the action and discourse that take place there. In this way, ideologies become solidified in the spatial realm, forever standing as a representative of a particular mode of thought and a conduit for a particular pattern of practice.

The third and final aspect of Lefebvre's spatial triad is known as "representational space." As the name suggests, this space is an inversion of the aforementioned spaces of representation in that it addresses the tendency of individuals, groups, and cultures to build abstraction from the built environment. In this way, representational space is the space created by the experience of a given space. These experiences are intimately connected to and even "dominated" by the ideological content communicated through the representations of space.[49]

However, it is important to note that representational spaces are more dynamic and intimate, less linear, than the more systematic and controlled representations of space. Representational space is "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users.'"[50] There is a sense of immediacy to representational space that holds the ability to subvert existing spatio-discursive "realities." Representational space is layered over physical space and that individuals make "symbolic use of its objects."[51] Lefebvre further highlights the distinction between these spaces and representations of space by suggesting that, while the latter establishes a kind of history of ideologies, representational spaces

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[48] Ibid., 116.
[49] Ibid., 39.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

> have their source . . . in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people . . . [Aspects of representational space include] childhood memories, dreams, or uterine images and symbols (holes, passages, labyrinths). [It] is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre . . . It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situation, and thus immediately implies time . . . [It] is essentially qualitative, fluid, and dynamic.[52]

The dynamism, then, of representational space in many ways stands in opposition to the closed horizon of spatial interpretation that characterises representations of space. Indeed, Lefebvre suggests that representations of space "leave only the narrowest leeway to representational spaces."[53] Representations of space construct spaces that monumentalize abstract ideologies. Representational space, as the space created by the *experience* of those representations, must be controlled in order to maintain spatio-discursive hegemony. However, this exertion of control is complex and never absolute, a fact Lefebvre subtly acknowledges when he writes that representational space is "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art."[54] Later, he suggests that "it is only by way of revolt" that individuals have any hope of creating new spaces – new representational spaces – to supplant the spatial and ideological domination that exists within a particular locale as a result of representations of space.[55] Here, then, Lefebvre echoes Harvey's theory of militant particularism – a revolution to define the nature of a given place in opposition to the existing meaning imposed upon it by social elites.

I began this brief review of Lefebvre's triad by asserting that this model would prove useful as a way to understand the way in which sacred place is defined and operates within this particular research project. Again, it is important to assert that the dialectical nature of the triad is perhaps its greatest strength for the purposes of this

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[52] Ibid., 41-42.
[53] Ibid., 50.
[54] Ibid., 33.
[55] Ibid., 50.

study. Lefebvre does not clearly delineate between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space; all are constantly at play within a given space – or, to locate this discussion within the framework of this project, place. They are unable to exist independent of one another. Spatial practice is the way in which the prevailing ideology of representations of space and the revolutionary ethos of representational space come to create the desired physical and psychical spatial "reality." At the same time, a fully rendered representation of space depends upon a properly regulated experience of representational space in order to ensure that the "intervention" of ideology becomes individual and social dogma – that ideology becomes culture.[56] Sacred place, as suggested earlier in this section, is not entirely social; neither is it entirely individual. Sacred place is a complex concept that is derived from and interacts with both the individual and society in distinct and significant ways at the same time. Lefebvre's triad provides an important theoretical framework for this spatial interdependence.

Secondly, while the overall dialectical functioning of Lefebvre's spatial triad is indeed paradigmatic for this inquiry into sacred space, it is crucial to briefly underscore the ways in which the individual aspects of the triad are themselves helpful starting points for understanding the way in which sacred place functions within this study. Each of the three unique expressions of space, though not dealing directly with issues of the sacred, contributes to a more developed exploration and definition of sacred place.

Lefebvre's concept of spatial practice is integral to sacred spatiality in that it highlights the importance of human action in the creation – even the consecration – of

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[56] There are, of course, other possibilities of dialectical interdependence within Lefebvre's triad. For an intriguing and helpful example of this model see Lefebvre's description of leisure, capitalism, and the Mediterranean, Ibid., 58-59.

a sacred place. An analysis of the way in which practice acts upon space allows for the nuance necessary to attempt a reading of the multiple, often contradictory, layers of sacred identification and identity that exist within a given locale. As I suggested earlier in this introduction, a close examination of spatial practice is complex; it is, however, necessary for a mature assessment of the sacred when one considers that religion inevitably makes demands on the way in which individuals conduct themselves – the way that they act – in the world. Spatial practice is, then, sacramental, and the way the faithful dress, stand, kneel, eat, pray, speak, and worship become meaningful expressions of the origins, nature, and values of a particular sacred place. These behaviours become ingrained, become ritualised, but this ritualisation does not occur within a vacuum. Kim Knott, in her excellent work on sacred spatiality, argues that the "cultural meaning of . . . ritual needs a place to be played out, whether a social space between ritual subjects, between subject and object, whether a sacrificial space, a space of liberation, or ritual conferment or of service. Sacred space is not the stimulus for ritual; ritual, as sacred-making behaviour, brings about 'sacred' space."[57] Sacred place is made sacred by the practices that occur within a given locale. Lefebvre's acknowledgement of this subtle yet profound reality within his spatial model heightens the importance of place within the matrix of human spirituality by suggesting an intimate and essential connection between action and locale; religion is not only about what one does or does not do, but it is also fundamentally about how those actions or inactions create realities within the spatial field.

The final two aspects of Lefebvre's triad, representations of space and representational space, express the tension that exists between the personal and the

[57] *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005), 43.

social dynamics within the experience of sacred place. The concept of representations of space asserts that places are constructed is an attempt to turn abstract ideology into tangible reality; this act of building monumentalises a system of beliefs within the spatial order and, in so doing, establishes a more permanent and reliable access point for the perpetuation of discursive power. Approaching the concept of sacred place with Lefebvre's representations of space in mind, one inquires about the degree to which the construction of a church, cathedral, or missionary society is intended to disseminate a particular way of seeing the world. Indeed, the survival of religious traditions is, in large part, dependent upon propagating the belief in a fundamentally abstract and transcendent reality. If one draws from the perspective of Lefebvre's spatial triad, the construction of a new sacred place is an attempt to signal a sense of viability, permanence and stability to a particular religious system of abstractions. This space inevitably directs belief and encourages certain kinds of practice that reinforce the discourse of religious belief.

Inversely, the concept of representational space suggests that individual and collective experience of a particular place holds the potential to either comply with or subvert the prevailing spatial discourse communicated via the representation of space. In the case of the former, individuals succumb to a pattern of the discursive domination of space. However, in the case of the latter, individuals create a "new" place by experiencing, advocating, and, indeed, practicing an alternative spatial reality within a given locale. When one examines representational space in light of religious faith, one reveals sacred places as sites of ideological, theological, and even cosmic contestation. Lefebvre notes that representational space cannot be mastered and that it is the least systemic of his spatial triad. In this way, his theories would seem to imply that sacred places are never settled, always in flux, always subject to ideological re-

envisioning. This assertion is of tremendous importance for the concept of sacred place. Individuals are culturally conditioned – perhaps through the influence of Lefebvre's representations of space – to hold place associations as static – especially when the discussion shifts to places with highly charged and sacred associations such as churches and cathedrals. This is the reason why groups like the Churches Conservation Trust make such a great effort to maintain sacred places throughout England; it is upsetting for many to consider the prospect of churches that do not maintain their physical, associative, or functional purposes. The reality, however, is that these sacred places are always subject to transformation "because they are dynamic, being made up of changing constituencies of people who adhere to them. As social bodies that either adapt to their contexts or die, they are engaged in a continuous process of renewal."[58] This challenge to the spatio-spiritual discourse of sacred places and the idea that sacred places are not fixed in their associations are central to the reading of sacred place within this research project.

Finally, though *Production of Space* is not expressly a discussion of sacred place, Lefebvre does spend considerable time addressing the issue of the sacred within the spatial field within that work. Most of his discussions regarding the sacred, and Christianity in particular, centre on his theories of absolute and abstract space. For Lefebvre, these are the two broad periods within the history of space and, in turn, of ideology, thought, and culture. For Lefebvre, absolute space was constructed using "fragments of nature" at sites chosen because of their natural qualities. Central to the concept of absolute place is the assertion that these spaces were imbued with political and religious importance by means of a "symbolic mediation" – a kind of

[58] Ibid., 54.

consecration.[59] In this way, Lefebvre squarely aligns his concept of absolute space within the religious tradition:

> [A]bsolute space is . . . a highly activated space, a receptacle for, and stimulant to, both social energies and natural forces. At once mythical and proximate, it generates times, cycles . . . It has no place because it embodies all places, and has a strictly symbolic existence . . . It consecrates, and consecration metaphysically identifies any space with fundamentally holy space; the space of a sanctuary *is* absolute space, even in the smallest temple or the most unpretentious village church.[60]

The process of transforming these sites from nature to absolute space consecrated the spaces but inevitably robbed them of their "natural character and uniqueness."[61] Though obscured by this process, absolute space survives as the "basis of representational spaces (religious, magical, and political symbolisms).[62] Lefebvre's use of representational space here suggests that, though the operation of power was not absent from absolute space, there was an emphasis within this spatial period on the intimate and generative experience of space, and sacred place in particular, as fundamental to the conception of life.

Lefebvre asserts that abstract space gained prominence over absolute space as the town gained prominence over the countryside in terms of social importance. He argues that this "force of history smashed naturalness forever and upon its ruins established the place of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art and symbols)."[63] Space became abstracted from experience and, as such, the experiential-lived aspect of spatial reality was subsumed by a mode of spatiality that worked "as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships . . . Formal and quantitative, it erases

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[59] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 48.
[60] Ibid., 236.
[61] Ibid., 48.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 49.

distinctions . . . [T]he bureaucratic and political authoritarianism immanent to a repressive space is everywhere."[64] This is, then, the rise of a kind of spatial hegemony – a space whose authority stems from ideology as opposed to experience. This has substantial implications for discussions of religion as Lefebvre notes that abstract space "relates negatively to that which perceives and underpins it – namely, the historical and religio-political spheres . . . [Instead it relates favourably concerning its] own implications: technology, applied sciences, and knowledge bound to power."[65] The belief in transcendence disappears and is replaced by a spatial philosophy that is "locus, medium, and tool of 'positivity.'"[66] The unity of time and space has been torn apart in abstract space and the individual is now subject to a new set of spatio-discursive realities. These new realities, a "secularised space" according to Lefebvre, begin a process by which individuals are increasingly alienated from virtually every aspect of their lives, including the spaces they inhabit.

Lefebvre's theory of absolute and abstract periods of spatialisation underscores the degree to which intellectual history, notions of the sacred, and spatiality are intimately linked. What is perhaps more important is that Lefebvre acknowledges that the impressions of sacred place are not static; they undergo radical changes over time. These changes occur in response to factors beyond the traditional realm of the sacred. In Lefebvre's theory, the way in which sacred place is conceptualised in a given culture is inseparable from the economic, political, and scientific life of that culture. Here again, Lefebvre provides a foundation for explaining the multiple influences upon sacred place by other cultural factors as well

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 50.
[66] Ibid.

as the radical changes in the conceptualisation of the sacred place across time. Both of these characteristics of sacred place will play an important role in this study.

Questions of Presence: Finding Sacred Place in Both a Global and Local Sense

Philosopher of place Edward Casey, in his seminal work *The Fate of Place*, maps the trajectory of the concept of place from antiquity through to the present. The work is staggering in its breadth. Perhaps most importantly, its historical perspective on the philosophical understandings of place, and indeed their effects upon the Christian concepts of place and the Divine, reveal that sacred place operates under a more expanded sense of locality than place in general. Put another way, the framework of sacred place holds the possibility of folding traditionally sacred sites such as churches, cathedrals, and graveyards *into* the idea of a world, even a universe, that is itself sacred in its own right.

Central to his work is the steady "ascendancy of space over place" that has occurred throughout western philosophical and theological history.[67] In tracking this movement, Casey identifies the work of philosophers and theologians in twelfth and thirteenth century Europe as vital to this transformation. French medieval philosopher Nicole Oresme (c.1323-1382) and Oxford don, theologian and, briefly, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Bradwardine (1290-1349) became important figures in the evolution of a series of philosophical and theological movements, originating in the late thirteenth century, designed to combat "doctrines that denied or limited the power of God."[68] These two men, along with many of their contemporaries, considered the intersection between the physical and spiritual – and, more specifically, the spatial and the spiritual – as a fitting battleground for these philosophical and theological wars; if, as human experience seemed to reflect,

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[67] Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 129.
[68] Ibid., 107.

humanity is bound by our common spatiality, to what extent must those who hold to the omnipotence of God express the transcendence of the Divine over the fixity of space and, to a greater extent, place? Oresme, arguing for the expansive power and presence of God in a series of careful philosophical movements, suggests "outside the heavens . . . is an empty incorporeal space quite different from any other plenum or corporeal space." From here, Casey observes that this "space" could be "recharacterised in terms of divinity rather than sheer physicality."[69] God occupies this infinite space, for to reason otherwise would suggest that the divine was rivalled in his infinity. Oresme concludes that God must occupy the places that exist within that infinite space. In that way, Oresme is able to suggest that God is "necessarily all in every extension or space *or place* which exists or can be imagined (emphasis mine)."[70]

Similarly, Bradwardine, regarded by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* as standing alongside both Augustine and Boethius in his learned stature,[71] makes a series of subtle yet important arguments that allow him to assert that the "place of God" is without limit. In his most influential work *De causa Dei contra Pelagium* (completed by 1344), Bradwardine recognises that the existence of God in this infinite space could be misconstrued as a "deus ex machina, invoked only in order to ensure that God has a proper place in which to exist . . . Its existence would be merely tautological in status, a conceptual redundancy, part of God's definition."[72] In order to clarify this potential misconception, Bradwardine suggests that this void, this space,

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[69] Ibid., 111.
[70] Nicole Oresme and Albert Douglas Menut, *Nicole Oresme, Highlights from his French Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1979)., 179.
[71] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 225.
[72] Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 112-113.

has parts that can be divided up. In doing so, Bradwardine theologically frames the existential realisation that humanity "presupposes a system of cosmos, a system of meaningful places."[73] In a series of arguments, he is able to use these distinct parts as aspects of space – some of them defined as place – in which God exists. What is more, God's simultaneous existence in these places serves to solidify his omnipotent perfection:

> God is necessarily everywhere in the world and all its parts.[74]
>
> God persists essentially by Himself in every place, eternally and immovably everywhere.[75]
>
> [It] is more perfect to be everywhere in some place, and simultaneously in many places, than in a unique place only.[76]

Bradwardine builds upon the notion of God as inextricably linked with the infinite spatial void first posited in the previous century by locating the Divine in the various localities of that void's matrix of existence. Bradwardine's third premise demonstrates a deft philosophical reasoning as it argues that God is indeed "more perfect" by virtue of his existence in multiple places simultaneously unlike the spatial fixity of the created order.

The work of Oresme, Bradwardine, and other scholars, philosophers, and theologians throughout the Middle Ages initiated what was arguably the first formalised discussion on the spatiality of the Divine. One may argue that the language of theology was, of course, common currency for such philosophical discussions during the thirteenth and fourteenth century and, as such, these writings bear little

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[73] Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Meaning in Architecture," in *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and George Baird (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 225-226.
[74] Thomas Bradwardine, "from *De Causa Dei Contra Pelagium*," in *A Source Book in Medieval Science*, ed. Edward Grant, trans. Edward Grant (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 556.
[75] Ibid., 559.
[76] Ibid.

upon the state of late-nineteenth-century Christian thought and practice. I would agree that to assert that the writings of these two men possessed a *direct* influence upon Victorian Christianity is difficult to substantiate. Such an objection, however, misses the mark. Oresme, Bradwardine, and many of their contemporaries are illustrative of a seminal philosophical and theological movement that, while it had its formalised beginnings in the medieval era, was able to establish the philosophical and logical foundations for spatio-theological theories of the Divine. These theories, though abstract, provide a historical, theological, and theoretical model for the popular notion amongst Christians that God is not limited to specific places, but, rather, that he exists in multiple places simultaneously and that for the orthodox believer to suggest otherwise would be to limit the power of God.

Much more recently, author Wesley Kort echoes the basic theoretical tenets of Oresme and Bradwardine in his work on place and literature. Kort identifies three different kinds of place-relations from his study of modernist fictional narratives. For Kort, place relations imply the way in which characters within a work of fiction understand themselves to "be placed." Though not directly invoking the name of God, he affirms that an individual within a narrative exists within both a local and global places:

> One kind of place relation can be housed under the category of 'cosmic or comprehensive space.' This is a sense of place within a space that precedes, outstrips, and includes humans and their constructions. Often this kind of place-relation is associated with nature, but nature, by the close of the nineteenth century, has become sufficiently problematized to prohibit its simple identification with comprehensive space . . . natural locations or situations often are used to suggest or represent cosmic or comprehensive space, but such space is not, without qualification, identifiable as natural space.[77]

[77] Wesley Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 19-20.

Kort asserts that humans understand themselves as "placed" within both localised and globalised places. As Heidegger noted, individuals sense that they are inside of a particular space and that that space is, by virtue of their presence within it, a place, though, admittedly, only in the broadest sense of the term. Within that much larger place, there exist places set apart by their particular associations. By virtue of his nature and being, God, the faithful would assert, occupies and exerts his divine will within both of these kinds of places. It is, then, the occupation and exertion of will within a given place that comes to set it apart, to one degree or another, as sacred.

Limiting the Scope of Inquiry: Faith and Sacred Place

Finally, this study operates within a very limited frame of reference to the divine. In order to sufficiently limit the scope of inquiry, I will be examining narrative representations of places that reflect the presence of the Christian God. Of course, the Christian faith was by no means the only brand of spirituality in existence in the nineteenth century. Many excellent studies have been produced detailing the vast array of religious and supernatural beliefs in that period.[78] However, the dominant metaphysical narrative of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the Christian faith and it occupied most, but not all, of the portrayal of the sacred in Victorian literature.

Conclusions

What becomes apparent, then, is that the analysis of sacred place in these two novels will be both traditional and innovative. Places that have long been identified as sacred within Christianity – the churches, cathedrals, and cemeteries that constitute

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[78] See Israel Finestein, *Jewish Society in Victorian England: Collected Essays* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993); Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment : British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room : Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); See Shahin Kuli Khan Khattak, *Islam and the Victorians: Nineteenth Century Perceptions of Muslim Practices and Beliefs* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008).

the traditional sacred – will play a pivotal part in the course of this project. However, the application of sacred place will extend to missionary societies, cities, and the world itself. While some may argue that this expansive definition stretches the notion of sacred place beyond recognition, I suggest that each of these "unorthodox" sacred places are viable and, what is more, are consistent with the way in which spatiality and place are addressed within each respective novel. Far from diluting the analysis of sacred place, the identification of these non-traditional sacred places enlivens and adds texture to the analysis of faith in both *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure*.

Sacred Place in Victorian England

Time has been taken throughout this study to trace the development of philosophical, scientific, historical, and ideological ideas of place and the sacred across a broad span of time. However, as I have indicated, this study seeks to examine the notion of sacred place in nineteenth-century England. It seems appropriate, then, to briefly touch upon theories and controversies concerning sacred place during this period of time. This brief examination is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of thought regarding sacred place in the nineteenth century; rather, I will illustrate various ways in which members of Victorian culture – critics, clergy, government officials, and the public – thought about, interacted with, and negotiated the idea of sacred place. The insight provided will serve to more firmly establish this research project and, more importantly, contextualise it within the broader discursive framework of the nineteenth century.

Any discussion of sacred place in the Victorian era will inevitably impinge on the well-known and widely-discussed theories of A.W.N. Pugin (1812-1852) and John Ruskin (1819-1900). The work of these two men wed architecture, society, and religious ideology in a way that made a significant and lasting impact in era marked

by an almost unprecedented expansion of knowledge, ideas, *and* building. The physical and architectural landscape of the nineteenth century was dominated by a resurgence – perhaps reappropriation is a more fitting word – of the Gothic tradition within England and, indeed, throughout much of the Europe and America. This Gothic Revival, as the movement came to be known, while populated with talented and vocal advocates and detractors, was dominated by the ideas of these two figures.[79] These ideas were not primarily focused on the nature of architecture and building; instead, both Pugin and Ruskin viewed architecture, and sacred architecture in particular, through the lens of social and moral ideology. In keeping with that tradition in their work, it seems fitting to briefly consider how Pugin and Ruskin's theories of social relationships expressed through the medium of sacred architecture.

Although Pugin was born into an established Protestant family, the most influential aspects of his architectural career are inextricably linked to his conversion to Catholicism at the age of twenty-three. Pugin contested the notion that his decision to convert was driven primarily by his fascination with Catholic architecture, arguing instead that "I gladly surrendered my own fallible judgement to the unerring decisions of the church, and embracing with heart and soul its faith and discipline, became a

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[79] While any discussion of either Pugin or Ruskin will inevitably touch upon the nineteenth century fascination with Gothic architecture, a formal and in depth exploration of the Gothic Revival will not be attempted in this research project. For important scholarship regarding the origins, history, and impact of the Gothic Revival, consider Basil Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century: A Study of the Gothic Revival in England* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969); Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay on the History of Taste*, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1995); James Stevens Curl, *Victorian Architecture: Diversity and Invention* (Reading: Spire Books, 2007); Roger Dixon, *Victorian Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Charles Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival in England* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1872); Michael Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002); Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

humble . . . [and] faithful member."[80] Whatever the case, Pugin's newfound Catholic faith impacted the young architect in a way that forged a lasting link between his architectural aesthetic and his religious faith. Prior to his conversion, Pugin was clearly an admirer and a student of the Gothic architectural aesthetic; he worked closely with his father Augustus Charles Pugin, a notable figure in the Gothic Revival that had begun in England in the mid-eighteenth century[81] It seems, however, that the younger Pugin's conversion to Catholicism infused his esteem for the Gothic with a sense of spiritual and moral urgency. His work became more strident and prescriptive in its tone as he began to assert a relationship between Gothic architecture and a culture's moral and religious condition. In his seminal *Contrasts* (1836), written shortly after his conversion to Catholicism, Pugin constructs a unique architectural and moral framework for history. In the medieval period, when Gothic architecture dominated the ecclesiastical landscape, Pugin argued:

> [the medieval architect and builder] felt the glory of the work he was called on to compose; it was no less than erecting an altar for the performance of the most solemn rites of the church, and it was the glorious nature of the subject filled his mind with excellence, and produced the splendid result. From such feelings as these all the ancient compositions emanated; and I repeat that without them Gothic architecture can never rise beyond the bare copy of the mechanical portions of the art. There is no sympathy between these vast edifices and the Protestant worship. So conscious of it were the first propagators of the new doctrines, that they aimed all their malice and invectives against them. The new religion may suit the conventicle and the meeting-house, but it has no part in the glories of ancient days.[82]

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[80] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and Benjamin Ferrey, *Recollections of A. N. Welby Pugin and His Father, Augustus Pugin, with Notices of their Works* (London: E. Stanford, 1861), 104.

[81] The younger Pugin contributed to two of his father's most significant architectural works; see, Augustus Charles Pugin et al., *Examples of Gothic Architecture*, 3 vols. (London: Pugin, 1838) and Augustus Charles Pugin, *Specimens of Gothic Architecture*, 2 vols. (London: Taylor, 1821).

[82] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *Contrasts; Or, a Parallel Between the Noble Edificies of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day* (London: Pugin, 1836), 23.

Pugin idealises the moral and religious character of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and suggests that those qualities were uniquely expressed by the prevailing Gothic architecture. The young architect goes on to suggest that the dominance of the Gothic style eventually faded. Furthermore, he asserts that this decline was paralleled by a decline in "*the religion* to which it owed its birth . . . [It] was succeeded by a mixed and base style devoid of science or elegance, which was rapidly followed by others . . . [It became] regulated by no system [and] devoid of unity [emphasis mine]."[83] With the publication of *Contrasts*, Pugin made a daring statement regarding the relationship between sacred architecture and the state of the "nobler [religious and moral] perceptions of mankind" within a given culture.[84] The determined assertion that the Gothic was especially suited for the true worship of the Christian God became the central focus of Pugin's architectural career.

Pugin followed his work in *Constrasts* by publishing *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841). In this work, taken from lectures he delivered as Professor of Ecclesiastical Architecture at St. Mary's College, Oscott, Pugin launches a fervent defence of Gothic architecture. *True Principles* is more detailed in its purpose, prescribing specific aspects of "Christian architecture" and giving specific reasons why this style is so well suited for mid-Victorian England. In this regard, Pugin appeals to a sense of nationalism, as well as to a sense of practicality, suggesting that Gothic's pointed architecture was well suited for drainage

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[83] Ibid., 3.

[84] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, "Apology for the Contrasts," in *The Sequel to Catholic Emancipation*, by Bernard Nicolas Ward (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1915), 87; Pugin's comments were so bold as to meet with opposition from publications such as the British Critic who suggested that Contrasts "was respectable for its apparent zeal and sincerity; but it betrays an utter want of either soundness or fairness in its pretence at argument." "Review of *Contrasts; or a parallel between the noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings Accompanied by Appropriate Tex*t," *The British Critic, and Quarterly Theological Review* XXV (1839): 479.

given England's notoriously inclimate weather.[85] What is perhaps surprising is that the underlying aesthetic principles of this work are, in and of themselves, not revolutionary; Pugin advocated the value of functionality in the Gothic. Still, as with his earlier work in *Contrasts*, Pugin's understanding of the Gothic and architectural aesthetics in general were intimately wed to morality, spirituality, and the Catholic faith. While the work was, as I have suggested, decidedly more specialized than *Contrasts*, Pugin held firm in his assertion that true Christian architecture – the construction of sacred place – held important implications for a society's morality:

> [A] man who builds a church draws down a blessing on himself both for his life and that of the world to come, and likewise imparts under God the blessing of his fellow creatures; hence we cannot feel surprised at the vast number of religious buildings erected by our Catholic forefathers in the days of faith . . . It must have been an edifying sight to have overlooked some ancient city formed a leading impulse in the mind of man, and when honour and worship of the Author of all good was considered of greater importance than the achievement of the most lucrative commercial speculation.[86]

For Pugin, the art of the building of sacred places is a communal, a social, act. While the builder receives blessing from God, this blessing is likewise passed along to "his fellow creatures." Pugin heightens this rhetoric of sacred construction by suggesting that the builder imparts this blessing "under God." In this way, Pugin seems to bestow a kind of sacred office upon the builder of scared places. The builder brings a very real spiritual benefit to the culture in which he builds. This is further highlighted by Pugin's assertion that individuals were "edified" by the skyline of a city marked by sacred places – places whose function was to "honour and worship the Author of all good."

Pugin's work was formative in the nineteenth-century development of ideas concerning sacred place. His theories were infused with the conviction that place –

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[85] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (London: J. Weale, 1841), 46; 8; 41.
[86] Ibid., 42.

expressed through the acts of architecture and building – was of central importance to the way in which individuals thought about themselves, others, and, perhaps most importantly, God. While it is easy to be distracted by Pugin's highly prescriptive principles of what constituted the authentic construction of sacred place, his theories, more generally speaking, reveal an understanding of the importance of sacred place to the ordering of individual and social life.

John Ruskin stands alongside Pugin as the nineteenth century's most important thinkers on the subject of sacred place. It is intriguing, however, to consider that the relationship between the two men was tumultuous.[87] Though both men assert that there is a moral force endowed within the work of the architect and the builder, there are marked differences between them; perhaps most importantly, unlike Pugin, Ruskin was not interested in architecture alone. Indeed, it becomes quite difficult to categorise his work as he addressed art, literature, architecture, and society with what has become his trademark passion and bravado. Still, given the nature of this research project, I will turn briefly to the way in which he addresses issues of place and the sacred.

Ruskin's own personal trajectory of faith followed a pattern established by many prominent and private individuals in the nineteenth century.[88] He grew up

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[87] Pugin remained largely silent with regard to Ruskin's work while Ruskin famously dismissed Pugin by asserting that he had little time for Pugin's work: "It is often said that I borrow from Pugin. I glanced at Pugin's Contrasts once in the Oxford architectural reading-room, during an idle afternoon. [Some of his articles] were brought under my notice by some of the reviews. I never read a word of any of his other works, not feeling, from the style of his architecture, the smallest interest in his opinions." John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Sir Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, vol. 5 (London: George Allen, 1904), 428-429; For an intriguing and provocative analysis of the relationship between these two seminal thinkers, see Patrick R.M. Conner, "Pugin and Ruskin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institutes* 41 (1978): 344-350.

[88] For two excellent analyses of the role of religion in Ruskin's personal life and writings, see both George Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John*

immersed within the Evangelical tradition. To spite the fervency with which he held to Evangelical orthodoxy as a young man,[89] he, like many Victorian Christians, experienced a fundamental crisis of faith; Ruskin called this experience his "unconversion" and wrote that it took place during a church service in Turin in 1858.[90] Later in his life, Ruskin returned to a version of Christianity that was markedly distinct from his faith experience as a young Evangelical.[91] Still, his work in general, and his work on architecture/place in particular, never ceased to be dominated by a markedly distinct sense of the sacred.

The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849), perhaps Ruskin's most notable work on the nature of place, functions in large part by virtue of an allegorical alignment between the architectural-spatial and the sacred. In the first chapter, entitled "The Lamp of Sacrifice," Ruskin pulls heavily upon the Evangelical biblical and theological tradition with which he was so familiar. He idealises the work of architecture as more than the haphazard construction of shelter, but as a purposeful, thoughtful giving of talent and resources to something beyond the self. Ruskin finds resonance for this sacrificial work of architecture in Christ's "bloody sacrifice" that

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Ruskin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) and Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin's God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[89] The degree of Ruskin's dedication to the Evangelical expression of Christianity is evidenced, at least in part, by a personal letter in which he encouraged a friend to read the tracts of the noted Bishop Carles Ryle (1816-1900); see John Ruskin to J.J. Laing, 5 November, 1854 in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, vol. 36 (London: George Allen, 1909), 180-181.

[90] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, vol. 35 (London: George Allen, 1909), 495.; Ruskin admitted in a letter written four years after this "unconversion" that he had "become a pagan too." John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, December 1862 in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 36:426.

[91] By 1886, Ruskin returned to a new Christianity that affirmed a more inclusive view of faith - one that affirmed certain central tenets of theological orthodoxy while simultaneously arguing that these beliefs "do not make people Christians." *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, vol. 35 (London: George Allen, 1908), 351-352.

brought about the salvation of humanity and fulfilled God's plan to redeem time and creation.[92] Ruskin, then, identifies architecture as a sacred act – one that transcends the earthly realm and reverberates with spiritual implications. What is perhaps even more profound is that Ruskin imbues the built structure with covenantal power; he establishes a parallel between the sacrificial gift of authentic architecture and the fulfilment of God's work with humanity on the cross. For Ruskin in *Seven Lamps*, buildings become "events as well as structures;"[93] he suggests that the work of architecture is transactional. Buildings are far from static locales, but are instead the embodiment of social and spiritual relationships.

Later in that same work, Ruskin makes an intriguing case for a more expansive sense of sacred place – one that moves beyond the notion of the sacred as existing only within the confines of the traditional locales of church, cathedral, and graveyard. Introducing the "Lamp of Memory," Ruskin writes:

> [I]t is in becoming memorial or monumental that a true perfection is attained by *civil* and *domestic* buildings; and this partly as they are, with such a view, built in a more stable manner, and partly as their decorations are consequently animated by a metaphorical or historical meaning . . . If men lived like men indeed, their *houses would be temples – temples which we would hardly dare injure, and which it would make us holy to be permitted to live*; and there must be a strange dissolution of natural affection . . . a strange consciousness that we have been unfaithful to our fathers' honour, or that our *own lives are not such as would make our dwellings sacred* . . .[emphasis mine][94]"

The implications of this brief passage are important to an understanding of Ruskin's view of sacred place and its relationship to broader society. Again, the work is charged with arguments reminiscent of Pugin as he asserts that architecture possesses

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[92] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley, 1859), 8-12.
[93] Gerald L. Bruns, "The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking," *PMLA* 90, no. 5 (October 1975): 912.
[94] John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory (from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*)," in *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John D. Rosenberg (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 131-132.

the ability to affect culture; it becomes "the actual expression of some ultimate nerve or fibre of the mighty laws which govern the world."[95] However, Ruskin here suggests that humanity does not only make sacred places in the act of building, but that places are made sacred by the act of living. In the same passage, he goes on to suggest that places can become "sanctified" not simply because they are a church or a cathedral, but that individuals can broaden the process of sanctification to the civil and domestic sphere by conducting themselves in a way that embodies the sacred. Here, then, Ruskin's work is reminiscent of Lefebvre's spatial triad in which the conceived nature of a place is intimately wed to the practice that takes place within that locale. Furthermore, that Ruskin allows for the expansion of the definition of sacred place to include non-traditional locales is promising for the broadened definition of sacred place under consideration in this study.

In the three-volume *Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), Ruskin continues his discussion of architecture contextualised within the Christian tradition. This wide-ranging work is complex in its detailed historical and theoretical analysis of the architecture of Venice. Of particular interest is his much-anthologised chapter "On the Nature of the Gothic" in which he suggests that Gothic architecture, which he, like Pugin, lauded, ideally contained an element of what he called "naturalism." For Ruskin, ideal architecture – embodied in the Gothic – is not marked by perfection but instead by the imperfections that come from authentic and detailed work done by the hands of the anonymous builder. He casts this aesthetic theory within a spiritual context, arguing that the relationship between God and humanity is uniquely illustrated in these built structures:

> [O]ur building must confess that we have not reached the perfection we can imagine, and cannot rest in the condition we have attained. If we pretend to

[95] Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 4.

> have reached either perfection or satisfaction, we have degraded ourselves and our work. God's work only may express that; but ours may never have that sentence written upon it, - "And behold, it was very good.[96]

Earlier in the same chapter, Ruskin asserts that the imperfection of Gothic indicates the humanity has not reached perfection and that, though individuals should put forth effort, they will always be in need of mercy.[97] In both of these passages architecture is cast in the role of illuminating the position of humanity in relationship to God. Architecture should mirror the need within the created realm for a perfection it cannot possibly attain. What is striking, then, is the way in which the sense of the sacred in Ruskin's architecture illuminates the divine via an artistic medium marked by its authenticity. Plainly put, this sacred "naturalism" is fundamentally mediated through and focused on humanity. This, of course, echoes one of the central reasons why Ruskin admires the Gothic; for Ruskin, the Gothic allows for the creativity of anonymous workers to be expressed in sharp contrast to the way in which workers are stripped of their individuality by the machinations of nineteenth-century industrialism.[98]

Finally, Ruskin's emphasis on naturalism highlights an important facet of his notion of sacred place. For Ruskin, religion was intimately connected to the natural world. In sections of his multi-volume *Modern Painters*, written over the course of thirteen years from 1843 to 1856, Ruskin displays a heightened sense of the

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[96] John Ruskin, "The Nature of the Gothic (from *The Stones of Venice*)," in *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John D. Rosenberg (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 190.
[97] Ibid., 184.
[98] According to Pugin, the Gothic tradition of building affrims the "individual value of every soul" over and against the trend of Victorian industrialisation that sought to emphasise "precision" by turning men into "cog-wheels" and "compasses." These practices "make a tool of the creature" and "unhumanise" workers. Ibid., 176, 177. In this passage and in others, it becomes clear that the Gothic, architecture, and the sacred are being employed by Ruskin in order to advocate for a progressive social and ideological cultural agenda.

relationship between the sacred and the surrounding landscape. In these volumes, he endorses what he calls a "Nature-scripture" in which aspects of nature speak to humanity of Divine blessing and wisdom.[99] Mountains, for example, are "calculated for the delight, the advantage, or the teaching of men; [they contain] some beneficence of gift, or profoundness of counsel."[100] The "sacred place" of nature does not exist merely to point to the grandeur of God. Instead, it pleases, teaches, and counsels humanity. Nature is revelatory – its savage beauty giving spatial expression to the abstract notion of deity. Underlining the importance of beauty to a Ruskinian theology, critic George Landow observes that the younger Ruskin possessed a "theocentric aesthetic."[101] Similarly, Harold Bloom echoes the assertion that Ruskin's aesthetic philosophy informed understanding of religious faith when Bloom writes that, "though [Ruskin] moved in outward religion from Evangelical Protestantism to agnostic naturalism and on finally to a private version or primitive Catholicism, Ruskin's pragmatic religion always remained a Wordsworthian 'natural piety,' in which aesthetic and spiritual experience were not be distinguished from one another."[102] Though the shifts in the position of Ruskin's personal faith possesses undoubted implications for his philosophy of sacred, it is most important for the purposes of this study to underscore that the Ruskinian concept of sacred place extends beyond the built Gothic architecture with which he is most commonly associated. Indeed, Ruskin lauds the Gothic precisely because it possesses the "savageness" and "naturalism" of nature. In this way, Ruskin embraces the tradition

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[99] *The Works of John Ruskin*, 5:191.
[100] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Sir Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, vol. 6 (London: George Allen, 1904), 385.
[101] Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin,*, 28.
[102] Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin,*, 28; Harold Bloom, "Introduction," in *John Ruskin*, ed. Harold Bloom, Modern Critical Views (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 11.

of both the Psalmist and the Romantics both of whom, with varying degrees of formal theological commitment, still found the presence of transcendence within the natural world.[103]

As a critic of art, society, and architecture, Ruskin's influence was felt in virtually every corner of Victorian culture. Of particular interest to this study is his influence on the Cambridge Camden Society, a group whose work would have a substantial impact on the development of ecclesiastical architecture in the nineteenth century.[104] Founded in 1939, the society sought to "promote the study of Ecclesiastical Architecture and the restoration of mutilated architectural remains."[105] The society developed as an extension of the Oxford Movement, a group that sought to reconnect with the Church of England's traditional liturgical and theological roots within the more church's history.[106] The Camden Society was particularly interested in the way in which church architecture, the way in which sacred place, was uniquely expressed within the Anglican history and tradition. Heavily influenced by the notion of a return to the Laudian ideal of worship, the Society quickly became convinced of the fact that the Gothic was, indeed, the style of architecture best suited to expressing

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[103] This is not to suggest an unproblematic relationship between Ruskin and Romanticism. For a more detailed analysis of Ruskin's reading of the Romantic period see John Batchelor, "John Ruskin and the Politics of Post-Romanticism," in *Scholarship in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Hewitt, vol. 1, Leeds Working Paper in Victorian Studies (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 1998) and Kenneth Daley, *Rescue of Romanticism: Walter Pater and John Ruskin* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001).

[104] The most important critical text regarding the Cambridge Camden Society and the subsequent Ecclesiological Society and ecclesiological movement remains James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

[105] Cambridge Camden Society, quoted in, George Wightwick, "Modern English Gothic Architecture," in *Quarterly Papers on Architecture*, ed. John Weale, vol. 3 (London: John Weale, 1845), 63.

[106] For an excellent and recent study of the Oxford Movement, see James Pereiro, *Ethos and the Oxford Movement: At the Heart of Tractarianism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the qualities of sacred place.[107] Here the Society was indebted to the work of Ruskin who was able to provide the theoretical framework for moving Gothic away from a Puginian emphasis on Catholicism - problematic for many within the Protestant Church of England – and toward a more generalised emphasis on morality, hard work, and ethical behaviour.

The adoption of the Gothic was welcomed by many within the Church of England as the church sought to solidify its position within nineteenth-century Christian consciousness. The growth of dissenting churches throughout rural and urban England, motivated the passage of the Church Building Act of 1818 as well as the New Parishes Acts of 1833 and 1834. This legislation opened the door to a massive church construction and restoration effort and provided the Church of England with the opportunity to reassert its identity through the spatial medium. The Gothic was well suited for a church that felt pressed to maintain relevance in a time in which the fundamental ways in which individuals conceived of themselves and society were being shaken by seismic shifts in modes of production, the economy, demography, government, and empire. The Gothic hearkened back to English medievalism and inspired a sense of nationalism that inspired a sense that the Church of England was an essential part of English cultural identity. What is more, the relationship between the Gothic and medievalism allowed the church to become the spatio-visual embodiment of a longed-for sense of community. The construction of

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[107] Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645) was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633-1645 and instituted polarising reforms during his tenure. His influence on the Oxford Movement is evidenced by the fact that his work was compiled and published in the *Anglo-Catholic Library*, a series of republished theological works with strong ties to the Oxford Movement; see William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God William Laud*, ed. William Scott and James Bliss, vol. 1, 7 vols., Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (London: John Henry Parker, 1847); For an excellent and recent study on the aesthetics of Laudian worship see Graham Parry, *The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation: Glory, Laud and Honour* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

restored or new Gothic churches solidified the notion of a long-standing and important relationship between the Anglican Church and the people of England.

These ideas concerning sacred place endorsed by what came to be known as the ecclesiological movement were not dissimilar to the fundamental assertions made by both Pugin and Ruskin. One of the most apparent similarities between ecclesiology and Puginian and Ruskinian theories of the Gothic is the importance of the builder. As with both of these figures, the model builder within the ecclesiological movement was described as "a single pious and laborious artist, alone, pondering deeply over his duty to do his utmost for the service of God's holy religion, and obtaining by devout exercises of mind the semi-inspiration for his holy taste."[108] Like both Pugin and Ruskin, the builder was ennobled within this architectural tradition. However, there was a certain moral seriousness, a weight, and a kind of sacramental office that was thrust upon the builder as well. The construction of a sacred place was, indeed, a sacred task; it required devotion, serious thought and, what is more, a willingness to give oneself over to a "semi-inspiration." Sacred places were of such importance and, perhaps, of such a fragile nature that the quality of their spatio-affective potency as sacred locales could be tarnished by a builder whose character was at odds with the spiritual and moral values of the place being built or restored.

Another central concept within the ecclesiological concept of sacred place was the assertion that churches, as sacred places, possessed the ability to communicate doctrinal, moral, and spiritual truth. Symbolism became a central aspect of the architecture of these churches. In *A Hand-Book of English Ecclesiology*, a complex theological meaning is mediated via the sacred architecture of the roodscreen:

> We have now only to speak of the mystical meaning of the rood-screen. It, as dividing the chancel, which is the Church Triumphant, from the nave, which is

[108] "Ecclesiastical Architects," *The Ecclesiologist* IV (1845): 277.

> the Church Militant, signifies death; and therefore carries the Image of Him Who by His Death hath overcome death.[109]

In another passage, the attention turns to the octagonal shape of fonts: "Eight symbolises regeneration. For, as the number seven is typical of the seven days' creation, so eight symbolises the new creation in Christ."[110] It is also intriguing to consider that two of the influential founders of the Cambridge Camden Society, James Mason Neale (1818-1866) and Benjamin Webb (1819-1885), edited a collection of writings by French writer and Bishop of Mende Guillaume Durand (1230-1296) and his work on ecclesiastical symbolism. Neale and Webb regarded Durand's work as "the most valuable work on Symbolism that the middle ages can furnish."[111] In one of the work's central passages, Mendes boldly asserts the importance of symbolism to church architecture:

> Is it possible to conceive that the Church which invented so deeply symbolical a system of worship, should have rested content with an unsymbolical building for its practice? . . . [B]y the analogy of . . . the operations of God in nature, of the conditions of Art, and especially of the whole sacramental system of the Church, it is likely that Church architecture itself would be sacramental.[112]

It becomes clear that the concept of sacred place for mid-Victorian ecclesiological Anglicanism was marked by an attention to the power of a sacred, coded, and complex aesthetic system. What is implied within these statements is the power of place to impart a narrative of communal identity as well as a correlation between the spatial reality of the church or cathedral and the spiritual realm. Durand and, by inference, both Neale and Webb suggest that sacred place mediates an authentic and

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[109] Ecclesiological Ecclesiological Society, *A Hand-Book of English Ecclesiology* (London: Joseph Masters, 1847), 81.
[110] Ibid., 130.
[111] Guillaume Durand, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, ed. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (Leeds: T.W. Green, 1843), *vii*.
[112] Ibid., *lxxvii*.

transcendent encounter with God through the use of aesthetic and architectural symbolism.

Nineteenth-century nonconformist notions of sacred place were largely informed by the movement's relationship with the spatial and architectural traditions and practices within Anglicanism. This was, of course, a continuation of an established trend within nonconformity, dating as far back as the seventeenth century when, according to the tradition of many denominations, nonconformists met "in woods and obscure places where the long arm of the law might, God willing, pass them by."[113] Similarly, the explosive rise of Methodism in the eighteenth century was marked by the advent of what George Whitefield (1740-1770) called the divinely-inspired "mad trick" of preaching out of doors to spite the Anglican prohibition against such a practice.[114] Indeed, John Wesley (1703-1791) famously responded to objections to his outdoor preaching by responding, "The world is my parish." The history of sacred place and the nonconformist movement is, then, marked by its relationship with and reaction to their various perceptions of the Church of England as oppressive, excessive, ostentatious, and misguided.

However, by the dawn of the nineteenth-century dissent had become firmly entrenched within the theological, social, *and* spatial landscape of English Christianity. This continued throughout the next fifty years and the publication of the

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[113] Christoper Stell, "Puritan and Nonconformist Meetinghouses in England," in *Seeing Beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition*, ed. Paul Corby Finney (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 50; Stell's work provides an excellent historical survey of the development of nonconformist architecture; see also his *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in the North of England* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1994); another helpful work is Christopher Wakeling, "The Nonconformist Traditions: Chapels, Change and Continuity," in *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

[114] George Whitefield, quoted in, William Tait, "Review of *The Life and Times of the Rev. George Whitefield* by the Rev. Robert Philip," *Tait's Edinbugh Magazine*, 788.

1851 census demonstrated that nonconformist Christianity had become the dominant expression of the faith within many areas including the majority of towns within the major manufacturing districts. Dissent had been effective in responding to the fissures that were exposed within the Church of England parish system by the process of urbanisation. Within urban areas such as these, nonconformist "meeting houses" or "chapels" – words that themselves suggest a purposeful distancing from the more traditional notion of sacred place as a "church" – created schools within the chapels, weeknight meetings, and youth clubs; this diversification of the intended purpose of these places of worship signalled a new vision of sacred place. The dominant philosophy behind the representations of sacred place within the nineteenth century had, with the exception of Ruskin, been tied to issues of reverence, theology, and morality. Nonconformist places of worship, then, sought to engage the values of evangelism and compassion; these two themes, though oftentimes problematic in their expression, would come to typify nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

This redefinition of sacred place within the nonconformist tradition was echoed within the movement's philosophy and practice of spatial aesthetics. Historically, and in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, nonconformist meeting houses and chapels were marked by "few architectural pretensions" and their relative simplicity.[115] This was, of course, a reaction to the Gothicism of High Church Anglicanism, an aesthetic symbol of theological and doctrinal elitism and overindulgence that was "wholly unsuitable to Nonconformist traditions of worship" as it "savoured of Superstition, pre-Reformation 'Popery,' and other problematic associations."[116] Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) as one of the most prominent figures

[115] Curl, *Victorian Architecture: Diversity and Invention*, 141.
[116] Ibid., 209.

within Victorian nonconformity, drew direct attention to this relationship between protest, architecture, and place:

> My notions of architecture are not worth much, because I look at a building from a theological point of view, not from an architectural one . . . The standard of our faith is Greek; and this place [of worship] is to be Grecian. I care not that many an idol temple has been built after the same fashion . . . *We owe nothing to the Goths as religionists.* We have the great part of our Scriptures in the Grecian language and this shall be a Grecian place of worship [emphasis mine].[117]

Spurgeon, who spearheaded the construction of his enormous, classically stylised Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1859-1861, suggests a "purified" vision of sacred architecture by asserting that nonconformity possesses an authentic and historically rooted theology in stark contrast to those who misguidedly follow the Gothic tradition.

Of course, Spurgeon did not speak for everyone and by the middle of the century some nonconformists began to suggest that it was no longer appropriate that one could enter a town and not be able to differentiate between "a Concert-room, a Theatre, a Town-hall, or a Chapel."[118] This period ushered in a movement that came to be known as "dissenting Gothic." These individuals had become convinced, influenced as many were by the work of Pugin and Ruskin, that Gothic was the uniquely moral, uniquely Christian style of architecture. While this influential strain of nonconformity did come to dominate mid to late nineteenth-century nonconformist architecture, it would be misleading to suggest that there were no important differences between Anglican and nonconformist Gothic. Indeed, the latter was more subdued in style, echoing one of the fundamental and historical differences between

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[117] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon: 1854-1860*, ed. Susannah Spurgeon, vol. 2 (New York: F. H. Revell, 1899), 327-328.
[118] Frederick James Jobson, *Chapel and School Architecture, As Appropriate to the Buildings of Nonconformists: With Practical Directions* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1850), 17.

the two expressions of Christianity. Dissenting Gothic was, then, a unique aesthetic expression that "drew on French and Italian models" as well as the more traditional English Gothic while they "dispensed with the symbolism that was so important to . . . the Church of England."[119] It is intriguing to consider that perhaps nonconformity was lured to the Gothic not only by the fact that it carried with it a certain mark of distinction in mid-Victorian England, but also that it, recalling Pugin and Ruskin, possessed the distinctly nonconformist traits of honesty, truth, and simplicity.

Considering the relationship between nonconformist and Anglican architecture of sacred place, one is reminded of both David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre. Harvey's theory of militant particularism and Lefebvre's notion of representational space bear directly on the way in which these two expressions of sacred place dialogically manifest themselves. The work of these two theorists in this area suggests that there is the possibility of a kind of spatial insurgence that can take place when individuals collectively attempt to assert themselves and take on the arduous task of creating a new place in opposition to the existing model or models of place. In this case, nonconformist expressions of sacred place, while undoubtedly authentic to the experience and theology of its followers, were largely formed in response to and in relationship with the prevailing sacred-spatial discourse of Anglicanism. Whether it was outdoor preaching, meeting in barns, Grecian architecture, or the adoption of the Gothic, the various nonconformist ideals of sacred place asserted themselves as an expression of *spatial dissent from* the Church of England.

The Literature

The discussion on the nature of place earlier in this chapter highlights the theoretical foundation for the assertion that an analysis of place within a narrative is a

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[119] Doreen M. Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 261.

viable methodology for the critical analysis of a literary work. While the analysis of language, character, and structure have gained a degree of notoriety within critical circles, the understanding and acceptance of a "place-centred" reading has not garnered a similar level of attention. Wesley Kort, in his important work on space and place in modern fiction, traces a justification for such a reading and elevates place from "setting" to a viable interpretive paradigm:

> The necessary and potentially prominent role of place and space in narrative discourse and its embeddedness among the other languages of narrative provide at least a partial remedy to the current pervasive deficiencies of spatial understandings, such as abstraction, fragmentation, and opposition to temporality. The language of place and space is always a part of narrative discourse and can be a principal locus of a narrative's power and significance. Places in narrative have force and meaning; they are related to human values and beliefs; and they are part of a larger human world, including actions and events.[120]

Place is not just the setting for the action of the plot, but is instead the means by which characters live within a given narrative universe. Place, as suggested earlier, cannot be divorced from human consciousness, experience, or expression. A plot takes place some-where and it is that question of "narrative where-ness" that haunts this critical study. Plot cannot "unfold" without place for, without it, there would not be anything to fold-out-into. Plot is more than mere temporality – the movement of a story throughout time. Plot is also contextuality – the movement of a story in place. In many ways, the actions, events, and experiences of a given narrative are derivative of place. Place is more primal than language itself for, though the understanding of place is a construct, the importance of place as an object to which individuals relate and express themselves precedes even the formation of language. What is more, the portrayal of place within a narrative is an important means by which the characters and events in the novel unfold, for individuals cannot exist and experiences cannot take place apart from place. To be without place within life, and, indeed, within

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[120] *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, 10-11.

narrative is not simply to be "homeless;" it is to be without one of the fundamental access points through which one creates a sense of wholeness and belonging. Building from there, place is a means for inclusion and exclusion, a way to approve and to censure certain persons and behaviours. Within a literary work, the place a character inhabits and, conversely, the places a character is not allowed to inhabit, marks the social, moral, ethnic, and cultural stratification of persons within that narrative universe.

The nineteenth century is especially intriguing as a period in which to analyse the narrative depiction of sacred place. The study of place as an expression of human understanding and development on both an individual and cultural level finds particular significance in an era of unprecedented change. Although the Victorian era has been stereotyped as a time of staid morality and allegiance to the status quo, any meaningful analysis reveals a period of immense volatility in virtually all aspects of life. The influence of science became more marked as the groundbreaking work of scientists such as Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) revolutionised the way in which individuals thought about the very foundation of their existence. The influence of these innovative thinkers extended beyond the physical sciences and lent credence to the philosophical and ethical theories of individuals like J.S. Mill (1806-1873) and T.H. Huxley (1825-1895). Meanwhile, the nineteenth century witnessed the rapid expansion of the British Empire, positioning England at the centre of the geopolitical scene. This growing sense of imperial dominance was buoyed by the industrialisation and urban expansion that took hold in the nineteenth century. This trend signalled a massive shift in population away from the rural areas and into England's urban population centres – a move that "freed [England from its]

roots in a traditional geographical and social world order based upon the land."[121] While the growth of technology and the shift of population radically altered the way in which individuals connected to the land in which they lived, these quantifiable measures of change were echoed, perhaps even amplified, in the evolution of ideas concerning the nature of Christianity.

Within the past two decades, literary and cultural scholarship on the nineteenth century has seen a welcome number of studies that challenge the once-dominant assumption that Victorian Britain provides the classic illustration of secularisation theory.[122] These studies express doubt in the academic narrative that has been built around the idea of a Britain that was full of individuals abandoning their Christian faith in favour of humanistic, agnostic, or atheistic systems of belief. It is far more accurate to assert that were you to "ask any Victorian scholar whether or not the Victorian age was a religious one, you would be immediately told that it was very religious indeed . . . They might even go on to refer to it as 'the evangelical century,' or 'the golden age of church attendance.'"[123] Indeed, the majority of Victorians were largely oblivious to the immediate effects of the process of secularisation.

However, it is also important to note that the idea of a Victorian "crisis of faith" is nonetheless a valid paradigm for understanding the evolution of the Christian faith in the period.[124] While most Victorians were indeed still attending church and would

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[121] Philip Davis, *The Victorians*, vol. 8, The Oxford English Literary History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.
[122] See Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001); Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt : Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Rodney Stark, *The Future of Religion : Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
[123] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt*, 1.
[124] Indeed, the "crisis of faith" paradigm is also a recurring theme in Victorian literary studies from Basil Willey, *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest*

consider themselves Christian believers, fissures within the landscape of Christian orthodoxy were beginning to emerge. While the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) has achieved tremendous notoriety over the past one hundred and fifty years for its role in redefining the scientific and cultural discourse regarding human origins and nature,[125] in the nineteenth century itself, more attention seems to have been given to the uproar caused by the publication of *Essays and Reviews* (1860). This collection, written by six Anglican clergymen and a pious layman, challenged several tenets of what was considered orthodox Christianity and sold as many copies in ten years as Darwin's work did in its first twenty years.[126] That these challenges to traditional belief came from within the Church of England itself underlines the degree to which the state of belief within the church was at the beginning of a change that was to make its way through the work of artists, authors, poets, thinkers, theologians, and the average English citizen over the course of the next one hundred years. Still, Mark Knight and Emma Mason rightly assert that instead of "applying secularisation theory in an indiscriminate and dogmatic fashion to insist on the historic inevitability of religious decline, it is more constructive, and more accurate, to think about the ways in which Christianity adapted its form and message to engage with widespread cultural change."[127] The theory of secularisation is one of evolution, of individuals wrestling with what it means to possess faith amidst doubt and to try to salvage some kind of transcendent meaning from the chaos of a world in such a rapid state of flux.

Doubters (London: Chatto, 1956) to A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (London: John Murray, 1999) and beyond.

[125] It is important to note that Willey discusses Essays and Reviews at length in his *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters*, 137-185.

[126] Adrian J. Desmond and James Richard Moore, *Darwin* (London: Michael Joseph, 1991), 500.

[127] Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 153.

A narrative analysis of sacred place within the Victorian novel uniquely expresses the evolution of Christian belief within the period. Sacred places, as the spatial representations of God's presence within a given narrative universe, function as both subject and object – as the expression of human desire to encounter the transcendent and as the vital spatial context in, through, and against which characters encounter reality, make decisions, and engage in action. I have chosen *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure*, two significantly contrasting and – most importantly – spatially oriented novels, as the textual lenses for this study. Of course, no two texts can be seen as entirely representative of the period. Indeed, this analysis makes no claim to uncover heretofore-unknown aspects of the Victorian religious psyche. Instead it focuses on the unique and comparative insights into the depiction of faith within these two novels when examined through the lens of place.

While a survey of sacred place in Victorian fiction is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to acknowledge that these two novels are by no means unique in the way in which places are portrayed as a means of understanding the sacred. Though Kort's work is focused on the use of space and place in modernist literature, he acknowledges that the "prominence" of spatial language in the modern era was not "sudden or unprecedented." Indeed, the roots go back to the nineteenth century:

> While places in Jane Austen's novels are shaped to support the needs and interests of characters, in the fiction of Thackeray, the Brontë sisters, and Dickens environment becomes increasingly prominent, complicated and even threatening. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847), for example, the environment exerts force on the characters and complicates their relationships. Characters are affected by aspects of their locations that they neither control nor understand.[128]

Evidence of Kort's assertion of the prominence of place in the Victorian novel extends to the use of sacred place as a viable means of understanding the sacred. George Eliot realigns traditional notions of sacred place, relocating it in the road and

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[128] Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, 18.

in the home, in *Adam Bede* (1859). Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888) is a novel in which the city itself is infused with sacred implications as a Church of England clergyman tries to find a new and viable way to express his faith within the urban milieu and thereby disrupts the notion of the city as an inherently profane place. Similarly, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) highlights a regionalism that is tied directly to expressions and understandings of faith and the sacred. Finally, both Emily and Charlotte Brontë imbue central places in their novel with decidedly sacred elements. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the new tenant at Thrushcross Grange meets his landlord Heathcliff at Wuthering Heights, calling the inner part of the house, beyond the entrance "the penetralium," alluding to the Latin word for the entry to the sanctuary of a temple. In so doing, the author, in the opening pages, hints at a sacred, supernatural quality to the storied home that provides the central backdrop of the novel. In a similar way, the protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is summoned to the "mystic cells" on the third floor of Thornfield to bring assistance to the wounded Mason. The sense of the sacred is heightened in the room as Jane notes images of the dying Christ and the twelve apostles. The events and portrayal of this hidden, mystic centre of the home suggest a spatial/architectonic pattern of *revelation* and *prophecy*. The carving of the apostle Judas highlights the true nature of the injured Mason who is about to betray Rochester's kindness and reveal Rochester's past marriage to Bertha. Jane also notices the apostle John, a prophetic foreshadowing of her complex relationship with her austere benefactor St. John Rivers.

The choice, then, of *Jude the Obscure* and *Bleak House* is not intended to imply that these novels are the only – or even the best – representations of sacred place in the Victorian novel. They were, however, chosen for specific reasons that are important to outline here briefly. First, these two texts are chosen because of the time

in which they were written. Separated by more than four decades, these two pieces of nineteenth-century fiction reflect the various concerns that emerged at different points throughout the era. *Bleak House* was published in 1852, the year after the Great Exhibition, a global event designed to showcase the dominance of the British Empire on the world stage. In the same year that the Exhibition took place, the well-known *Census of Religious Worship* took place,[129] demonstrating the *en masse* migration of British citizens away from rural communities and toward the city centres, creating a social and religious dynamic across the nation that had never been seen before. And finally, by the mid-nineteenth century, British Evangelicalism was firmly established as a force with which to be reckoned both at home and abroad. National hubris, urban growth, spatial dislocation, social injustice, and new experiments in the expression of religious piety are all themes that dominate Dickens's expansive novel.

Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, however, is a novel influenced by events that took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the years between 1852 and 1895, *Essays and Reviews* and *Origin of Species* had been published and the later work of Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) such as the agnostic *Literature and Dogma* (1873) had gained notoriety; these literary and scholarly events cannot be overstated in terms of their impact on both intellectual and popular attitudes regarding the reliability of the traditional Christian narrative. Similarly, the ways in which individuals understood their own spatiality was changing. The ease and frequency with which individuals could travel, especially via train, had become less of a novelty and more of an institution and a way of life by the final decades of the nineteenth century. It is in this climate of change and doubt that Hardy wrote *Jude the Obscure*, a novel that

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[129] For an excellent and detailed analysis of the results of this census, see K. D. M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems : The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

combines personal geographical mobility and faith under duress to offer a unique vision of the sacred at the end of one century and the dawn of another. What becomes apparent, then, is that though Hardy's *Jude* and Dickens's *Bleak House* are separated by a relatively brief period of time, they address markedly different aspects of what contemporary critics would see as the Victorian condition. It is this very fact that makes an analysis of sacred place in these two particular novels so intriguing. Each provides a unique vantage point from which one can examine the role of the sacred – as expressed via place – within these "different" Victorian cultural spheres.

Secondly, *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure* have been chosen for this study precisely because the unique issues that they address grant them distinct perspectives on the way in which sacred place functions. Dickens's novel, written at a time of unprecedented urban expansion, was acutely aware of the inequities that accompanied such growth. *Bleak House* is a novel centrally focused on how individuals and society navigate the revolutionary transformations taking place in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century. Dickens works primarily with the idea of place as a social construct. At the same time, *Bleak House* is mature in its understanding of place, embracing the notion that the individual's intrinsic need for place is precisely the reason why social manipulation of place is so potentially devastating.

In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy demonstrates a similar commitment to a multi-layered approach to the understanding of place. Central to the novel is the place-centred exclusivity of various locales throughout the narrative, particularly Christminster. However, a close reading of the novel reveals Hardy is most focused upon place as a fundamental component of human experience. The need for place amongst the novel's characters clearly precedes the effect of places upon them. What is perhaps more important is that Hardy is able to define, destroy, and redefine

fundamental human narratives around the concept of place, thereby highlighting the absolute centrality of the concept to the creation of human consciousness.

In the chapters that follow, I will explore the portrayal of sacred place in both of these novels. I will demonstrate that these various depictions work together to reveal a particular perspective on the nature of Christian faith within that given narrative universe. At the beginning of each chapter, time will first be given to uncovering the viability of a place-based reading of each novel – exploring evidence for both the social constructionist and phenomenological readings of place in the process. This will not only demonstrate the dominance of "the language of space and place" within the novels, but will also establish a framework for how all place – including sacred place – works in the narrative. From that point, the focus will shift to the narrative depiction of sacred place within each text and how that depiction informs the broader spiritual themes of each work. If place is, as I have asserted, an essential medium for human experience, then the analysis of sacred place in *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure* will yield important insight into the way in which characters experience and live the Christian faith in the midst of a rapidly changing and often threatening culture. Poised at the middle and end of the Victorian age, Dickens and Hardy deliberately engage with place as a central aspect of their textual construction. Place in these novels is not more or less randomly selected background or incidental window dressing, but is, instead, a primary expression of human desire, desperation, hope, and, yes, faith.

Chapter II
Reclaiming Sacred Place in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*

Unpacking Place in Bleak House

Place is not just a narrative modality in the novel but a powerful paradigm for reading and interpreting nineteenth-century faith and culture.[130] Place is enmeshed in the fabric of the novel, acting as a narrative map for characters who move between the markedly distinct worlds of Victorian England: the powerful halls of the High Court of Chancery, the desolate graveyards of the forgotten, the picturesque countryside and gardens surrounding Bleak House, the abject poverty of Tom-all-alone's and even the far reaches of the growing empire in India and Africa. This fragmented and polarised mapping is more than a mere story telling device for Dickens; locales are imbued by the author and by the characters themselves with a personal importance that is critical to a mature analysis of the novel. These places then, reflect and reveal the larger philosophical, ideological, and cultural shifts that led to an increasing fragmentation of place in the nineteenth-century.

It is telling that Dickens chose the Jarndyce family home as the title for the novel. Dickens positions Bleak House as an organising idea, a template, for the place-thrust of his narrative. In keeping with the place theory set forth for this study, *Bleak House* suggests a balanced perspective on place that acknowledges that the social and

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[130] Topographically sensitive Dickens criticism has been with us for well over a century, ever since T Edgar Pemberton, *Dickens's London: or, London in the works of Charles Dickens.* (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1876); George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (London: Blackie & Son, 1898) and the various localities of Bleak House have received their full share of critical attention most recently in Efraim Sicher, "House and Home: Bleak House," in *Rereading the City, Rereading Dickens: Representation, the Novel, and Urban Realism* (New York: AMS Press, 2003), James Buzard, "Anywhere's Nowhere: Bleak House as Metropolitan Autoethnography," in *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 105-156, and Jeremy Tambling, *Going Astray : Dickens and London* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2009).

personal implications of place are not mutually exclusive, but, instead, function dialectically. Through its narrative ties to Court of Chancery, *Bleak House* demonstrates the social genesis and manipulation of place. The ruin and despair that marred the home during Tom Jarndyce's descent into madness, still echoed in its name, come as a direct result of the self-perpetuating injustice of a broken and unjust legal system. At the same time, Dickens's place-focus recognises that the social creation, destruction, and protection of place is alternately devastating and enlivening to individuals and groups precisely because being in place – in the spatial and existential sense - is essential to the human paradigm of existence. Dickens harnesses this reality in *Bleak House* through vividly mirroring the lives of the inhabitants of Bleak House with the state of the home itself – from the despair and disrepair of Tom Jarndyce to the security and structure of Esther Summerson and John Jarndyce. This pattern suggests that, in the novel, the character of a place is inseparable from the existential investment in that place on the part of characters in the narrative. In naming his novel *Bleak House*, Dickens, then, suggests the home as a model for the dialectical relationship between the personal/individual and social/institutional properties of place.

The previous chapter explored the theoretical and methodological issues concerning the analysis of place within literature and, more specifically, within the framework of this study. However, as the examination shifts to a single text, a more focused level of inquiry into the role of place within the context of this specific narrative is required. Place in *Bleak House* is most obviously observable, objective, and physical. Indeed, the force of Dickens's descriptive prose creates a novel in which the sheer physical existence of place is unavoidable. However, places in *Bleak House* stretch beyond their physical qualities and become imbued with any number of

expressions of existential human investment. Places, after all, are constitutive of a personal or corporate "historical narrative."[131] The definitions of narrative locales in *Bleak House* reflect the history, the personal, social, ideological, and transcendent desires and beliefs of those who encounter them. The physical/descriptive quality of place is ultimately subsumed into this affective reading of place as the relationship to place dictates the way in which place is ultimately observed and described.

Place as Social-Construct in Bleak House

It has been asserted in recent years that *Bleak House* is a novel that participates in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition.[132] It would seem reasonable, then, to question whether or not the places within the novel are Gothic in character. Of course, central to the study of the Gothic novel is the long-standing tradition of what one may term "structural atmosphere:"

> Gothic landscapes are desolate, alienating and full of menace . . . Later the modern city combined the *natural and architectural components* of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest (emphasis mine).[133]

While the topic of the Gothic in *Bleak House* is only tangential to this study, critical assessments of the novel as part of the Gothic tradition are of interest, especially when one considers this centrality of place within the Gothic tradition.

Elements of the Gothic are present in both the narrative episodes and individual characters within *Bleak House*, but are perhaps most significantly reflected in the novel's use of place. The place-based "violence and menace" are not, however,

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[131] Brian Jarvis, *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 7.
[132] Allan Pritchard, "The Urban Gothic of Bleak House," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 45, no. 4 (March 1991): 432-452; Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings : Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny, and Literature* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2002); See Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
[133] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

supernatural in nature. They are much more tangible, given life by the Dickensian vision of a Victorian England awash in moral ambiguity, greed, indifference, and corruption. Put more directly, the condition of virtually all of the places – be they vast estates, cluttered shops, "wretched hovels," forgotten graveyards, or infested urban ghettos – is in such a state because of the society in which they exist. Robert Alter, writing of Dickens generally, argues that, "Dickens repeatedly exercises a faculty of *archaic vision* in which what meets the eye in the contemporary scene triggers certain primal fears and fantasies, archaic vision becoming the medium through which we are let to see the troubling meanings of the new urban reality."[134] While Alter anchors his critique in Dickens's work on the urban environment, I would extend his reading a step further and assert that, in *Bleak House*, it is not only the urban realities that are given a frightening intensity by Dickens's narrative vision. Virtually all of the major places in the novel evoke images of the fear and misery brought about by the social ills of the nineteenth-century.

Place in *Bleak House* creates a broad thematic synecdoche for the moral and political condition of Victorian Britain. While there are numerous instances in which the creation of place is directly linked to extrinsic social forces, this dynamic is most powerfully observed in the cases of Bleak House and Tom –all-alone's. It is telling that these two place-names were apparently the final two choices for the name of the Jarndyce family home and, in turn, the novel's title.[135] Dickens, of course, finally settled on Bleak House as the home of the novel's central characters and, from there, introduced the reader to the home's dark and sordid history:

It had been called, before his time, the Peaks. [Tom Jarndyce] gave it its

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[134] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities : Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 47.
[135] Charles Dickens, *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*, ed. Harry Stone (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 186-205.

> present name and lived here shut up, day and night poring over the wicked heaps of papers in the suit and hoping against hope to disentangle it from its mystification and bring it to a close. In the meantime, the place became dilapidated, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door. When I [John Jarndyce] brought what remained of him home here, the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too, it was so shattered and ruined.[136]

Though John Jarndyce has taken pains to divorce himself from the Chancery suit that bears his name, he makes the decision to keep the home's inherited name of Bleak House, perhaps as a constant reminder not to be seduced by the riches promised by legal predators. The institutional power play that found actualisation from the endless meanderings of the High Court of Chancery led indirectly, yet implicitly, to the *creation* of Bleak House.

Though it may, at first glance, seem far-fetched to assert that a new place was created, a more careful reading would suggest that is precisely the case. Before Tom Jarndyce, we are told that the place that came to be known as Bleak House was known as the Peaks – a name with easily identifiable and altogether different allusions. The home's former name suggests grandeur and prestige. Here then, through this brief conversation, we see the transformation of *place within a place*. Bleak House and the Peaks are, in one sense, the same place for they possess the same geographical locale. However, though existing as the same place in one sense, The Peaks undergoes a *re-creation*, and become something wholly different in its manifestation as Bleak House. The physical deterioration of the home carried with it an intangible, but nonetheless powerful, stigma of failure, frustration, and despair. Recalling his arrival at the home to bury his great uncle, John Jarndyce wonders aloud whether a home like Bleak House could be "anything but an eyesore and a

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[136] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 109.

heartsore."[137] Here then, in a single locale, place is defined as possessing both physical/visual and affective/emotional qualities.

The key to understanding the place-ness of Bleak House is to recognise the external forces acting as the genesis of its creation. Again, the traditional model of social constructionist place theory focuses on the ways in which place is created in order to consolidate resources and power and to marginalise the perceived "other." In understanding this reading of place, one must be careful to recognise that, while place creation is often a deliberate process that undoubtedly occurs as persons and institutions seek to ensure power and insulate themselves from perceived threats, passive place creation also, indeed simultaneously, occurs as the unintended but very real by-product of the reckless pursuit of those very goals. The "construction" of Bleak House from its previous incarnation as the Peaks does not come as a result of a wilful act on the part of the High Court of Chancery. Bleak House is, however, an indirect result of institutional hegemony run amok – of a deeply imbedded, powerful financial, cultural and legal bureaucracy whose chief end is its own perpetuation, regardless of the cost. That Dickens chose to spatially embody the destructive effects of The High Court of Chancery in the home is not without purpose. The connection between the two had, by the time of his writing in 1851, become a standard assumption of the period:

> If a house be seen in a peculiarly dilapidated condition, the beholder at once exclaims, 'Surely that property must be in Chancery'; and the exclamation very correctly expresses the popular opinion as to the effect of legal proceedings generally upon all property which unluckily becomes the subject of litigation in any shape.[138]
>
> Ask why such a family was ruined . . . why the best house in the streets is falling to decay, its windows all broken, and its very doors disappearing, why such one drowned himself . . . you are just as likely as not to hear that a

[137] Ibid., 109.
[138] "Editorial," *The Times*, December 24, 1850.

> Chancery suit is at the bottom of it. There is no word so terrible to an Englishman as this.[139]

Places throughout the novel, most notably Bleak House, are often vivid realisations of this socially rendered collateral damage. They are Dickensian visions of indirect, but nonetheless powerful, instances of place creation. The Court is consumed with "nothing but costs,"[140] doggedly adhering to the "one great principle of the English law: . . . to make business for itself."[141]

The story of Bleak House does not, of course, end with the death of Tom Jarndyce. There is another phase, another re-creation of place, that occurred between the inheritance of the home by John Jarndyce and the arrival of the young wards in the opening chapters of the novel. Mr. Kenge suggests this second evolution of place as the three are being sent to Bleak House, ironically enough by the authorisation of the Lord Chancellor himself:

> 'The Jarndyce in question,' said the Lord Chancellor . . . 'is Jarndyce of Bleak House.'
>
> 'Jarndyce of Bleak House, my Lord,' said Mr. Kenge.
>
> 'A dreary name,' said the Lord Chancellor.
>
> 'But not a dreary place at present, my lord,' said Mr. Kenge.[142]

The home John Jarndyce has inherited is no longer the "dreary place" that mirrored Tom Jarndyce's madness and despair. Once again, Bleak House had become something else altogether and, though its name retained the spirit of its terrible past, the place-based associations of Bleak House had changed. This rebirth of place at Bleak House is more subtly, yet clearly, illustrated in the surprise evident in Esther's reaction to learning of Bleak House's history of destruction and distress at the hands

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[139] "Editorial," *The Times*, March 28, 1851.
[140] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 108.
[141] Ibid., 573.
[142] Ibid., 39, 40.

of the High Court's injustice. Hearing the story and, one presumes, measuring it against the evidence of the home she, Ada, and Richard had moved into one night earlier, she remarks not once, but twice: "How changed it must be!"[143]

Though easy to overlook, these comments illustrate Esther's perception of the marked difference between the home described by Jarndyce as "dilapidated" and overrun with "weeds choking the passage to the rotting door."[144] The house – the place – has been reborn. Esther describes the home she encounters as "delightfully irregular,"[145] possessing a "delightful"[146] garden, and rooms detailed with "perfect neatness."[147] To Esther, awakening the morning after her arrival at Bleak House, "Every part of the house was in . . . order."[148] The "new" Bleak House is now a place "twice removed" from the Peaks. It is a return, in some ways, to its previous stature.[149] This second transformation from place of desolation and madness to place of hope and rebirth is all the more striking when compared to the other places in the novel. After all, the primary Dickensian mode of place in *Bleak House* is one of desolation. Places are in a state of collapse (Tom-all-alone's), abandonment (Nemo's graveyard), chaotic clutter (Krook's shop), and staid aristocratic decay (Chesney Wold). These places are, exclusively and without exception, portrayed in these sad states, and by the end of the novel, none has changed significantly.

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[143] Ibid., 109, 110.
[144] Ibid., 109.
[145] Ibid., 78.
[146] Ibid., 106.
[147] Ibid., 79.
[148] Ibid., 105.
[149] For an interesting and related analysis of the architecture of Bleak House and its relationship to the characters and the plot, see Alice van Buren Kelley, "The Bleak Houses of Bleak House," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25, no. 3 (December 1970): 253-268.

Refusing to "found a hope or expectation on the family curse,"[150] Jarndyce establishes his new Bleak House as a purposeful counter-balance to the direct and indirect effects of social injustice in nineteenth-century England. When the High Court of Chancery demonstrates only a passing interest in the well being of the young wards Ada and Richard, Jarndyce, "a cousin, several times removed,"[151] steps in to offer Bleak House as a lasting refuge. To Esther Summerson, a young woman without parents, little social standing, and a hidden lineage whose revelation would scandalise the Victorian establishment, he becomes a Guardian and offers her, quite literally, the keys to Bleak House. At Bleak House Charley Neckett, a young orphaned girl supporting her siblings in a sparse London flat, finds employment, training and a home. And finally, to Jo, the forgotten, marginalised and placeless street sweeper, Jarndyce, to spite warnings of the highly communicable nature of the boy's illness, offers Bleak House as a place of shelter and recovery. In choosing to retain the name Bleak House, Jarndyce makes a conscious choice to ensure that its past, dominated by manipulation and desperation at the hands of High Court of Chancery, is never far from memory. Perhaps it is that the spectre of Chancery, a "phantom that has haunted . . . so many years,"[152] serves as the impetus for the determined effort to forge a new place, a new Bleak House, that offers hope, refuge, and dignity in a Victorian society that offers few places where such ideals have taken root.

While Bleak House stands "as a symbol of hope for the redemption and spiritual rebirth of the novels other bleak houses,"[153] there are other places in the novel that demonstrate the powerful effect of social forces on the creation of place. The sepulchral Chesney Wold is a powerful antithesis to the rebirth and dynamism of

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[150] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 359.
[151] Ibid., 16.
[152] Ibid., 359.
[153] Kelley, "The Bleak Houses of Bleak House," 265.

Bleak House. However, one must acknowledge that, in a place-centred reading of the text, Tom-all-alone's stands as perhaps the most vivid example of the effects of the hegemonic assertion of power and greed in Victorian England. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to assert that, given Dickens struggle in choosing between Tom-all-alone's and Bleak House as the name for the Jarndyce family home and, in turn, the novel's title, Dickens would, once settled, choose Tom-all-alone's as the name of a place of pivotal importance in the development and understanding of the novel itself. Most traditional models of social constructionist place theory focus on the establishment of place as a means of social and economic exclusion. In *Bleak House*, Tom-all-alone's stands as the repository for all that "established" members of Victorian society would find unacceptable. Mr. Bucket and Mr. Snagsby, representatives of reputable, albeit not exclusive, London society, reflect the trepidation with which this socially quarantined district was met.

> When they come at last to Tom-all-alone's, Mr. Bucket stops for a moment on corner, and takes a lighted bull's-eye from the constable on duty there, who then accompanies him with his own particular bull's-eye at his waist. Between his two conductors, Mr. Snagsby passes along the middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water . . . and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses. Branching from this street and its heaps of ruins, are other streets and courts so infamous that Mr. Snagsby sickens in body and mind, and feels as if he were going, every moment deeper down, into the infernal gulf.[154]

The horrors, perceived and actual, of the place Tom-all-alone's are very real to both Snagsby and Bucket, the latter of which, though a detective, seems to require the additional assistance of a second police officer upon entering Tom-all-alone's. Again, as with Bleak House, the sensory realities of Tom-all-alone's reveal a deeper place-reality – one in which the slum becomes much more than a particular point on a London city map; it becomes a part of the internal mapping of Victorian

[154] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 330, 331.

consciousness, a place in which the associations of danger, sickness, and depravity intersect to create a place "black and foul".[155] Here the sights, sounds, and smells of place are inextricably linked to that place's affective quality. Tom-all-alone's occupies a place so beyond the realm of mere physicality that Dickens goes so far as to anthropomorphise it as an individual cursed by nature and, later, as a ward of the court.[156] By granting place a certain, momentary personhood, Dickens suggests that place in *Bleak House*, and Tom-all-alone's in particular, possesses the physical and transcendent duality that has been characteristic of human self-reflection for millennia.

This duality is an important critical recognition, for, once one has identified the reputation of a place, one can begin to work backwards and assess its origin. Dickens, in a passage in which the physical and existential horrors of Tom-all-alone's are most evident, leads the reader to not only identify with the desperate living conditions, but to recognise the that the genesis of his awful place lies outside of its borders.

> Jo lives--that is to say, Jo has not yet died--in a ruinous place known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people, where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants who after establishing their own possession took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch vermin parasites appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep . . . and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years--though born expressly to do it."[157]

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[155] Ibid., 334.
[156] Ibid., 654.
[157] Ibid., 235, 236.

Snagsby, Bucket, and, one would imagine, most in *Bleak House's* London would view all that is "wrong" with Tom-all-alone's as being contained *within* its confines. Dickens clearly disagrees. Here is an expression of the Dickensian understanding of place as manufactured by social forces, of how, according to Harvey, "distinctive human practices *create and make use of* distinctive . . . space[s] (emphasis mine)."[158] Tom-all-alone's, itself held in Chancery, has become a geographic holding pen in which the disease, filth, and hopelessness that pervades its quarters is kept at bay, to be "avoided by all decent people." The darkness that pervades Tom-all-alone's is tied expressly to the lack of will, inaction, and indifference of the men in political and social power – in this case, Dickens's mockingly named Lord Coodle, Sir Thomas Doodle, the Duke of Foodle, and "all the fine gentlemen in office." The implication is that the wretched existence of Tom-all-alone's is allowed to continue because it serves a purpose. As the name implies, the "raison d'etre of Tom-all-alone's is that it *be* all alone."[159] When Jo is mocked by the local constable for living in Tom-all-alone's, the boy replies with a rhetorical question that are suggestive of the social and psychological architecture of the neighbourhood's borders:

> 'Now I know where you live,' says the constable, then, to Jo. You live down in Tom-all-alone's. That's a nice innocent place to live in, ain't it?'
>
> I can't go an live in no nicer place, sir,' replies Jo. 'They wouldn't have nothink to say to me if I wos to go to a nice innocent place fur to live. Who ud go an let a nice innocent lodging to such a reg'lar one as me!"[160]

The constable's sarcasm suggests a cultural assumption regarding the "kind of people" - guilty and unpleasant - that inhabit Tom-all-alone's. Jo, in his characteristic plainspoken and insightful manner, disregards the attempted slur and affirms the

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[158] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 14.
[159] D.A. Miller, "Discipline in Different Voices: Bureaucracy, Police, Family, and Bleak House," *Representations* 1 (1983): 69.
[160] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 286.

constable's assertion that the only place for someone like Jo is someplace like Tom-all-alone's. Society – the "they" Jo mentions in his answer – would not allow an individual of his kind to live anywhere else. The implication is clear: the lowly, the infirmed, the filthy and the guilty are hemmed in, via the social, economic, and legal leverage of acceptable society, by the geographical boundaries of Tom-all-alone's.

However, it is important to recall that a social constructionist perspective of place does not only work from the top-down, but from the bottom-up as well. Traditional Marxist readings of literary texts have emphasised the oppression of the impoverished other by the powerful elite. With reference to the example of Chancery mentioned earlier, the place-oriented-effects of a legal system in which justice has given way to myopic self-interests are undoubtedly evident in *Bleak House*. At the same time, there is also evidence of the politically and socially marginalised using place to enact a sort of existential barrier between themselves and the "other." In this place of their own, these individuals are free to practice life as they see fit, oftentimes in direct rebellion to the cultural expectations of "polite society."

This is again, in some ways, a cultural as opposed to an economic and ideological expression of Harvey's "militant particularism." The most striking example of such a community in *Bleak House* takes place in the depiction of Mrs. Pardiggle's "missionary visit" to the brickmaker and his family. Esther recalls the brickmaker's indignation upon their arrival. After a few minutes of Mrs. Pardiggle's moralistic prodding, the brickmaker finally exclaims, " 'I wants it done, and over. I wants a end to *these liberties took with my place*. I wants a end of being drawed like a badger. (emphasis mine)'"[161] Trying to assemble a life for himself amidst abject living conditions, the brickmaker, when confronted with a group of outsiders, asserts

[161] Ibid., 121.

his own sense of place in an effort to solidify his own power and authority. Interestingly, "his place," if one were to expand the social constructionist reading of the passage, is a reinvention of his outsider status. That is to say that he, living in economically and culturally imposed squalor in the brickfields, was most certainly excluded from the privileged places marked out for the more dignified members of Victorian society.

The brickmaker makes the most of the opportunity to turn the tables on his visitors. He uses his place, however lowly it may be, as a weapon of power and authority against those would patronise and chastise him, who would marginalise him socially. Going beyond the simple enforcement of place boundaries, he defines the morality and behaviour that constitute his place:

> I'll save you the trouble. Is my daughter washin? Yes, she is washin'. Look at the water. Smell it! That's wot we drinks . . . An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty – it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally unwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants . . . Have I read the little book wot you left? No, I an't . . . There an't nobody here as knows how to read it . . . How have I been conducting myself? Why I've been drunk for three days . . . Don't I ever mean to go to church? No, I don't never mean for to go to church . . . And how did my wife get that black eye? Why, I giv' it her . . .[162]

By identifying himself and his family with filth, illness, death, lack of education, debauchery, blatant disregard for established authority, and spousal abuse, the brickmaker turns the tables and uses the characteristics and behaviours that made him unfit to share place with the influential and powerful as a kind of deconstructed social criteria for those fit to join his own place. In so doing, he preempts or usurps his placelessness by rendering his oppressors placeless themselves.

While Mrs. Pardiggle doggedly refuses to be dissuaded by the brickmaker's tirade, the other members of "established society" that accompany her are readily

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[162] Ibid., 121-122.

attuned to the enforcement of physical and cultural place boundaries. Esther recalls that, "Ada and I were very uncomfortable. We both felt intrusive and *out of place* . . . We both felt painfully sensible that between us and these people there *was an iron barrier*, which could not be removed by our new friend. By whom, or how it could be removed, we did not know; but we knew that (emphasis mine)."[163] The politics of place have been successfully inverted and it is the members of polite society who are left shuffling their feet, uncomfortable and playing the outsider. The brickmaker's house – "one of a cluster of wretched hovels in a brickfield"[164] – has been redeemed from a "no-place" reserved for social outcasts to a place of one's own – a seat of personal influence and power defined by its inhabitants' adherence to a reversed set of socially acceptable characteristics and behaviours. By both adhering to and upending traditional expectations regarding the use of political power, *Bleak House* offers a bounded and yet democratised vision of the social implications of place.

Phenomenological and Experiential Readings of Place in Bleak House

Though Dickens is overwhelmingly concerned with the social injustice and, in turn, the social implications of place in *Bleak House*, he does not ignore the inextricable link between place, the individual, and experience. This emphasis is subtler, for, as Heidegger noted, in the last several hundred years, "dwelling is never thought of as the basic character of human being."[165] By engaging place on this level, Dickens acknowledges human existence in, experience of, and attachment to place. He pushes the reader beyond consideration of the social genesis of the novel's places to consider why these places are of vital importance to his characters. In the novel,

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[163] Ibid., 122.
[164] Ibid., 118.
[165] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 148.

individuals and institutions shape place, but it is the fundamental need for place that, first and foremost, shapes individuals.

The inclusion of a phenomenological counterbalance to the social constructionist perspective on place in *Bleak House* extends beyond the first chapter. While several key characters throughout the novel express this fundamental connection to place, Jo, the young vagabond whose close relationship to the enigmatic Nemo plays a central role in the unravelling of the plot's central mystery, is perhaps the most telling example of this theme. It is the role of place – or displacement rather – that dominates his life and eventual death. This is perhaps nowhere more movingly depicted than in chapter 19, in which Jo interrupts an evening of entertaining at the Snagsby home to escape the harassment of a local constable bent on the young boy "moving on:"

> "'Why bless my heart,' says Mr. Snagsby, 'what's the matter!'
>
> 'This boy,' says the constable, 'although he's repeatedly told to, won't move on.'
>
> 'I'm always moving on, sir,' cries the boy, wiping away his grimy tears with his arm. 'I've always been a moving and a moving on, ever since I was born. Where can I possible move to, sir, more nor I do move.'"[166]

Here and elsewhere, Dickens employs dramatic storytelling to evoke empathy with the lowly Jo. While his exclusion from socially acceptable places – which necessitate his constant "moving on" – is readily apparent, Jo's frustration does not stem from being socially excluded from a particular place, but rather from the fact that such exclusion renders him placeless and is thereby deeply unsettling to his sense of self. For Jo, the truly tormenting aspect of being out of place is not social, first and foremost, in nature. Rather, it is the existential impact of being without a self-

[166] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 284.

generated point of personal orientation, which characterises the phenomenological perspective on place that creates the anxiety and sadness that permeates his character. Set against this tense standoff between the constable, Jo, Mr. Snagsby and several other characters, the third person omniscient narrator speaks:

> Do you hear, Jo . . . The one grand recipe for you – the profound philosophical prescription – the be-all and the end-all of your strange existence upon earth. Move on![167]

The order for Jo to "move on" has implications beyond the spatial exile of one deemed socially unacceptable. Rather, and perhaps at a more profound level, the constable's demand encapsulates a personal philosophical dilemma – existential placelessness – that dominates his "strange existence." Jo's frustration at Snagsby's home is less about the sense of exclusion derived from his inability to access the places inhabited by polite society than it is about a life spent without a place of personal orientation. Jo's plaintive cry of " 'O my eye! Where can I move to!'" reveals a boy searching not for specific access to specific place, but simply to *a place* in which he can establish, identify, and orient himself. Jo's suffering is then deeply tied to his way of conceiving and understanding the world in which he lives.

This profound sense of disconnection from place and its damaging effect on Jo's fundamental ability to shape a basic and whole paradigm from which he can access the world in which he lives are evidenced elsewhere in *Bleak House*. In chapter 16, Jo's fundamental inability to orient himself to his surroundings, on streets he would have undoubtedly walked before in his wanderings, suggests that his sense of being off course extends beyond his immediate surroundings.

> It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness to the meaning, of those symbols, so abundant over the shops . . . To be hustled, and jostled, and

[167] Ibid., 285.

> moved on: and really feel that it would appear to be perfectly that I have no business, here, or there, or anywhere . . .[168]

Though the streets themselves were almost certainly not foreign to the boy who made a life of "moving on," here Jo finds himself trapped in an urban labyrinth, an unfamiliar no-place, never resting, always moving. However, locked into this maddening maze, the fundamental human impulse and necessity to orient oneself within and by place is not lost on Jo. Amidst the endless moving without settling, within this placeless existence, Dickens's narrator reaches into the mind of the street sweeper:

> . . . and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that that I *am* here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am! It must be a strange state . . .[169]

Jo cannot deny a fundamental urge to fashion a place of his own. In this brief moment of introspection he attempts to understand the way in which he must "somehow" fit into the frame of his own and broader human existence to spite his lifelong dis-placement. Dickens here implies that even the lowly Jo – whose personal motto becomes "I don't know nothink" – has the internal wherewithal to recognise the existential lack created in no small part by his inability find a place for himself. While this sense of lack is most certainly caused by the long standing and socially imposed displacement of "unacceptable" individuals like Jo, the effect of this lack is so damaging precisely because, as this passage demonstrates, the drive to identify oneself as *in place* is an innate facet of human experience and thereby precedes the contrivance of social engineering.

In Jo's aimless wanderings in the cavernous streets of Tom-all-alone's and in his altercation with the police constable, Dickens portrays the profound impact of

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[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

placelessness on an individual's ability to develop a cohesive paradigm of his or her existence. The author, however, reserves his most powerful statement on the basic human need for place for his account of the final hours before Jo's death.

> He shuffles slowly into Mr. George's gallery, and stands huddled together in a bundle, looking all about the floor. He seems to know that they have an inclination to shrink from him . . . He, too, shrinks from them . . . He is of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity.[170]

Throughout Jo's life and now here at his death, Dickens returns to the notion of Jo's lack of place. The implications in this passage for this discussion are two fold. First, Dickens clearly and deliberately imbues place with a philosophical and even ontological quality by including it in his description of the dying Jo. By setting place alongside species in the description of the depths to which Jo has fallen at the hour of his death, Dickens implies that the former is as vital as the latter to understanding the most fundamental of perspectives on human existence. In so doing he equates the question "What am I?" with "What is my place?" Dickens's respective answers to these questions are telling as he explains that Jo's sad life has left him "neither of the beasts, nor of humanity" and that "he is of . . . no place." In doing so, Dickens implies that Jo's status as a creature without place renders him, by association, less than human. So vital is the role of place in the development of human consciousness, that, in *Bleak House*, it is intimately tied to the very definition of what it means to define oneself as human.

Jo is not the only place-less character of the novel. Near the opening of *Bleak House*, Dickens introduces the second of the novel's narrators, Esther Summerson.[171]

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[170] Ibid., 669.

[171] The existence of and relationship between Bleak House's two narrators has been the subject of much critical disucssion such as Robert Newsom, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things : Bleak House and the Novel Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), Richard T. Gaughan, "Their Places Are a Blank:

When the reader first encounters Esther, she is an orphan living with her godmother. This sense of displacement is further and more subtly emphasised in the titles given to the opening chapters of *Bleak House*. The titles of chapters III and V – "A Progress" and "A Morning Adventure" respectively – suggest a sense of forward motion – of open *space* and possibility. This is in keeping with both the seemingly boundless optimism of Esther's character as well as the events of those chapters, events that take Esther from placelessness in her godmother's home to the boarding house at Greenleaf and to the Jellyby's in London. This restless movement into the open space does not yield the "place" for which Esther is longing. In "A Morning Adventure," a seemingly routine conversation between Caddy Jellyby and Esther reveals something of the endless and placeless movement of the Esther's life thus far:

> 'Where would you wish to go?' [Caddy] asked.
> 'Anywhere, my dear,' I replied.
> 'Anywhere is nowhere,' said Miss Jellyby, stopping perversely.
> 'Let us go somewhere at any rate,' I replied.[172]

Esther has spent life living and moving without ever reaching her destination. She has been to many "anywheres" without consciously realising that they were all, as Caddy points out, "nowheres." She has been in other people's places, but not in a place of her own – she has not been home. Esther does, however, find a place, for the following chapter is fittingly entitled "Quite at Home." Arriving at Bleak House, Esther finds a place in which her value is acknowledged, her lineage is not questioned, and her station is secure. Bleak House offers her the opportunity to

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The Two Narrators in Bleak House," *Dickens Studies Annual* 21 (1992): 79-96, Bert G. Hornback, "The Narrator of Bleak House," *Dickens Quarterly* 16 (1999): 3-12, and Lisa Sternlieb, "Esther Summerson: Looking Twice," in *The Female Narrator in the British Novel: Hidden Agendas* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2002), 75-105.

[172] Ibid., 59.

transform “anywhere, ” “somewhere,” “progress,” and “adventure” – transitional themes that dominated her life up until this point – into a place of her own.

The perspective on place in *Bleak House* is one of subtle balance. Critics have rightly understood the novel as, in large part, a scathing commentary and biting satire on the social ills in Victorian England. This reading of the text leads quite naturally to a vision of place in which place is constructed by individuals and systems with the express purpose of fortifying their wealth, authority, and prestige. The metaphorical and physical effects of such corruption on places ranging from Bleak House to Tom-all-alone’s are built into the very framework of the narrative. In this way, Dickens is able to underscore the importance of place as a weapon of class – both from the bottom up and from the top down. The cultural, religious, and financial establishment sequester the dispossessed members of Victorian society who, in turn, seek to empower themselves by creating places of their own in which the privileged members of society are unwelcome. In *Bleak House*, the tension, insecurity, fear, and animosity created by the chasm between rich and poor, sick and well, acceptable and unacceptable results in the erection of place boundaries. These borders allow each party a sense of self-orientation, security, and self-dignity – in essence, a sense of home.

While the characters in *Bleak House* live within the very specified and socially constructed place-boundaries, the longing for place in the novel is depicted as a search for self-definition and self-understanding. Dickens seems to suggest that, if Jo and Esther are homeless, they are, in turn, self-less; their lack of place leaves them lacking in their fundamental ability to experience and understand themselves and their lives. In this way, Dickens affirms a dual theory of place, one that acknowledges that place

is used as a powerful tool of social manipulation precisely because of its pivotal role in the construction and experience of the self.

Moving to the Sacred in *Bleak House*

Having demonstrated that *Bleak House* is invested in an understanding of place as a social and philosophical concept and, more to the point, that a place-based reading of the novel is valid, I now turn to a more focused analysis of the portrayal of sacred place in the novel. A place-based analysis of Chancery Court, Bleak House and Tom-all-alone's has revealed Dickensian critiques of the injustice and indifference with which the legal and social establishments in Victorian society met the burgeoning challenges of mid-nineteenth-century Britain. For Dickens, the Victorian religious establishment extended the pattern and practice of inequality wrought by the political, social, and economic institutions of that era. Far from offering solace, comfort, and direction in a time of tremendous upheaval and change, Dickens portrayed many popular segments of the church in nineteenth-century England as part of a pattern of broad cultural hegemony – unable or unwilling to meaningfully meet the emerging challenges facing the nation. Similar to the way in which Dickens portrayed secular expressions of cultural authority, depictions of the religious establishment in *Bleak House* are decidedly spatial in nature. The novel's portrayal of sacred places becomes more pointed when one considers that the new challenges facing nineteenth-century England were themselves markedly spatial. The Victorian consciousness, I would assert, was plagued by a sense of spatial and, in turn, personal and social disorientation. What is more, the spatial nature of these new and challenging realities resulted in a fundamentally spatial response. The nineteenth-century legal, social, and religious establishment in *Bleak House* reacts to the cultural disorientation by erecting boundaries, boundaries that sought to reinforce and

consolidate traditional lines of power and authority. Disorientation and borders, both foundationally spatial concepts, provide a meaningful spatio-cultural framework through which one can meaningfully access the use of sacred place in *Bleak House* and, as such, warrant discussion before turning to specific examples of sacred places in the novel.

Cultural and Spatial Disorientation

The nineteenth-century development of England from a largely rural/agrarian society into an urban/industrial society has become an undeniable and central tenet of Victorian historical, social, and literary research. Written in 1851, Dickens's *Bleak House* reflects an authorial and, indeed, a cultural self-consciousness regarding the effects of this mass migration. Such a rapid economic, cultural, and spatial shift produced an inevitable sense of anxiety and a unique set of cultural, economic, and even religious issues. *Bleak House* reflects these events and their effects, in part, by shuttling the characters and the various narrative episodes back and forth between rural and urban environs. However, just as the historical and demographic trajectory of the nineteenth century hurtled towards the urban centres, the novel demonstrates the centrality of the city by imbuing London with a sense of narrative gravity, regularly pulling the characters and plot away from the country and into the urban labyrinth as the story progresses. Indeed, Richard, Jo, Tulkinghorn, Nemo/Hawdon, and Lady Dedlock, five characters who acted directly or indirectly in either the creation or resolution of the novel's central mystery, all venture beyond the city, only to return there to finally meet their death. The pull of the urban is echoed further in Esther and Bucket's arduous journey from London to St. Albans and back to London again in an attempt to find the missing Lady Dedlock. In that journey, arguably the climax of the novel's narrative, key facts are revealed in the rural setting, but

characters and plot are continuously drawn to the city for final resolution. Pritchard echoes this observation, noting that the narrative "trails lead inevitably from Chesney Wold [the rural] . . . in to the labyrinth of London, the true setting of mystery as well as of isolation."[173] While the theme of difference between urban and rural is timeless, *Bleak Houses'* thematic emphasis on the issues of poverty, indifference, and injustice within London demonstrate the fundamental centrality of the city in Dickens's notion of the social makeup of mid-nineteenth-century Britain. An understanding of this centrality is dependant upon an acknowledgement of the spatial, psychological and cultural anxieties that were unique to the urban environment in that period.

As men, women, and families moved from one place to another, they were required to reconfigure their social, professional, familial, personal and even religious/spiritual roles in accordance with this new place in which they found themselves. Put in a different way, individuals were required to existentially re-orient themselves to the physical and existential realities of new spaces and places they encountered. Both the religious practice of pilgrimage and the archetypal journey narrative are dependent upon the assumption that geographical movement is paralleled by personal transformation. That is to say that the process and result of a significant place-change results in dynamic physical, personal, and psychological change to an individual. The physical journey of so many in the nineteenth-century from one geographical locale to another – from rural to urban – could not help but bring about a cultural climate of disorientation and confusion for it required them to uproot themselves from the security and affection of the only place many of them had ever known and, in turn, to establish themselves in an unfamiliar and intimidating urban landscape.

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[173] Allan Pritchard, "The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House*," 446.

The degree to which this new urban milieu was unsettling to individuals in mid-Victorian England is difficult to overstate. The spatial and existential anxiety is well documented in the observations of those who witnessed it firsthand. Frederick Engels, working for his father in the northern city of Manchester, observed that London, a city in which "a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach" was a "strange thing."[174] Here London is a city without orientation, a place whose labyrinthine streets evoke a sense of spatial and, in turn, existential confusion. An individual is lost in the city, immersed in its surroundings without being able to differentiate the beginning from the end – all while being divorced from the natural world around him. In a similar way, Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 writes that the new urban space represents the pinnacle of society's capacity for financial and commercial success while, at the same time, creating a "brutish" society in which "civilised man is turned back almost into a savage."[175] Here, the devolution of individuals and culture is tied to the new spatial realities of urban living that confronted England in the nineteenth-century. The careful observation of these new realities were themselves the genesis of de Tocqueville's own journey from France to England: "I should like to get a clear picture of the *movements of peoples spreading over on top of each other and getting continually mixed up, but each still keeping something that it had from the beginning* (emphasis mine)."[176] De Tocqueville suggests a sort of urban infestation in which individuals are forced to live not only side by side, but also literally on top of each other. This spatial

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[174] Frederick Engels "'The Great Towns' from *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844 (1845)*," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout (London: Routledge, 2003), 59.
[175] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland*, ed. J.P. Mayer and trans. G. Lawrence and K.P. Mayer (London: Faber, 1958) 107-108.
[176] Ibid., 21.

process of "movement" is one that results in an erasure of individual identity – leaving behind only "something that it had from the beginning" – and an endless cycle of confusion. The physical realities that had come to characterise this new urban existence were not isolated from the character and psyche of those who encountered them.

Another French citizen, Hippolyte Taine, in a visit to London, joined Engels and de Tocqueville in expressing the overwhelming physical presence of the Victorian urban milieu:

> Astonishment at last gives way to indifference; it is too much . . . To the west of us a forest of masts and rigging grows out of the river: ships coming, going, waiting, in groups, in long files, then in one continuous mass, at moorings, in among the chimneys of house and the cranes of warehouses – a vast apparatus of unceasing, regular and gigantic labour. They are enveloped in a fog of smoke irradiated by light . . . The atmosphere seems like the heavy, steamy air of a great hot-house. Nothing here is natural: everything is transformed, violently changed, from the earth and man himself, to the very light and air.[177]

Taine's observations, taken as a whole, underscore the visual and emotional spectacle of the Victorian city. Traditional modes of narrative description collapse when Taine is confronted with the visceral reality of urban London. As Philip Davis notes, Taine's observations rely on what Davis calls the "syntax of urban description," on "lists" and "phenomenal increase without coherent connectives."[178] Structure gives way to these lists which, in turn, gives way to a collapse of the ability of physical descriptors to adequately express the multidimensional reality of the urban environment; for Taine, the colossal city arouses feelings of "astonishment," "indifference," and an eventual sense that it is all "too much." The language of physical description is not adequate in describing London. It has become a labyrinth, a monster, a mystery.

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[177] Hippolyte Taine, *Notes on England*, trans. W.F. Rae (London: Strahan, 1872).
[178] Philip Davis, *The Victorians,* 19.

This spatial and existential confusion in Victorian England is echoed in Dickens's *Bleak House*. Indeed, the opening of the novel itself is surprisingly similar to Taine's description of the London dockyards:

> Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls deified among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.[179]

Comparing these two passages, one from the non-fictional account of a foreign visitor and the other from a well known novelist, is revealing. In Taine and in Dickens the rapid survey of the urban expanse conveys the sense that the observer is flying above the scene. Neither allows time for visual, cognitive, or emotional reflection upon the places they "see." They, like Jo, simply move on. The Victorian urban landscape defies classification and Dickens, like Taine, yields to Davis's "syntax of urban description."

Also telling is the extent to which both writers demonstrate an attempt to exert mastery over the urban landscape. For Taine, this attempt is expressed in the sociological nature of his work itself – the attempt to "describe" and "explain" England and her people. Taine's sociological positivism gives way to the stark and overwhelming realities of the city. The objective precision of language expressed in phrases like "every quarter of an hour" and "to the west of us" give way to the ambiguity expressed in his use of words such as "astonishment" and "indifference." Similarly, Dickens uses his third person omniscient narrator to describe London and,

[179] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 11.

in so doing, plays with the notion that Victorian London could be known, controlled, understood, and mastered. Put another way, in this opening passage, Dickens's acknowledges and satirises the mid nineteenth-century desire to leverage some modicum of control by mastering the complicated spatial dynamics of the city. While the implications of Dickens's use of the third person omniscient narrator is suggestive of this critique, it is most powerfully employed when he describes the individuals "peeping over the parapets . . . as if they were up in a balloon." This choice of metaphor is not accidental. By the time *Bleak House* was published, ballooning had become an object of fascination for Victorian culture. Though few individuals had the opportunity to actually ride in a balloon, the activity had so ingrained itself into Victorian popular culture that clothing, accessories and china all bore the image and the opening of the Crystal Palace in 1851 was celebrated with the launching of a balloon. [180] Dickens, however, chooses this metaphor not simply because ballooning had become so popular, but because of the psychological, social, and spatial needs that fed its popularity.

Ballooning offered the traveller the opportunity to rise above the spatial and, in turn, existential confusion that characterised the urban environment. In so doing, the traveller could transcend and master the city, thereby rendering Engel's "strange" urban labyrinth as harmless. Journalist Henry Mayhew, who had made a career of immersing himself in London, recognised the visual, psychological and emotional paradigm shift that the mere possibility of balloon flight offered those living in the midst of the disorienting urban landscape:

> I had visited Jacob's Island (the plague spot) in the height of the cholera . . . [and] had sought out the haunts of beggars and thieves . . . I had seen the world of London below the surface, as it were, and I had a craving to

[180] Elaine Freedgood, *Victorian Writing about Risk: Imagining a Safe England in a Dangerous World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 74.

> contemplate it far above it . . . As the balloon kept on ascending, the lines of buildings grew smaller and smaller . . . Indeed, it was a most wonderful sight to . . . grasp it in the eye, in all its incongruous integrity, at one single glance.[181]

Mayhew, a reformer, had chronicled the life of those living in London's most impoverished areas.[182] According to Mayhew, the balloon rider, by virtue of being able to remove himself or herself from the urban environment, is given a god-like view of the city, one which is no longer "strange," "savage," or "too much" to take in. Instead the city is full of "plaster models" and the barges on the rivers, so intimidating to Taine on his visit, "appeared no bigger than insects."[183] The anxiety and confusion that have arisen as a result of the new spatial realities of Victorian urban experience are able to be mastered and reduced to nothing more than a "child's box of toys." Mayhew's comments reveal the degree to which he, and perhaps other in the Victorian cityscape, sought refuge from and control over their disorientating urban environment. Like Bentham's Panopticon nearly seventy years earlier, the balloon offered a technological reconfiguration of spatial relationships that offered control, safety, distance and a sense of divine omniscience.

Not only is Dickens's opening syntactically similar to the spatial omniscience described in Mayhew's balloon ride, but Dickens goes so far as to make the connection explicit by describing the inhabitants of London themselves, curiously looking over the bridge, as balloon travellers. However, these metaphorical aeronauts have their vision obscured as they peer over the bridge into a "nether sky of fog." Dickens underscores the point that while the desire to escape the difficult realities of the new urban environment is authentic, it is in the end an exercise in futility. Dickens

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[181] Henry Mayhew, "In the Clouds, or, Some Account of a Balloon Trip with Mr. Green," *Illustrated London News*, September 18 (1852), 224.
[182] See Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin, 1985).
[183] Ibid.

subverts his own metaphor; the "chance people" on the bridge are in a balloon and yet unable to see anything. The fog obscures their long-range vision, allowing them to see only what is in their immediate surroundings. Similarly, the passage's third person omniscient narrator whose language, it has been pointed out, are reminiscent of a balloon journey, seems to have his view affected by the very same fog. The fog dominates all aspects of his description of urban London. His perspective is only partial and his reader is unable to fully "see" the city. The fog effectively humanises a narrative voice that has been criticised by some critics for its insular, authoritarian and dogmatic rhetoric.[184] Characters within the story and the narrator above it cannot escape the fog that cloaks the city in a veil of spatial obfuscation. In that way, Dickens does not allow the reader to see London as anything but a place of anxiety, confusion, duplicity, and mystery.

The spatial and existential confusion that Dickens ascribes to the Victorian city does not discredit the technological, industrial, or financial advancements of the period. Indeed, the sympathetic portrayal of the new generation of industrialist embodied in Mr. Rouncewell demonstrates Dickens's affirmation of progress. Rather, the depiction of the urban environment as a place of spatial, personal, and ideological disorientation illustrates a timely assessment of the rapid changes and attendant challenges that have come as a result of these advancements. Dickens asks how Victorian society will meet the challenges of poverty, indifference, and injustice that had come to dominate the period.

Borders and Boundaries

Robert Lougy is correct in his contention that "*Bleak House* is a novel obsessed with the possible failure or collapse of barricades or gates, haunted by fear

[184] See Robert Garis, *The Dickens Theatre* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) and James R. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1971).

that what does not belong might somehow find a way in."[185] As I suggested earlier in this study, the effort to establish stability in a time of rapid change and confusion is often expressed in an attempt to reassert a sense of personal, corporate and, inevitably, spatial boundaries – an effort to reassert identity. That ability to define one's own place – oftentimes in direct opposition or exclusion to the place of another – is a crucial component in the development of a sense of individual, group, or even national identity.

One year prior to the publication of *Bleak House*, Britain mounted arguably the century's boldest place-based assertion of identity: the Great Exhibition. Here, at the midpoint of the nineteenth-century, the British Empire demonstrated its awareness of its place among other nations by hosting an event for the nations of the world in its own capital city of London. The event, according to Prince Albert, was intended to attain "that great end to which indeed all history points[:] the realisation of the Unity of Mankind."[186] Though Prince Albert's stated intention was to generate unity amongst the people of the world, the very fact that it was Britain calling the nations to *its shores* in order to realise this goal reveals a latent claim to greatness on the global stage. While the growth of empire engendered a sense of confidence and power, the expansion of borders and the awareness of the physical proximity to new and unfamiliar cultures also bred a deep-seated and spatially-oriented sense of vulnerability and anxiety. As the reach of the British Empire grew to include nations and territories farther and farther from its centre, the purpose and identity of that centre – of Great Britain itself – became strained. At the same time, domestic

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[185] Robert E. Lougy, "Filth, Liminality, and Abjection in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*," *ELH* 69 (2002): 480.
[186] Prince Albert, "Speech at the Mansion House, March 21, 1850" in *Victorian Prose: An Anthology*, ed. Rosemary J. Mundhenk and LuAnn McCracken Fletcher (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 280.

upheaval, not the least of which included the spatial changes that occurred in the urban centres as a result of growth in both industrial infrastructure and population, radically altered the sense of what constituted the British identity. Urbanisation, a rapidly developing economic system, and the spatial realities of the nation's urban centres confronted the established aristocratic elite with the reality that the traditional model of social relationships and hierarchies, based upon the a sense of historic entitlement, was fading, replaced by the concepts of cooperation, negotiation, and unavoidable coexistence – from, in the well-known words of Henry Maine (1822-1888), "status to contract."[187] This reshaping of Britain's cultural discourse was deeply unsettling.

The Great Exhibition offered the nation the chance to reassert its identity, to establish itself as the centre of the expanding empire and, in the assertion of its centrality, distract itself from the seismic shift in the national consciousness. As Grace Moore argues, as the "economy shifted towards industrial capitalism, with the migration of the labour force from the country to the cities, and the emergence of an identifiable working class, the chasm between the two nations of rich and poor became increasingly apparent. One means of deflecting attention from miserable working conditions was through generating a sense of national pride."[188] While Prince Albert's speech demonstrated a certain diplomatic restraint, others were more direct about the way in which the Great Exhibition was able to elicit a new nationalism:

> The invitation we have given the world, to send its treasures to enrich and bedeck our Crystal Palace, and its tribes to visit us, for the sake . . . of witnessing our national conditions under its various aspects, implies a conscious greatness, on the part of our country sufficient to warrant such a bold and unprecedented step. It would be presumptuous and idle for an

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[187] Henry Maine, *Ancient Law*, 3rd American ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888), xl.
[188] Grace Moore, *Dickens and Empire: Discourses of Class, Race and Colonialism in the Works of Charles Dickens* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 21.

> inferior state to ask her potent neighbours thus to honour her, and no such state would venture the experiment.[189]

The spatial implications are clear. Confronted with an underlying sense of anxiety about its own national identity, Britain asserts itself as the standard of "conscious greatness" in the world. Individuals are invited *to Britain* not only to experience the Great Exhibition itself, but to observe first hand the wonders of the country's "national conditions." It is clear that, while the Great Exhibition welcomed treasures and peoples from nations around the world, a demonstration and declaration of the superiority of British culture was an important aspect of the decision to host the event.

Though *Bleak House* does not directly address the Great Exhibition, Dickens is able to position the narrative as an effective counterbalance to the popular rhetoric that accompanied the event.[190] Dickens, though appointed to a post in one of the Exhibition's planning committees, soon made it clear that he objected to the event's partial and therefore unrealistic portrayal of mid-Victorian urban life. The Exhibition was held in the specially constructed Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London. In calling the glass exhibition hall the Crystal Palace, Britain was able invoke powerful biblical associations. In Revelation, the Apostle John records that in his vision the New Jerusalem, perhaps one of the most potent place-based symbols in the Christian faith, descended from heaven to earth and possessing "the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as *crystal* [emphasis

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[189] John Stoughton, *The Palace of Glass and the Gathering of People* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1851), 53.

[190] While it is true that Dickens does not directly mention The Great Exhibition in *Bleak House*, many critics have acknowledged allusions to the event within the novel; recently and notably see Robert Tracy, "Lighthousekeeping: *Bleak House* and the Crystal Palace," *Dickens Studies Annual* 33 (2003): 25-53 and Clare Pettit, ""A Dark Exhibition:' The Crystal Palace, *Bleak House*, and Intellectual Property," in *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace*, ed. James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers, and Eileen Gillooly (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 250-270.

mine]."[191] London is, in this way, equated with the city of God, perfected and prepared to act as the seat of divine power in a new age. At the dawn of the industrial age, the age of British Empire, Britain positions itself as the spatial, spiritual, technological, moral, political, and economic centre of the world. Dickens's disenchantment with the project arose from his conviction that the Great Exhibition had uncovered a certain cultural narcissism that focused on the presentation of an imagined and idealised Britain. In 1851, Dickens, angered that the plight of London's impoverished had not been on display at the Great Exhibition that year, angrily asked

> Which of my children shall behold the Princes, Prelates, Nobles, Merchants, of England equally united, for another Exhibition – for a great display of England's sins and negligence, to be, by steady contemplation of all eyes and steady union of all hands, set right?[192]

Dickens's response to the gilded presentation of London life is strikingly similar to the rhetorical style of his third person omniscient narrator in *Bleak House*. In *Household Words* he criticises the organisers of the Great Exhibition for their efforts at establishing a national and, indeed, international identity for Great Britain. Dickens is, in many ways, asking whose portrait of British identity will be passed along to future generations. The Dickensian argument for an inclusive and transparent representation of cultural identity echoes his portrayal of Reverend Chadband, Mrs. Pardiggle, Mrs. Jellyby, and Mrs. Snagsby, characters so distracted by image that they neglect the duties, obligations, and injustices right before their eyes. The nation's invitation to "[witness the] national conditions under its various aspects" never came to fruition as the indigent population that filled London's slums was not granted entrance to this spatial and representational statement of British identity. The blind

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[191] Revelation 21:11 (King James Version).
[192] Charles Dickens "Last Words of the Old Year," *Household Words*, 4 January, 1851, 338.

hypocrisy that stirred Dickens's wrath at the Great Exhibition fuelled his satirical portrayal of myopic social indifference in *Bleak House*.

The exclusion of, as Dickens put it, "England's sins and negligence" embodied in the urban poor is of significant importance in the understanding of sacred place in *Bleak House*. The portrayal of sacred place in the novel followed a real-life pattern of social and spatial exclusion of those who did not fit the accepted norm of the desired and prevailing social discourse. For the organisers of the Great Exhibition, an official display on the poverty and squalor that many of its citizens lived in was in direct opposition to the image of England the organisers wanted to project to themselves and the world. This cycle of spatial and relational exclusion dominated the social fabric of the nineteenth-century. Thackeray, moved by his reading of Henry Mayhew's reporting on the London's most underprivileged and neglected citizens, wrote that the latter's writings portrayed

> a picture of human life so wonderful, so awful, so piteous and pathetic, so exciting and terrible . . . the griefs, struggles, strange adventures . . . [that] exceed anything that any of us could imagine. Yes; and these wonders and terrors have been lying by your door and mine ever since we had a door of our own. We had but to go a hundred yards off and see for ourselves, but we never did. . . . We are of the upper classes; we have had hitherto no community with the poor. We never speak a word to the servant who waits on us for twenty years.[193]

Thackeray's impressions reveal the degree to which a segregation based upon social class was ingrained in Victorian society. His use of spatial language such as "lying by your door and mine" and "a hundred yards off" underscores the fact that the politics of exclusion in the nineteenth-century is not merely social, legal, or economic, but inevitably involves a spatial component as well. Plainly put, just as there was no place for the poor in the narrative of British identity being constructed for the Great

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[193] William Thackeray, "Waiting at the Station" *Punch*, 9 March, 1850, 93.

Exhibition, there was no place for the poor in the social and relational narrative constructed by Thackeray's "upper classes."

The notion of a non-inclusive narrative construction is a helpful tool as I return to the way in which the social and spatial dimensions of this pattern play out in *Bleak House*. Leicester Dedlock, for example, unsettled by Mrs. Rouncewell's younger son's technological interests, decides on exclusion:

> "Mrs. Rouncewell," said Sir Leicester, "I can never consent to argue, as you know, with any one on any subject. You had better get rid of your boy; you had better get him into some Works. The iron country farther north is, I suppose, the congenial direction for a boy with these tendencies." Farther north he went, and farther north he grew up; and if Sir Leicester Dedlock ever saw him when he came to Chesney Wold to visit his mother, or ever thought of him afterwards, it is certain that he only regarded him as one of a body of some odd thousand conspirators, swarthy and grim, who were in the habit of turning out by torchlight two or three nights in the week for unlawful purposes.[194]

Leicester Dedlock's home does not allow for a boy with "these tendencies." Later in the story, the now grown Mr. Rouncewell returns to Chesney Wold as a successful iron master in order to ask Sir Leicester for permission to take Lady Dedlock's servant to live with his family in the north in order to prepare her for marrying his own son. Now confronted with an adult vision of the boy he feared so many years earlier, Dedlock's anxiety again expresses itself in terms of spatial exclusion:

> All Sir Leicester's old misgivings relative to Wat Tyler and the people in the iron districts who do nothing but turn out by torchlight come in a shower upon his head, the fine grey hair of which, as well as of his whiskers, actually stirs with indignation.[195]

Dedlock's understanding of the social order includes Mr. Rouncewell only if he and those like him stay "in the iron district." The fact that Rouncewell has transgressed the established social boundary, and done so with such boldness as to treat Dedlock as

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[194] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 98.
[195] Ibid, 417.

a near-equal, seems to Dedlock to be a kind of assault that provokes him to "indignation." Again, place here acts as one of the most powerful human expressions of inclusion and of exclusion, of love and of repulsion, of acceptance and of censure that an individual, group, or culture can express.

In another passage, the Reverend Chadband, speaking to Jo at the Snagsby home, is indicted in the politics of spatial and moral exclusion that dominates the novel.

> You are a human boy . . . O glorious to be a human boy! And why glorious, my young friend? Because you are capable of receiving the lessons of wisdom, because you are capable of profiting by this discourse which I now deliver for your good . . .
>
> > O running stream of sparkling joy
> > To be a soaring human boy!
>
> And do you cool yourself in that stream now, my young friend? No . . . Because you are in a state of darkness, because you are in a state of obscurity, because you are in a state of sinfulness, because you are in a state of bondage[196]

There exists latent within Chadband's assessment, the notion that poverty and filth are intrinsically linked to personal moral failings – a position which reformers such Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), Mrs. Gaskell, and Dickens himself seemed to adopt for their own purposes.[197] In 1842, reformer Edwin Chadwick reported to the Home Department that the "adverse [living conditions of the poor] tend to produce an adult population short-lived, improvident, reckless, and intemperate, and with habitual

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[196] Ibid., 289-290.

[197] Though reformers vigorously advocated for social and legal interaction with and amongst England's disenfranchised communities, their writings reveal a dependency - perhaps largely rhetorical - upon the relationship between poverty, filth, and moral corruption. See Pamela K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

avidity for sensual gratifications"[198] This progression from "slums to sewage, to sewage to disease, and disease to moral degradation,"[199] while perhaps not Chadwick's immediate intention, reflects at the very least a latent cultural equation between poverty, filth, and moral character. *Bleak House* itself utilises this fear of physical and moral contamination in its foreboding description of Tom-all-alone's:

> Much mighty speech-making there has been, both in and out of Parliament, concerning Tom, and much wrathful disputation how Tom shall be got right . . . And in the hopeful meantime, Tom goes to perdition head foremost in his old determined spirit.
>
> But he has his revenge. Even the winds are his messengers, and they serve him in these hours of darkness. There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream . . . of a Norman house, and his Grace shall not be able to say nay to the infamous alliance. There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution through every order of society up to the proudest of the proud and to the highest of the high. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge.[200]

This passage, strikingly similar to Charles Kingsley's depiction of Jacob's Island in *Alton Locke* (1850), portrays the "infection and contagion" stalking its next victims like a cold and calculating madman.[201] What is intriguing is the way in which Dickens utilises the socio-spatial language of borders in order to heighten the sense of terror in the passage. The sickness is bred in the slums of Tom-all-alone's. It leaves the dying bodies of the poor, and crosses the boundary into "a Norman house" in which "his Grace," to spite the safety implied by his station and fashionable residence, will not

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[198] Edwin Chadwick, *Report...from the Poor Law Commissioners on an Inquiry into the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1842), 370.
[199] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 131.
[200] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 654, 657.
[201] For an excellent analysis of Kingsley's treatment of this issue see Marc Reboul, "Charles Kingsley: the Rector in the City," in *Victorian Writers in the City*, ed. Jean Paul Hulin and Pierre Coustillas (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Publications de l'Universite de Lille III, 1979), 39-72.

be able to avoid infection. Dickens also plays with the popular notion, discussed above, of equating filth and disease with a level of moral depravity. The narrator portends that the illness is not only composed of atoms, but that its constitutive parts also includes "obscenity," "degradation," "ignorance," "wickedness," and "brutality." Dickens satirises the fears of the upper classes that the sickness spreading through the wind and water exacts a physical and a moral cost. This satirical turn underscores the narrative inversion that Dickens employs in this passage. He subtly implies that the origins of the disease and its spreading are indeed moral, but that the responsibility for those moral transgressions rests on the upper classes. The sickness, Dickens argues, will spread "through every order of society up to the proudest of the proud and to the highest of the high" because it is exacting "revenge" and "retribution" for the wrongs done to Tom-all-alone's by those with the power, authority, and resources to bring change.[202] Lawyers, politicians, and religious leaders take part in "wrathful disputation" over how to alleviate the suffering of those living in the slums, but none seems willing to translate theory into practice. The inaction of the elites is directly responsible for the suffering the "tainting, plundering, and spoiling" that take place as a result of the disease. The infection is an act of judgement not unlike the plague of disease that fell upon Egypt as a result of its refusal to free God's people. However, God is again absent and, though responsibility clearly rests with the established members of Victorian society, Dickens expresses a certain fatalism when he writes "Tom goes to perdition head foremost in his old determined spirit." Though Tom is not at fault, he is fated to end his journey in Perdition – the *place* of eternal judgement and punishment. This notion of an ominous ending to a life spent in misery is echoed in the following chapter when Jo, in the final moments before death, denies seeing a

[202] See also Charles Kingsley, *Cheap Clothes and Nasty* (London: W. Pickering, 1850)..

light but instead tells Mr. Woodcourt that he is "in the dark . . . a gropin – a gropin."[203] In this way, those in a position of power and influence are made doubly responsible for both the spread of the disease and the lives of the residents of Tom-all-alone's, who must spend their short mortal lives in a place "unfit for life"[204] and their eternities in a place of dark misery.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens suggests a reversal of culpability in which the dominant Victorian discourse, established by the upper classes, has quarantined the physical and moral contagion within the boundaries of particular marginalised places, most notably Tom-all-alone's. This act of containment enables the privileged few to move freely from place to place without risking "infection." Respectable members of society only travel to these quarantined areas accompanied by a seasoned guide – as was the case with Mr. Snagsby and Inspector Bucket – or armed with a legalistic and dogmatic ideology – as was the case with Mrs. Pardiggle's journey to the brickyards. Dickens, then, presents a spatial universe in *Bleak House* that has undergone a "process of purification, designed to exclude groups variously identified as polluting."[205] Dickens's reversal creates a counter-narrative to combat this prevailing ideology of purified place. In placing the blame on the upper classes, Dickens turns the notion of purification on its head and the question of who should be held responsible and spatially quarantined is reconsidered.

Sacred places in the novel are extensions of rather than shelters from, this politics of exclusion and purification. That is to say that they, without exception, serve to solidify the process and secure the boundaries that deny the poor and disadvantaged a viable place to call their own. As discussed earlier, the widespread

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[203] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 677.
[204] Ibid., 654.
[205] David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London: Routledge, 1995), 57.

Victorian assumption, evident in *Bleak House* itself, that poverty, filth, and disease were equated with moral failure, enabled this spatial segregation. When it relates to sacred places, this isolation is made even more difficult by the sense of dependency upon a central place from which to connect to a transcendent other; without this place, as Eliade argues, a sense of chaos and disorder takes root. Plainly put, access to the divine was something that was spatially prohibited by the enforcement of the Victorian ideology of exclusion. When considered individually, the various sacred places in the novel reveal a Dickensian vision of nineteenth-century Christianity that has retreated into bounded exclusivity in doctrinal, theological, cultural, *and* spatial terms. In that way, it has broken the spatial conduit to the divine for countless members of Victorian society. By placing the place-based symbols of God, to quote Jo once again, "out of reach" Christianity in *Bleak House* has become an indulgence of the privileged and, therefore, irrelevant to the challenges that confront mid-Victorian Britain.

"Out of Reach": St. Paul's Cathedral, Boundaries, and an Introduction to Sacred Place in the Novel

In *Bleak House*, Dickens portrays traditional sacred places as insufficient sources of refuge, comfort, and solution for the overwhelming sense of personal, social, and spatial disorientation and anxiety confronting mid-nineteenth-century England. While not advocating a wholesale abandonment of these places and, perhaps more importantly, the faith and ideology associated with them, Dickens's narrative is clearly intended to expose the church's own abdication of its responsibility to individuals living through this time of rapid change.

Perhaps the novel's most important episode for understanding Dickens's perspective on sacred place is Jo's encounter with St. Paul's Cathedral. As the boy

casually eats a piece of bread on the corner, he contemplates one of the most historic, important and sacred places in the nation:

> Jo moves on, through the long vacation, down to Blackfriars Bridge, where he finds a baking stony corner wherein to settle to his repast.
>
> And there he sits, munching and gnawing, and looking up at the great cross on the summit of St. Paul's Cathedral, glittering above a red-and-violet-tinted cloud of smoke. From the boy's face one might suppose that sacred emblem to be, in his eyes, the crowning confusion of the great, confused city -- so golden, so high up, so far out of his reach. There he sits, the sun going down, the river running fast, the crowd flowing by him in two streams -- everything moving on to some purpose and to one end -- until he is stirred up and told to "move on" too.[206]

St. Paul's, one of the pre-eminent place-based symbols of the Christian faith in Victorian London, has, in this passage, become something else entirely. The cathedral and its cross are traditionally interpreted and revered as symbols of the church as Christ's agents of salvation on earth. The centrality of these images had endured the storm of revolution and change throughout history. However, this place and its meaning are indecipherable to Jo, as unintelligible as the anything he encounters in the streets he is forced to wander. The cross at St. Paul's is no longer the symbol of the Messianic King of Kings, but has become an image of "crowning confusion." Dickens himself extends the metaphor beyond Jo and applies his place-based semiotic of St. Paul's and its cross to the whole of the London, calling it a "great, confused city." The church here is not immune from the confusion that torments Jo, frightens Esther, and draws Richard into despair. The church is itself crowned with confusion, unable to help itself much less the citizens of London in this time of change.

Dickens suggests that the confusion emanating from the "sacred emblem" is intensified by the fact that it is "so golden, so high up, so far out of reach." Its physical appearance and position parallel the existential sense amongst Jo and others

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[206] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 291.

passing by that the church and its message are inaccessible and make little sense. Dickens's use of "high up" and "out of reach," suggest that it is, to use the vernacular, "out of touch" with the needs of those who are similarly unsettled by the socio-spatial transformations of the nineteenth-century. Jo's contemplation of St. Paul's does not induce him to "stop and rest," but to "move on." His musings, limited though they may be, have not drawn him closer to the "glittering" cross, but have instead echoed the call for him to keep moving. In this way, the inaccessible religious establishment is paralleled with the brusque constable in their indifference to Jo's evident need. Dickens's St. Paul's becomes the spatial embodiment of the growing inability of traditional notions of the sacred to offer meaningful remedies to the myriad of issues facing mid Victorian England.

A closer examination of the imagery in this passage opens the possibility of an additional, albeit nuanced, reading. The description of St. Paul's architecture, though minimal, is significant when observed in the context of existing scholarship on the topic of sacred place. Mircea Eliade observes that the symbolic meanings in sacred architecture are often centred on "the temple [which] constitutes an opening in the upward direction and ensures communication with the world of the gods."[207] Eliade goes on to underscore the vital importance of this structure – the *axis mundi* as he calls it – as a conduit to the divine and as a marker signalling that that place belongs to the religious faithful, not unlike the erection of a flag by a conquering army.[208] Particularly interesting for the purposes of this study is his contention that "for the [axis] to be broken denotes catastrophe; it is like 'the end of the world,' reversion to chaos . . . life is not possible without an opening toward the transcendent; in other

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[207] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt: 1987) 26.
[208] Ibid.,37.

words, human beings cannot live in chaos. Once contact with the transcended is lost, existence in the world ceases to be possible."[209] In the passage above, the cross "sits on the summit" of St. Paul's Cathedral, in effect creating the *axis mundi* to which Eliade referred. It is "high up," adorned on its pinnacle with the pre-eminent symbol of Christian faith. The cross on the summit is, however, surrounded by and "glittering above a red and violet-tinted cloud of smoke." While the *axis* is not broken, its connection, its line of sight, with the "earth below" is compromised. It glitters but, like the "omniscient" narrator in the novel's opening passage, its view and connection to what is below is obscured by the return of Dickens's fog and smoke. I suggest that this break in the *axis* between humanity and the divine, this distance between the cross and Jo, spatially illustrate Dickens's own narrative and metaphorical version of the chaos and loss of transcendence which Eliade observed in his research.

Viewed in this way, St. Paul's Cathedral becomes a place-centred embodiment of the larger theme of a society in which God – or at the very least the tangible work of God on earth – has become suddenly absent. The cross atop the cathedral suggests the idea of an inaccessible and unapproachable God, "glittering" in stark contrast to the "very muddy, very hoarse, very ragged"[210] Jo – bearing little relevance to the souls that populate the city below. God is effectually absent in *Bleak House*. This pattern can be found in many Victorian narratives of lost faith, although there are differences of attitude and tone.[211] Dickens, for example, does not lament the absence of God, nor he is concerned about the loss of divine immanence in a morally corrupt

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[209] Ibid.,33, 34.
[210] Dickens, *Bleak House,* 162.
[211] See R.L. Brett, *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularization in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986), and Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (London: J Murray, 1977).

world. While Carlyle's assertion that "the Divinity has withdrawn from the Earth; or veils himself in that wide-wasting Whirlwind of a departing Era, wherein the fewest can discern his goings"[212] is similar to Dickens's treatment of the divine in *Bleak House*, it is important to note that Dickens does not express God's absence in devotional terms. While Carlyle and others use the image of an absent deity to lament the fact that humanity is no longer "encompassed and overcanopied by a glory of Heaven, even as his dwelling-place by the azure vault,"[213] Dickens's usage is more satirical than sorrowful, fuelled by his frustration at the hypocrisy of the religious establishment. The supremacy of the deity is secondary to the willing abdication of kindness and goodwill on the part of the deity's followers. The disappearance of God in *Bleak House* demonstrates the extent to which Dickens considered Victorian religion to have sacrificed charity for a sense of safety and authority.

The anxiety and dread that characterised Dickens's portrayal of the impact of the socio-spatial changes in Victorian England is accentuated by the absence of a culturally viable expression of the Christian God. Eliade's contention that chaos ensues once the spatially expressed symbol of communion between humanity and God has been broken seems accurate as the characters in *Bleak House* attempt to find their way without the traditional *axis mundi* that had served as the centre for the literary and actual world for centuries. This confusion, though often expressed spatially, deeply affects the character's sense of individual identity. Esther, haunted by her aunt's words and her mysterious parentage, questions her worth and legitimacy. Richard is unable to settle upon a professional calling and marry the woman he loves, finally succumbing to the madness and despair. Leicester Dedlock is

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[212] Thomas Carlyle, "*Characteristics"* in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle (Complete)*, vol. 15 (New York: P.F. Collier, 1897) 235.
[213] Ibid., 235.

threatened by the new aristocracy of the industrial age as represented by Mr. Rouncewell and sees the certainty of his station collapse before him as revelations about Lady Dedlock's past emerge. And finally, Jo, acknowledging again the novel's absence of God when he admits that he "couldn't make nothink"[214] out of the Rev. Chadband's prayers, is strangely aware of the spatial, relational, and intellectual censure society has placed upon him. In these characters, Dickens captures the destabilising effects of a culture of confusion upon the lives of individuals in the nineteenth-century.

The little church in the park

The novel's first extended description of sacred place occurs in the opening paragraphs of the second chapter. The chapter does very little to advance the action of the plot; instead, Dickens establishes the associative and biographical background of the Dedlock family. As with chapter 1 and its portrayal of the High Court of Chancery, the author uses place as a vital narrative tool with which to create particular associations regarding the Dedlocks. In so doing, the place that comes to be known throughout the novel as "the little church in the park" becomes constitutive of the physical, existential, and metaphorical landscape of the Dedlock family. Indeed Dickens's portrayal of this particular sacred place is reliant upon the growing public perception that parish churches were often willing to sacrifice their autonomous advocacy of the gospel in order to obtain support for the church and its clergy. M.J.D. Roberts, in his excellent work on the church patronage writes that

> . . many clergy took a keen interest in [private patronage]. The existence of private patronage provided a strong link between the landed elite and the clergy, a link which was believed to be beneficial to both parties . . . the clergy came to model their social attitudes after the fashion the gentry. The Church . .

[214] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 676.

> . reinforced its claim to be a respectable occupation closely related to the ideal occupation – that of a leisured landowner.[215]

For Dickens, this increasing sense of aristocratic and religious mutuality demonstrated that the Church's authority to speak forcefully and truthfully had been compromised by the selfish interests of a clergy that desired status and security over true faith and justice.

In order, then, to properly understand the narrative function of the "little church" within *Bleak House*, it is vital to contextualise it spatially within the broader framework of the land owned and controlled by the family. Though the church is admittedly given little attention in this chapter, it is thematically inseparable from Dickens's description of Chesney Wold and its environs:

> It is not a large world . . . [It] is a very little speck. There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place. But the evil of it is that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun. It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air . . .
>
> The waters are out in Lincolnshire. An arch of the bridge in the park has been sapped and sopped away. The adjacent low-lying ground . . . is a stagnant river with melancholy trees . . . *My Lady Dedlock's place* has been extremely dreary. The weather for many a day and night has been so wet that the trees seem wet through, and the soft loppings and prunings of the woodman's axe can make no crash or crackle as they fall. The deer, looking soaked, leave quagmires where they pass . . . The vases on the stone terrace in the foreground catch the rain all day; and the heavy drops fall—drip, drip, drip—upon the broad flagged pavement, called from old time the Ghost's Walk, all night. *On Sundays the little church in the park is mouldy; the oaken pulpit breaks out into a cold sweat; and there is a general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves* (emphasis mine).[216]

The narrative structure of this passage is reminiscent of the opening paragraphs of chapter 1 in which, as I discussed earlier, the third person omniscient narrator provides a sweeping aerial view of Chesney Wold and its surroundings. The narrator

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[215] M.J.D. Roberts, "Private Patronage and the Church of England, 1800-1900," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32, no. 2 (1981): 203.
[216] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 17-18.

does not allow an extended focus on any one particular spatial aspect of these various places, but gathers their various descriptions like bits of glass to form a kind of thematic mosaic that depicts Dickens's overriding narrative plotting and ideological intent. The passage portrays a place in which the rain is "slowly rotting the outward . . . in rhythm with the subtler decay within."[217] The description of the church as "mouldy" and possessing a "smell and taste" of the dead is purposefully echoed in the "melancholy trees," the dilapidated bridge, and the stagnant river. The passage suggests that the little church is not a place unto itself, but is instead a place within the much larger "Lady Dedlock's place." The church's physical and associative qualities are descriptively and thematically incorporated into the larger realities – spatial and otherwise – of the Dedlock family.

The church is, of course, different from the rivers, bridges, and trees that surround Chesney Wold, for the word and the place itself, to Victorian and contemporary readers alike, invokes powerful cultural and spiritual associations. Dickens is, however, not ignorant of these associations and instead uses them to offer a dual critique of the perpetuation of an unengaged and uniformed aristocratic ruling class and the church that has surrendered its prophetic and priestly office in order to secure its safety and authority in times of dramatic change.

It is important to note the way in which Dickens chooses to describe the little church in this passage. The "oaken pulpit" is, quite literally, the place occupied by the priest. In that way, it carries with it cultural connotations of authority derived from a supernatural source. As the place from which the message of Christianity is proclaimed, the pulpit comes to represent an emphasis on truth and salvation. This place association is undercut, however, by the "cold sweat" that runs down the pulpit,

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[217] Alice van Buren Kelley, "The Bleak Houses of *Bleak House*," 254.

suggesting that something sinister is emanating from a place intended for the strong, steady and uncompromising proclamation of the Christian message. The traditional place-based associations of the pulpit are further undermined by the next sentence in which the narrator suggests that the "general smell and taste" of the church recalls the "ancient Dedlocks and their graves." This small parish church is a place more closely associated with the Dedlock family than it is with the message of life and hope that supposedly characterises the faith preached from the pulpit. The bodies in the church graveyard are ancient, signalling that these ties are not recent but are, instead, part of a relationship between the church and the Dedlocks that has existed for multiple generations. Far from being secured in their tombs, the bodies produce a smell and taste that come to symbolise the historical relationship between the family and the church. By using the highly visceral and evocative language of the senses to describe the little church, Dickens is able to illustrate the profound degree of entanglement between the church and the detached traditions of the aristocracy, epitomised by the Dedlock family.

Dickens's brief description of the church also offers a subversive reversal of one of the dominant place-oriented narratives of the nineteenth-century. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the way in which Dickens introduces an inversion of responsibility for the outbreak of deadly diseases that were commonly associated with London's poorest and filthiest inhabitants. In this passage, however, Dickens reassigns the epicentre of disease from Tom-all-alone's to the "little country church" – a move from the slum to the sacred. The sheer physicality of the language – the sweating pulpit coupled with the smell and taste of buried bodies – used to describe the church is putrid, biological, organic, and suggests the release of and exposure to

bodily fluids. For Lougy, this language is indicative of a much larger theme in *Bleak House*:

> Things . . . are variously slimy, sticky, runny –oozing through the crevasses and cracks of a decaying world whose surface has been pockmarked by escaping gases and the viscous liquids of putrefaction . . . whatever physical distinction might exist between mud, ooze, and excrement become blurred in the panic-driven semantic coding of the nineteenth-century, as each becomes associated . . . with disease and bad smells.[218]

Lougy's reading of the novel has ample support in the text; The stench of the unhealthy water at the brickmaker's home, the "marshy smell" of Mrs. Jellyby's bedrooms, and the "offensive" smell of the yellow oil left behind by Krook's spontaneous combustion all demonstrate that, in *Bleak House*, the sense of smell is intimately linked to filth, contamination, and even death.[219] This point is made, perhaps most powerfully, in the description of Snagsby's trip to Tom-all-alone's with Inspector Bucket. Snagsby "passes along the . . . street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water . . . and reeking with such smells and sights that he . . . can scarce believe his senses."[220] While the fact that Snagsby is himself sickened by the smells is telling, Dickens explores the connection with more intensity as he continues to describe the journey. Later, Snagsby learns from the officer accompanying him that the stench is emanating from the "stinking ruins" of the "fever houses."[221] The powerful smells that sicken Snagsby are not linked to hygiene or excrement alone, but are expressly tied to the "stinking" fever houses populated by the dying indigent community of Tom-all-alone's. Snagsby, apparently sickened by

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[218] Lougy, "Filth, Liminality, and Abjection . . .," 477-478.
[219] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 121; 49; 476.
[220] Ibid., 330-331.
[221] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 331.

the smell and suspicious of the sickness that may accompany the odour, refuses to "breathe the dreadful air."[222]

In developing this idea, Dickens capitalised on the well-documented obsession within nineteenth-century British medicine and culture with the relationship between putrefaction and public health.[223] Early Victorian medicine and science developed theories of disease that held that illness was transmitted by means foul odours, or what came to be known as miasma. This notion was played out on a regular basis in the pages of local newspapers during the cholera outbreaks of 1853 and 1854. Within that period of time, the *Times* published several stories that made explicit ties between infection with the deadly disease and exposure to noxious smells. One story, detailing an outbreak near St. Pancras, reported, "there are upwards of six burial grounds in the parish teeming with human remains . . . The [place] is described as a mass of putrefaction, from which [comes?] a body of miasma, poisoning the surrounding neighbourhood."[224] These notices were published throughout Britain and were specific in detailing the growth of the outbreak within particular geographical locations. This pattern was echoed in other fictions of the period including Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago* (1857) a novel partly about a cholera epidemic in a particular region that is directly attributable to poor housing and poor sanitation. This environment of awareness and fear created an ever-expanding map of contamination. This practice of mapping reveals the inextricable link between disease and place and

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[222] Ibid., 331.
[223] See Alain Corbain, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); William A. Cohen and Ryan Johnson, eds. *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); and Tracy C. Davis, " Filthy – Nay – Pestilential: Sanitation and Victorian Theatres" in *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*, ed. Della Pollock (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 161-186.
[224] "The Cholera (from the Board of Health)," *The Times*, October 03, 1853.

exploited the existing socio-economic and spatial stratification of Victorian society. Dickens recognises this tendency in *Bleak House* and develops it to suit his narrative and social agenda.[225] The contagion that infects the little church in the park is not biological, though it is at least partially responsible for the death of several characters in *Bleak House* all the same. The metaphorical use of bodily fluids and the smell of death in the description of the church suggest that the church is suffused by a moral miasma that is, in the end, much more dangerous than the disease that radiates from Tom-all-alone's. This passage, then, represents a Dickensian redefinition of the nature and geography of disease; disease is both biological *and* moral and emanates from the slums *and* the sacred places of nineteenth-century Britain.

The gravity of this illness and the moral and ethical dimension of its character are depicted later in *Bleak House*, as Dickens reintroduces these themes in Esther's description of the little church in the park. She observes that the church "smelt as earthy as a grave."[226] Esther's observations continue the portrayal of the church in the park as a place marked by stagnancy, illness, and death. The place "admitted a subdued light," symbolically suppressing hope and virility and leaving the parishioners with "pale" corpse-like countenances. Dickens again uses smell to recall the images of disease and death. In this passage, however, Dickens is more brazen and the metaphor is more direct; Esther describes the church as smelling "as a grave" without, as the third person narrator had done in the previous passage, mediating the metaphor through the bodies buried in the church graveyard. The church releases an odour of death because its system has been compromised by the moral infections of

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[225] For examples of Dickens's well-established position on sanitary reform, see speeches on 6 February 1850 and 10 May 1850 at the Metropolitan Sanitary Association in *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. K.J. Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).
[226] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 268.

self-interest, privilege, and compromise. The evidence and power of this allegorical use of the disease motif resides in its relationship to the way in which Dickens portrays the biological illness that travels from the London slums to Bleak House. That disease, as discussed earlier in his chapter, is an expression of justice and revenge for the neglect of the poor and disadvantaged. The illness that seeps from the church in the park, however, is not given extrinsic justification, suggesting that the disease has emerged from some fault intrinsic to the church, the Dedlocks, or, more likely, the relationship of mutual self-interest and preservation between the two.

While the elitism and corruption that characterised the connection between the Dedlock's and the little church in the park in chapter 2 was demonstrated by the church's inclusion in the description of the Dedlock's "place" at Lincolnshire, the same connection is shown much later in the subtle elements of Esther's description of the church. Esther, awaiting the beginning of the church service, comments that the church service could not begin because "the great people were not yet come." The commencement of the service was contingent upon the arrival of Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock. The sacred function of this sacred place could not be enacted without the presence of its most prized patron. It seems appropriate to note that, elsewhere in *Bleak House*, Dickens makes no distinction between the religious and secular leaders in his narrator's speech shortly after Jo's death, condemning lords, gentlemen, and reverends alike. The religious establishment is a constitutive part of the corruption that the author attacks in the novel. The church in the park represents a spatial extension and representation of the sense of aristocratic privilege and indifference. The attributes of the church-as-place act as symbolic representations of the brokered relationship between the church and the aristocratic establishment.

Like Chesney Wold, the High Court of Chancery, Krook's shop, and even the first Bleak House, the church in the park is associated with stagnancy, decay and death. This is perhaps most tragic in the case of the little church as it represents a perversion of its original intention as a place of peace, rest, solace, and justice. The church undergoes a shift in orientation; it has, in essence, ceased to be a place that belongs to the service of God, but, rather, has become a place in the service of the Dedlock family.

Any discussion of the little church in the park as a sacred place would be incomplete without acknowledging and indeed analyzing the illustration entitled "The little church in the park" by Hablot K. Browne, more popularly known as Phiz.

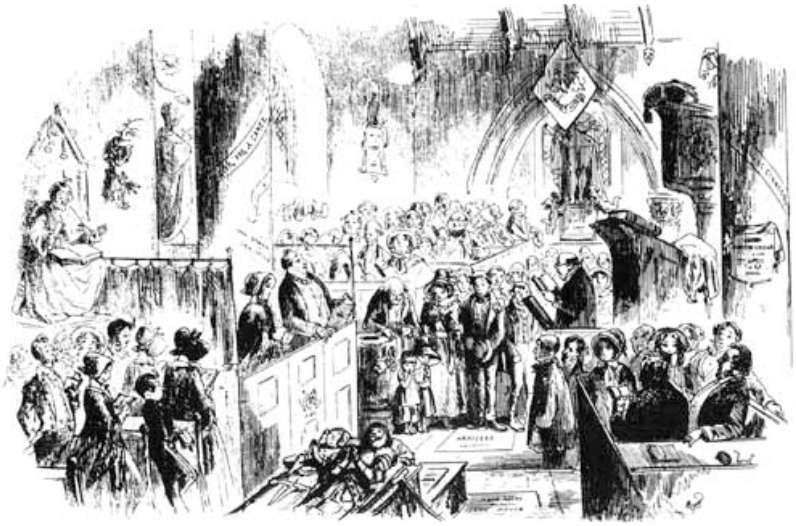

Fig. 1. Hablot K. Browne, *The little church in the park*,
in Dickens, *Bleak House*, 269.

While an analysis of Phiz, his work, and his relationship with Dickens is peripheral to this discussion, the inclusion of the nuanced and detailed rendering of the church in

the park is inseparable from a "reading" of this sacred place.[227] It seems important to note that Phiz's cover of the monthly parts of *Bleak House* was finished, at the latest, by March of 1852. A brief survey of that piece reveals illustrations that reference elements of plot and theme that were to come in instalments that had yet to be written. This timeline and evidence would suggest that Dickens had explained the novel in some detail with Phiz from the outset, thereby demonstrating a direct connection between Dickens's own intentions as an author and Phiz's illustrations. What is more, an illustrated representation of a fictional *place* within its narrative context and sanctioned by the author is especially helpful given the spatio-visual nature of this analytical study.

Several key elements of Phiz's "The little church in the park" (Fig. 1) echo the analysis of this particular sacred place discussed thus far. Most notable in this regard is the visual and spatial prominence given to Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock. From an aesthetic and thematic perspective, their importance to Phiz is startlingly clear. The contrast between light and dark is perhaps most prominent in the Dedlock's large boxed pew, causing the viewers' eyes to be drawn to that portion of the image in particular. This visual signpost is aided by the illuminated pillar that stands above the Dedlocks, acting as both an architectural frame for the couple as well as a shaft of light directing the viewers to the importance of the couple within the image. Phiz, therefore, employs artistic techniques in order to develop the Dedlocks as the centre of the entire illustration; everything, and indeed everyone, else is to be viewed in relationship to them.

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[227] For a more detailed analysis of Phiz and his work see Valerie Brown Lester, *Phiz, The Man Who Drew Dickens* (London: Pimlico, 20046 and Michael Steig, *Dickens and Phiz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

Of course, the key plot development occurring in this episode is the first encounter between Esther and her mother Lady Dedlock. While both characters are indeed in the illustration, there is nothing to suggest that this meeting is the most important aspect of the piece. Rather, I suggest that Phiz illustrates the little church in the park in order to underscore the importance of this sacred place to the overall themes within the novel. The church is illustrated in its entirety, inviting the viewer to understand it not in reference to a particular encounter, but – in the tradition of artists like William Powell Frith (1819 – 1909) – as a single, unified *place* in which multiple encounters and themes are played out. Whereas Esther's narrative account of the little church provides us with her unique observations and understandings of the place, Phiz offers a democratising perspective in which Esther, the servants, the gentry, and the tenants are all part of this sacred place. In so doing, Phiz is able to universalise the hypocrisy and exclusivity that are characteristic of the little church. Phiz's illustration, then, represents a broad, social, and fundamentally place-based reading of Esther's visit to the church. In this way, Phiz demonstrates a marked social awareness, echoing the themes and ideas present in William Hogarth's (1697-1764) moral works of art.

Having located the Dedlocks at the visual centre of "the little church in the park," Phiz incorporates subtle details that again echo prominent themes from Dickens's own narrative depiction of the church. Perhaps most apparent is the Dedlocks' importance within the spatial arrangement of the little church. As mentioned above, the two are spatially segregated from the rest of the congregation. From their vantage point, the Dedlocks can see the clergyman and many of the more established parishioners. However, it is intriguing that the servants from Chesney Wold sit behind them, obscured by a curtain on Lady Dedlock's side of the pew. This

may suggest the Dedlock family is not dissimilar from Mrs. Jellyby in their seemingly intentional ignorance of the plight of those within their own household, a reading of the illustration that find resonance in Sir Dedlock's crude dismissal of Mrs. Rouncewell's son. That this segregation is represented within the sacred place of a parish church further suggests the complicity between the privileged exclusivity of the aristocracy and the clergy. It is telling that the congregants, with the exception of the obscured servants, are all facing the Dedlock's great pew. This arrangement suggests a kind of spatial subversion of the pulpit as the centre of the church and the place from which the truth of the faith is proclaimed.

Dickens's theme of a church compromised by power and security is supported by the subtle messages Phiz writes on the banners that encircled the church's two pillars. It is fitting that the two pillars stand behind the parish priest and the Dedlocks respectively, for the corruption, again, stems from the relationship between the clergy and the aristocracy. The pillar closest to the Dedlocks reads "easier for a camel." Though the rest of the banner is obscured from view, this seems to be a clear allusion to Christ's warning that it "is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."[228] The second banner, hanging from the pillar near the pulpit, contains the partial phrase, "all shall be changed." Again, this is clearly a reference to the Bible. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he argues that followers of Christ "shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."[229] The prophetic hope offered to the more "corruptible" members of the congregation rings hollow in a place that perpetuates the place-based politics of exclusion and privilege. The idea that "all shall be changed" seems to run counter to the stagnancy that has

[228] Matthew 19.24.
[229] I Corinthians 15:51.

characterises the visual and textual representation of the church thus far. That the little church in the park affirms secular as opposed to religious paradigms of social reality effectively dissolves the demarcation between sacred and secular place. The church in the park has become an extension of rather than a refuge from the most pressing social issues confronting Victorian Britain.

Finally, and perhaps most powerfully, Phiz includes an unusual statue on the wall directly behind the Dedlock's pew. The monument – a seated figure dressed in legal robes and a wig leaning intently over a law book – is of a judge and hovers like a watchful angel above the proceedings in the little church that morning. A closer examination reveals important details. Above the judge's head is what appears to be a relief of the scales of justice. Here, however, the scales, in a blatant subversion of the iconic image of Lady Justice, are markedly uneven. The figure clearly alludes to the High Court of Chancery and its pattern of self-preservation and injustice under the guise of studied legal authority. In this single monument, Phiz is able to echo Dickens's idea of an unholy communion between the legal system, the aristocracy, and the church. The little church in the park has sacrificed its autonomy, authority, and individuality and has ceased to exist as a place in which individuals connect with the Divine. Instead, it has become a place in which the very architecture, décor, iconography, and arrangement of the church perpetuates the injustices that Dickens rejects in *Bleak House*.

Though, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, London is the place-centre of the novel, the little church in Lincolnshire is important to a proper understanding of the role of sacred place in *Bleak House*. Though the novel's plot and characters are pulled continuously toward London, the moral and social problems that elicit Dickens's ire occur in multiple places, both urban and rural, within his narrative landscape. In this

way, Dickens does not advocate a Romantic retreat from the perceived evils of industrialisation and urban existence. Indeed, Ruskin went so far as to call Dickens a "pure modernist – a leader of the steam whistle party."[230] Dickens sees the problem as moral instead of technological. Indeed, the new spatial realities of the Victorian urban environment were daunting, but the cultural reform Dickens advocates in *Bleak House* requires a moral reckoning as opposed to a departure from the promise of industrial advancements. This vision is realised, at least in part, in Mr. Rouncewell as the man of morality and industry.

Throughout the novel, the medieval relics of privilege and power embodied in the legal, aristocratic, and religious establishments are aligned against the progress of justice and reform that exemplified Dickens' vision of a better future. The little church in the park, *placed* within the lands around Chesney Wold, is perfectly situated to become a spatial metaphor – as all places are metaphors for human existence – for the sense of exclusion and indifference Dickens decries in *Bleak House*. The church, in its primary associative capacity, is a place of divine encounter. However, the geographical, architectural, sensory, and social dynamics of the church, as portrayed by both Dickens and Phiz, represent a corruption of that primary place identity by a compliant and even complicit religious establishment.

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts

Moving from Chesney Wold to London itself, the portrayal of sacred place as a spatial extension of the Victorian indifference and exclusion continues. In chapter 16, Jo awakens and begins his workday by eating a dirty piece of bread

> on the door-step of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and gives it a brush when he has finished as an acknowledgment of the accommodation. He admires the size of the edifice and wonders what it's all

[230] John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, Venice, 19 June 1870 in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 37:7.

> about. He has no idea, poor wretch, of the spiritual destitution of a coral reef in the Pacific or what it costs to look up the precious souls among the coco-nuts and bread-fruit.[231]

The passage, like the first description of the little church in the park, is brief, and yet it offers a subtle and important shift in the way that Dickens uses place to communicate his critique on popular expressions of the Christian faith. This shift is dependant upon understanding the nature and context of this place. It does not, after all, function – like St. Paul's Cathedral and the church in the park – as a spatial centre of communion with the divine. At the same time, the building is undoubtedly sacred in its dedication to and alignment with certain established nineteenth-century expressions of Christian faith and outreach. One may recall that a place is sacred, in large part, due to its divine orientation; sacred places are locales designated for the human remembrance, worship, *or purposes and mission* of the divine. The growing emphasis on missionary efforts amongst Victorian Christians was ostensibly a fulfilment of Christ's admonition to his followers before he ascended into heaven to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."[232] The name of the organisation itself, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP), echoes the implicit spatiality of the Great Commission. Indeed, there seems to be a direct parallel between the call to "go into all the world" and "preach" and the mission of spreading the "gospel" "in foreign parts." In this way, the SPGFP is the central spatial embodiment within England of what many believers considered to be Christ's final, and sacred, command before his ascension to heaven.

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[231] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 237.

[232] Mark 16:15, KJV; for use of Great Commission in the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise, see John Harris, *The Christian Church or the Christian Church Constituted and Charged to Convey the Gospel to the World* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1843) and more recently Alister McGrath, "The Nineteenth-century: The Global Expansion of Protestantism" in *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution--A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 173-196.

This movement of the Gospel to foreign lands fit nicely within the Victorian paradigm of national identity; the spread of Christianity to foreign *lands* via missionary efforts was oftentimes ideologically constitutive of the "civilising" of foreign *lands* via empire. Admittedly, a direct link between the construction of empire and the spread of missions in the nineteenth-century is overly simplistic, as missionaries and imperial officials would oftentimes find themselves at odds with each other in these foreign lands.[233] However, given their mutual emphasis on geographical expansion, their common national heritage, and the fact that many of their efforts "on the ground" overlapped, the symbiotic nature of their relationship cannot be ignored. The Bishop of Llandaff, writing in the early nineteenth-century, seems to express this dynamic as he connects the secular purposes of empire with the spiritual and moral agenda of British missionaries:

> I do not, indeed, expect much success in propagating Christianity by missionaries from any part of Christendom, but I expect much for the extension of science and of commerce . . . India will be Christianized by the government of Great Britain.[234]

The bishop's candour reveals the degree of entanglement between the roles of empire and mission in the nineteenth-century. For Bishop Foster, the efforts of British missionaries in spreading the Christian message were augmented, perhaps even supplanted, by the imperial expansion of British interests in India.

The history of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts itself is deeply rooted in the British colonial experiment. The organisation began in 1701 with a royal charter issued by King William III with the initial purpose of

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[233] For an excellent and detailed analysis of the relationship between empire and Christian missionaries, see Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[234] Richard Watson, *Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson* (London: Strand, 1817), 198.

revitalising the flagging Anglican Church in colonial America. However, within a decade, its role had been expanded to include the "conversion of heathens and infidels."[235] In its historic relationship with British imperialism and its ideological contingency upon the command to spread the Gospel, the intimate connection between spatiality and the SPGFP becomes evident. This connection, then, positions the SPGFP in *Bleak House* as an institution and, more importantly as a place with a distinctly religious, political, and spatial identity. Dickens had combined the ideologies of religious mission and politico-economic empire prior to *Bleak House*, most notably in his well-known satirical meditation on London as the centre of global progress in *Dombey and Son* as the narrator suggests that the "earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light."[236] Dickens's description of an earth created expressly for the profit and expansion of Dombey's shipping company is rhythmically and syntactically similar to the of the creation account in Genesis 1. If the passage in *Dombey and Son* suggests an ideological link between religion and empire by invoking religious imagery in the description of a secular business with intimate connections to British imperialism, then the description of the SPGFP in *Bleak House* achieves the same end by reversing that order and exploiting the historical and cultural associations of empire present in a religious organisation. The ideology and mission of British imperial expansion are, then, never far from the place associations of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and is crucial to understanding the way in which Dickens portrays this as a sacred place in the passage.

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[235] C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1901), 69.
[236] Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 2.

An understanding of the little church in the park was reliant upon placing it within its broader place-context of the Dedlock family parish. Similarly, the SPGFP must be contextualised within its broader place-matrix. The description of Jo's breakfast on the steps of the Society takes place in a chapter entitled "Tom-all-alone's," one of only three chapters in *Bleak House* that uses a place as its title. By constructing a scene – however brief – that focuses on the offices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts within the context of the fictional London slum, Dickens demonstrates his understanding of the rhetorical possibilities of place within the narrative context. Jo's encounter with the sacred place is immediately preceded by a graphic place-based portrayal of Tom-all-alone's.

> It is a black dilapidated street . . . where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants . . . Now these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery . . . [T]hese ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers.[237]

The depravity of Tom-all-alone's thus described elicits a sense of spatial immediacy in the reader. Dickens use of language is noticeably spatial, using phrases such as "among the rubbish," swarm of misery," "cloud of dust," and "bred a crowd of foul existence" to create an atmosphere of poverty and filth. Dickens almost chokes his readers by plunging them into the claustrophobic imagined space.

Viewed within the context of the chapter, then, the introduction of the offices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts represents a sharp place-based disruption to that sense of spatial immanence. After all, if the associative qualities of place for Tom-all-alone's are immediate and local, the associative qualities of place for the SPGFP can be said to be distant and foreign. The rhetorical strength of Dickens's use of place in this passage is subtle: while both Tom-all-

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[237] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 235, 236.

alone's and the SPGFP possess an associative spatiality that, in part, refers to a place in need, the SPGFP is representative of the need of an-other place while Tom-all-alone's is representative of its own place-centred need. Put another way, the SPGFP as a place is not in need; it is, as a matter of fact, an admirable structure and, as such, requires an extra level of affective place-reading in order to identify its ideological and religious justification. The spatially expressed need displayed in Tom-all-alone's, however, is not mediated through another place, but is inherently self-referential. This narrative distancing makes it difficult for the reader to associate himself or herself with the needs of these "foreign parts." Indeed, even the names of these two places – Tom-all-alone's and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts – are affectively dissimilar. The former elicits sympathy in its portrayal of place as the embodiment of an individual – Tom – who is spatially isolated. The latter, however, is markedly bureaucratic, challenging the reader once again to identify with its spatially ambiguous mission to "foreign parts." By juxtaposing the spatial immanence of Tom-all-alone's with the geographically distant concerns embodied in the offices of the SPGFP, Dickens is able to advocate a redeployment of effort, energy, and resources away from global interests and towards the social needs that exist within Britain's own borders.

This ideological struggle, setting the spatial representation of domestic injustice and poverty in Tom-all-alone's against the spatially expansive foreign interests of Christian missionaries, is reflected again in the details of Jo's breakfast on the steps of the SPGFP. After finishing his meal and sweeping the step in "acknowledgement of the accommodation," Jo takes a moment to "admire the size of the edifice" and, in this moment of reflection "wonders what it's all about." He is able to appreciate the SPGFP's outward physical aesthetic and that appreciation, it

would seem, suggests to him that this place is of some cultural importance. In this way, Jo's momentary consideration of the meaning of the SPGFP building is reminiscent of his encounter with St. Paul's Cathedral that was discussed earlier in this chapter. The towering steeple and cross atop St. Paul's and the great edifice that houses the SPGFP are places whose sheer physicality suggests something of their value to British culture. However, in the light of the definition of place proposed in this study, Jo's inability to make sense of the SPGFP demonstrates Dickens's radical critique of the religious status quo in Victorian England. That is to say, if place is, simply put, affected space, then the fact that Jo is unable to connect with or even discern a place meaning for the SPGFP would suggest that, for a growing number its London's poorest citizens, it has been relegated from place to space.

Dickens representation of the SPGFP is, then, reminiscent of Ruskin's description of architecture devoid of its original vibrancy and for which little remains "but the sickly phantoms and mockeries of things that were."[238] Though Dickens and Ruskin differed in many ways, Ruskin's image of a space now haunted by its placed-based past is helpful in understanding Dickens's spatial representations of the sacred. The narrative and rhetorical poignancy of Dickens treatment of the SPGFP is contingent upon the loss of something – namely, the sacred purpose that constituted its original place-ness in British society. The identity of the SPGFP as a sacred place, though no longer "alive" in this passage, haunts the reader in order to remind him or her of the consequences of nineteenth-century indifference to British domestic inequalities. The reader is at once confronted with what this place meant or was intended to have meant as well as what exists there now, and, in this way, a "tension is instilled between the precise yet marginal details of the memory of the place and

[238] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley, 1859), 33.

the now overturned details that occupy the place of that memory."[239] Dickens is intent upon capitalising on the anxiety caused by this spatial haunting; he accentuates the dissonance between what the place is and what it was supposed to be by his satirical treatment of its sacred purpose. It is ironic that, while the reader to whom the narrator speaks is conflicted by the presentation of the SPGFP, Jo is merely confused. While his aesthetic appreciation of the building may cause him to marvel, he is not haunted by the place's past incarnation as a sacred place precisely because he "has no idea, poor wretch, of the spiritual destitution of a coral reef in the Pacific or what it costs to look up the precious souls among the coco-nuts and bread-fruit." Jo experiences a sense of exclusion, but he does not "read" the SPGFP in the same way as Dickens's readers or, indeed, as the other characters in the novel. Throughout the novel Jo, in the tradition of the archetypal "wise-fool," demonstrates comedic simplicity and poignant wisdom. Dickens's satirical encapsulation of the mission of the SPGFP – the mention of coco-nuts and bread-fruit certainly not intended engender sympathy, reverence, or awe – would seem to suggest that Jo is demonstrating wisdom and sees the SPGFP rightly. While Dickens's rhetorical agenda seems to capitalise upon the haunting presence of the sacred in this now mysterious "edifice," Jo's inability to grasp that sacred past is portrayed as the most accurate way of perceiving the SPGFP in the novel.

In this passage then, Dickens seems to suggest that the SPGFP has ceased to function as a sacred place. Although brief, Dickens's portrayal of Jo's breakfast does seem to imply the certain qualities of place have come to characterise the SPGFP and that those qualities have come to replace the building's sacred history. Though it is easy to overlook, Jo's physical position on the outside steps of the building is

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[239] Dylan Trigg, "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory" (unpublished, 2007), 17.

important in revealing the nature of this place's post-religious identity. Jo is literally placed "on the doorstep" of the SPGFP. In this way, Dickens makes double-use of spatiality to identify the ignorance and exclusivity that have come to characterise the SPGFP. There is an irony in Jo's intimate spatial proximity to a place whose very name implies a focus on distant lands. Jo is physically close to the SPGFP while, at the same time, being quite distant from the existential spatiality of its intended purpose. Put another way, Jo's geographical proximity is precisely what prevents him from being within the SPGFP's circle of concern. This place that lauds itself as a centre for Christian mission has yet to make its calling of compassion, service, grace, and salvation known to the "savages and infidels" living in London's own slums.

The fear of contamination and spatio-cultural anxiety that gave birth to an unwritten policy of nineteenth-century urban disengagement has been sufficiently addressed earlier in this chapter. The pattern – spatial in nature – of domestic disengagement and foreign reinvestment became so ingrained in the Victorian church that the zealous William Booth of the Salvation Army wrote a work at the end of the century entitled *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890). In the book, Booth draws a direct comparison between the city and, taking his inspiration from the work of British journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904),[240] the colonial efforts in Africa. Ironically, though Booth portrays the city as a place of moral corruption, his work is not rhetorically dissimilar from the passage under consideration in *Bleak House*. By confronting his Christian readers with the similarities between "darkest England" and "darkest Africa," Booth demands that they de-compartmentalise their resources, effort, and charity and acknowledge the

[240] See William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890) and Henry Morton Stanley, *In Darkest Africa* (London: Sampson, Low, 1890).

mutual need between the two. In the same way, Dickens places Jo – an acknowledged representative of the poor and dispossessed in London's slums – on the very doorstep of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, thereby creating the narrative equivalent of Booth's rhetorical comparison between Africa and England. The irony of the child from the slums eating a piece of bread on the steps of an organisation intent on providing support, services and salvation to individuals living on distant shores requires that the reader compare the reality of the "swarm of misery" of Tom-all-alone's and the "precious souls among the coco-nuts and bread-fruit." Anthony Chennells eloquently explains this strange juxtaposition and its effect on the reader:

> Native, savage and heathen predictably come together by being drawn into a set that includes English soil; they constitute [an] . . . oxymoron although the reader's prejudices and beliefs must release the trope: that is prejudices which locate heathendom and savagery only in the exotic belief that England does not produce such creatures.[241]

By, in essence, placing the London savage alongside the spatial representation of the savage overseas, Dickens disassembles the popular construct of British national identity. As a place whose stated purpose is the geographical expansion of Christian faith and charity, the SPGFP is the ideal spatial embodiment of, as Dickens saw it, a trend within Victorian Christianity of branding the domestic poor as the Other while assuaging its collective conscience by investing in the spiritually destitute around the world.

This comparison is clearly designed to advance Dickens's perception of a latent hypocrisy lurking beneath the veneer of humanitarian work performed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and individuals and organisations like it.

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[241] Anthony Chennells, "Savages and Settlers in Dickens: Reading Multiple Centres" in *Dickens and the Children of Empire* ed. Wendy S. Jacobson (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 164.

The passage also seems to imply that the Society, in its efforts to ignore or marginalise the existence of the likes of Jo, echoes the efforts of the Great Exhibition and the British imperial enterprise itself. As I mentioned above, the sacred purity of Christian holiness was not the only ideology jeopardised by Jo's spatial proximity. Indeed, Jo's presence on the steps created a narrative challenge to the Victorian construct of national identity for "the imperial gaze, the philanthropic gaze, the missionary gaze" are united by the fact that they are "incapable of focusing on domestic detail."[242] One may recall that Dickens's primary objection to the Great Exhibition did not stem from its ideology of positioning the west as the global symbol of moral, financial and industrial progress. Indeed, Dickens seemed to affirm that notion in his writings.[243] Rather, Dickens took issue with the representation of British identity presented to the world at the Great Exhibition. To Dickens, it was a representation fundamentally incomplete and, therefore, fundamentally flawed in its unwillingness to acknowledge the poor and disenfranchised of British society. Similarly, the portrayal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in this passage suggests a Christian organisation whose "admirable" building and its laudable mission of salvation and goodwill are, like the Great Exhibition, gilded representations of identity that deny the plague of poverty and injustice, embodied by Jo, lingering within Britain's own borders.

Mrs. Jellyby and Telescopic Philanthropy

Mrs. Jellyby, though she has been tangentially discussed thus far, is, for Dickens, a paradigmatic character that allows him to illustrate several of the most

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[242] Ibid.

[243] Charles Dickens and R.H. Horne, "The Great Exhibition and the Little One" in *Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from Household Words 1850-59* ed. Harry Stone (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1968), 1:319-320.

important themes in the novel. In chapter 4, Kenge describes Mrs. Jellyby to Esther as

> . . . a lady of very remarkable strength of character who devotes herself entirely to the public. She has devoted herself to an extensive variety of public subjects at various times and is at present . . . devoted to the subject of Africa, with a view to the general cultivation of the coffee berry—AND the natives—and the happy settlement, on the banks of the African rivers, of our superabundant home population"[244]

The description is confirmed upon Esther's arrival to the Jellyby home as the woman herself admits that the "African project . . . employs my whole time."[245] The chaos that comes as a result of Mrs. Jellyby's obsession with the African mission results in a "disgraceful" home that smells "as bad as a public house,"[246] young children continuously teetering on the edge of physical harm, an emotionally distraught eldest daughter, and a husband that has seemingly surrendered any semblance of personal or relational vitality.

Admittedly, the hypocrisy evident in Mrs. Jellyby's relationship with her own family is the most striking aspect of her character. However, it is her adherence to the dubious ethical philosophy of "telescopic philanthropy," also the title of the chapter in which her character is introduced, that provides an important emphasis on issues of spatiality. A telescope renders close an object that is distant; it operates on a continuum of spatial immediacy. This rendering, however, is an illusion. The viewer is not in actual proximity to the object being viewed. That which appears before the viewers' eye is, in reality, only an image of the actual object – a filtered and reprocessed representation of reality constructed by the manipulation of light.

What is perhaps more intriguing is that Dickens chose to pair the word "telescopic," with all of the implications discussed above, with the word

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[244] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 44.
[245] Ibid., 47.
[246] Ibid., 56.

"philanthropy." The notion of "philanthropy" is suggestive of compassion, love, and support. Here, then, Dickens has combined words with seemingly oppositional, or at least conflicted, connotations. The immediacy of the concepts of compassion and support exist in a direct semantic tension with the instability inherent in the ideas of distance and illusion. The word, it is important to note, is not defined by abstract concepts alone. Indeed, "philanthropy" is inextricably linked with an active posture that anchors its definition within the context of the physical and relational world. The contradiction inherent in "telescopic philanthropy" goes beyond the field of abstraction and is anchored in the tension that resides between the concepts of distance and action. Both of these ideas – distance and action – are anchored in the experiential reality and have direct spatial implications. This contradiction is part of Dickens's rhetorical ploy as the tensions between "telescopic" and "philanthropy" create a cognitive and moral dissonance with which the reader must struggle. Placing these two words, with their contrasting implications, alongside each other is not unlike the image of Jo having breakfast on the doorstep of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; in both instances, Dickens questions popular Victorian notions of charity and generosity by using and manipulating issues of spatiality.

One may recall that place emerges as a direct result of human experience. In that way, a place-centred reading of the telescopic philanthropy metaphor soon uncovers the integral role of sensory interaction – the process by which experience takes place – in Mrs. Jellyby's character in *Bleak House*. The function of the telescope, after all, is to allow the *visual* field to become enhanced and, in so doing, to allow one to seemingly traverse large distances in an instant. Similarly, the function

of philanthropy, as discussed earlier, is inherently *interactive* and experiential, always requiring a subject and object to fulfil its mission of goodwill.

Later in *Bleak House*, Dickens makes a direct reference to Mrs. Jellyby's interactive and visual experience. As the third person narrator describes Jo, it becomes clear that, in this passage, the reader is being afforded the opportunity to "see and interact" with the sweet-sweeper through the eyes of Mrs. Jellyby.

> Jo is brought in . . . he is not one of Mrs. Jellyby's lambs, being wholly unconnected with Borrioboola-Gha; he is not softened by distance and unfamiliarity; he is not a genuine foreign-grown savage; he is the ordinary home-made article. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a common creature of the common streets, only in soul a heathen. Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. Stand forth, Jo, in uncompromising colours! From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, there is nothing interesting about thee.[247]

Though this passage contains a brief reference to Mrs. Pardiggle, it is more fitting to ascribe the recorded perspective and experience in the passage as belonging to Mrs. Jellyby as it is decidedly closer to the description of Mrs. Jellyby in the chapter entitled "Telescopic Philanthropy." While *Bleak House* has no record of Mrs. Jellyby ever meeting Jo, Dickens here allows the reader to experience the world as Mrs. Jellyby – a world in which urban natives like Jo live. In doing so, Dickens reveals the mechanics of human experience: the natural and culturally conditioned negotiation of one's environment as a spatio-moral being. That negotiation, mediated via the senses, is powerfully depicted in the narrator's description of Jo. Here, Dickens uses sensuous and visceral language, describing Jo as "disagreeable to all the senses . . . Homely filth begrimes him . . . [and] homely sores are in him." The encounter with and sensory experience of Jo is one of confrontation. Jo's overwhelming filth makes him

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[247] Ibid., 668-669.

offensive. Echoing the previously discussed tendency of many in the nineteenth century to equate poverty and filth with moral corruption, Mrs. Jellyby's vision of Jo's outward appearance leads her to believe his moral capacity has been diminished to the point that it has become "lower than the beasts that perish." The description of Jo is one marked by an implicit sense of proximity. The language used in the passage, with its emphasis on offensive odours, filth, parasites, and disease, are vivid and immediate, creating a sense of impending contamination or infection.

In her adherence to the ethos of telescopic philanthropy, Mrs. Jellyby places Jo and the natives of Borrioboola-Gha on a continuum of experience. Dickens is able to highlight the difference in the way in which she encounters, interprets and experiences each in markedly different ways. On the one side, the African natives are described as "genuine," and, as residents of a foreign land, intriguing. They are also referred to as Mrs. Jellyby's "lambs," a likely allusion to the numerous times in the Gospels in which Christ and the Gospel writers refer to sheep and lambs as symbols of corrupted and endangered innocents or as true members of God's family.[248] Finally, it is important to note that the residents of Borrioboola-Gha are referred to in this passage within the context of their spatial relationship *to Mrs. Jellyby*; they are "softened by distance," a statement that establishes an irrevocable connection between perception and proximity. On the other side of the continuum is Jo, the urban native of London's Tom-all-alone's. In contrast to the "softened" image of the African natives, Jo, as described above, is an image of filth and contamination. He is "ordinary" and there is "nothing interesting" about him. And again, as with the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, he is defined specifically within the context to his spatial relationship *to Mrs. Jellyby*. Jo is "of the common streets," a "home-made [savage],"

[248] See Luke 10:3, 15:3-10 and John 21:15.

and is described several times as being, in various ways, "homely." These repeated suggestions of spatial intimacy both define and heighten the descriptive impact of Jo as filthy and depraved.

The natives in Africa, foreign and distant, are passive beings, pitied, idealised, and willing to receive the fruit – whatever it may be – of Mrs. Jellyby's fevered commitment. At the same time, she ignores the native of London's own slums, as they "move on" through the streets outside her own home. Though these "native" communities receive different levels of attention from Mrs. Jellyby, it is also true that neither Jo nor the natives of Borrioboola-Gha are truly "seen" by Mrs. Jellyby. Telescopic philanthropy is an illusion that dehumanises the former and idealises the latter. In his essay on *Bleak House*, Bruce Robbins explains that "the verb 'to telescope'" can often be interpreted as "a forcible, sometimes violent compression in which circles collapse into one another and the result is closure and perhaps loss."[249] Mrs. Jellyby's participation in this illusion does damage to the humanity of these two parties, transforming them into objects rather than subjects. The Africans, safely behind the telescopic lens, become the objects of a kind of philanthropic ethnography, reducing them to statistics, numbers on a balance sheet, and letters to be written. Jo, and the denizens of Tom-all-alone's with him, become objects of abjection, their existence too dangerous to even acknowledge within the illusion. While Jo – and even the Jellyby children – are "ignored" by Mrs. Jellyby, it would not be accurate to say that she is not aware of, or even watching, them. To ignore someone does not necessarily mean that you are ignorant of that person. Rather, Mrs. Jellyby focuses her gaze through the telescope, ignoring the savages in the streets of London and in

[249] Bruce Robbins, "Telescopic Philanthropy: Professionalism and Responsibility" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, (London: Routledge, 1990), 215.

her own home, precisely because she is aware of their identity and the challenges acknowledging them would present.

It is also intriguing to explore another important implication of the metaphor of the telescopic philanthropist. Telescopes require a singular focus on the part of the viewer through the looking glass; peripheral vision is limited if not erased. This focus on the distant "other" is so intense as to cause Mrs. Jellyby to neglect the "difficulties and challenges" resident in her own home, much to the detriment of her family's well-being. In both cases, however, the spatial proximity that plays such a vital role in an individual's authentic experience of place is circumvented by the politics of power born from the ability to observe and, in so doing, objectify and existentially exploit the depersonalised other from a distance.

However, while the notion of telescopic philanthropy is clearly spatial, the connection with the sacred is admittedly subtler. Indeed, Mrs. Jellyby never makes clear the nature of her work amongst the natives of Borrioboola-Gha in Africa. She hints that the work is her "mission" in life, suggesting that she may understand it as some kind of divine mandate, but little is mentioned beyond that point. The link, however, becomes more evident when one considers the fact that critical and biographical opinion have uniformly attributed the genesis of the narrative of Borrioboola-Gha – situated on the "left bank of the Niger" – to the real-life account of the disastrous events surrounding the Niger Expedition in 1841, a trip in which forty-one of the three hundred and one travellers died of tropical fever while the natives largely refused to accept religious conversion or change their "heathen" ways. While the incident had preceded the publication of *Bleak House* by eleven years, the expedition had returned to the public consciousness again in 1848 when *Narrative of the Expedition Sent by Her Majesty's Government to the River Niger in 1841* was

published.[250] In that same year, Dickens wrote a lengthy review of this new work and, in so doing, provided important insight into the ideological agenda that was, at least in part, at the centre of the expedition itself:

> The stone that is dropped into the ocean of ignorance at Exeter Hall, must make its widening circles, one beyond another, until they reach the negro's country in their natural expansion. There is a broad, dark sea between the Strand in London and the Niger, where those rings are not yet shining; and through all that space they must the widening circle of enlightenment must stretch and stretch, from man to man, from people to people, until there is a girdle round the earth; but no convulsive effort, or far-off aim, can make the last great outer circle first, and then come home at leisure to trace out the inner one. Believe it, African Civilisation, Church of England Missionary, and all other Missionary Societies! The work at home must be completed thoroughly, or there is no hope abroad. To your tents, O Israel! But see they are your own tents![251]

Dickens's review expresses the extent to which Dickens had become convinced that strains within nineteenth-century Christianity – and evangelicalism in particular – were the primary ideological force behind the fated mission to Niger. In so doing, Dickens effectively contextualises the narrative – and more importantly spatial – dynamic that drove the fictional mission to the natives of Borrioboola-Gha. It is perhaps even more intriguing to consider that, by publicly and forcefully articulating his conviction that the global philanthropic efforts taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were the result of the misguided ideologies promoted within the Christianity of the period, Dickens provides strong evidence for reading Mrs. Jellyby and telescopic philanthropy within the Victorian Christian context.

In his review Dickens invokes the metaphor of a stone dropping into water and the waves that slowly radiate out from the centre as a result. That centre, Dickens states, is the "ocean of ignorance at Exeter Hall." The choice of Exeter Hall is not

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[250] William Allen and R.H. Thompson, *Narrative of the Expedition Sent by Her Majesty's Government to the River Niger in 1841* (London: Richard Benson, 1848).
[251] Qtd in Humphrey House, *The Dickens World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 89.

accidental, as it had become a place-based representation of Evangelical social thought and action. F. Morell Holmes, writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, records the history of the Exeter Hall by noting that "it was not until the Hall was opened and religious effort and philanthropic zeal had a 'local habitation and a name' . . . that we find the phrase 'religious world' used. We might speak of Exeter Hall, then, as the outward sign and symbol, the emblem and monument of religious and philanthropic organisation and work."[252] The hall, opened in 1831, existing within nineteenth-century consciousness as the centre of evangelicalism, is placed at the rhetorical centre, as the source, of the tragedy that took place in the Niger Expedition. By establishing a narrative parallel to the real life Niger Expedition in the fictional account of the mission to the natives of Borrioboola-Gha in *Bleak House*, Dickens implicates Victorian evangelicalism as the source for Mrs. Jellyby's misguided philosophy of telescopic philanthropy.

Further analysis reveals that Dickens's review uses biblical allusion to frame his rhetoric regarding the Niger expedition. Dickens's allusiveness utilises Victorian evangelicalism's hallmark devotion to the biblical text as a rhetorical tool against the movement's overzealous emphasis on foreign missions.[253] Dickens's metaphorical image of pressure rings emanating from a single stone thrown into the water bears a striking resemblance to the spatial dynamics of the Great Commission – a scriptural admonition, as discussed earlier, that provided the doctrinal and conceptual framework for Victorian evangelical missionary endeavours. In the version of the

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[252] F. Morell Holmes, *Exeter Hall and Its Associations* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1881), 29-30.

[253] For an excellent analysis of the centrality of the scriptures to the evangelical movement see David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989) in which the author asserts that Biblicism is one of the defining characteristics of the evangelical movement in Britain from its inception.

encounter recorded in Acts, Christ commands his followers to spread his Gospel by using spatial language, calling them be witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."[254] That deliberate, incremental, and spatial pattern of movement for the followers of Christ outward from the centre in Jerusalem finds an intriguing parallel in Dickens's use of a naturally ordered series of circles moving outward from a single place and action in at the centre. In that way, Dickens's assertion that "no . . . effort, or far-off aim, can make the last great outer circle first" becomes weighted with adds scriptural weight to its moral and rhetorical authority. That the review addresses its audience directly as the "Church of England and all other Missionary Societies," only serves to extend the blanket of culpability beyond the evangelical churches and movements that dominated Exeter Hall to encompass the foreign missionary endeavours of more traditional, conformist expression of the Christian faith. Dickens's final and rousing call for the citizens of England to address the needs within their own borders before attempting to cure the religious and social ills of nations around the world is framed, again, in the language of scripture as he commands them to return to "your tents O' Israel! but see they are your own tents!"[255] While the rhetorical strength of using the sacred scripture to critique the Victorian evangelical movement is apparent, it is perhaps more intriguing to realise that the expression "to your tents, O Israel" is "an [ancient Hebrew] idiom for assembly disbandment."[256] Given that definition, Dickens's use of the phrase at the end of the passage above can be read as a call for a realignment of Christian philanthropic efforts

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[254] Acts 1:8.
[255] See 1 Kings 12:16, 2 Samuel 20:1, and 2 Chronicles 10:16.
[256] Michael M. Homan, *To Your Tents, 0 Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2002), 192.

back to England's own shores *as well as* an interconnected, and perhaps more revolutionary, call for a disbanding of the British missionary enterprise abroad.

This brief analysis of Dickens's comments on the Niger Mission is an important step in contextualising the nature and, in turn, inherent spatiality of Mrs. Jellyby's philosophy of telescopic philanthropy. It provides the background for a more developed and critical insight into what Dickens considered to be the central ideological genesis of the fictional mission to the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, namely the fervency with which mid-nineteenth-century Christians – and evangelicals in particular – sought to engage in missionary work in foreign nations. Mrs. Jellyby's character makes a lasting impression on readers because of her unwavering devotion to her cause and the degree to which that devotion blinds her to the suffering of those to whom she is responsible. It seems untenable to assert that Mrs. Jellyby is without reason or motivation for her admittedly irrational behaviour.[257] I would suggest that Dickens's review of Allen and Thompson's book on the Niger Expedition contextualises the motivation and rationale for the fictional mission to the Borrioboola-Gha within the framework of Victorian Christianity.

Mrs. Jellyby, whose reputation within the narrative community in *Bleak House* had become inextricably linked with the mission to the African natives, can reasonably be read as possessing the same motivation and values. It is indeed difficult to imagine that Dickens's satirical re-creation of the real-life Niger Expedition would exclude the party within England at whose feet he had plainly laid the blame –mid-nineteenth evangelicalism. It is undeniable that Dickens portrays Mrs. Jellyby as possessing an insatiable need for recognition and acclaim. However, that Mrs.

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[257] It seems worth mentioning that Dickens's portrayal of Mrs. Jellyby is somewhat problematic in its treatment of the public role of women in the nineteenth century; See Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth Century England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002).

Jellyby's behaviour is motivated, at least in part, by her personal identification with Victorian evangelicalism maintains Dickens's narrative and thematic integrity.

Nemo's Churchyard

The final and perhaps most intriguing portrayal of sacred place in *Bleak House* is introduced in chapter 11 as the mysterious Nemo, the "no-one" upon whose identity much of the novel's plot hinges, is finally laid to rest. Dickens's employs his trademark combination of visceral detail and ideological furore in his lengthy description of the church graveyard:

> Then the active and intelligent . . . comes . . . and bears off the body of our dear brother here departed to a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed, while our dear brothers and sisters who hang about official back-stairs—would to heaven they HAD departed!—are very complacent and agreeable. Into a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination and a Caffre would shudder at, they bring our dear brother here departed to receive Christian burial.
>
> With houses looking on, on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gate—with every villainy of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life—here they lower our dear brother down a foot or two, here sow him in corruption, to be raised in corruption: an avenging ghost at many a sick-bedside, a shameful testimony to future ages how civilization and barbarism walked this boastful island together.[258]

Dickens's choice to "hide" the novel's most volatile piece of evidence in the church graveyard was not made lightly. The careless and haphazard fashion in which men, women and children were buried in graveyards throughout London was considered a source of the dreaded and disease-ridden miasma that gripped the nation with fear throughout the nineteenth century. Newspapers regularly published articles expressing - oftentimes in great detail – concern over the practices of these gravediggers, as in this letter to *The Times*:

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[258] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 165.

> The gravedigger dragged from behind a tombstone part of a mutilated body . . . to the grave, which had a few minutes previously received its tenant, and thrust it in with great violence, without a covering; he then descended into the grave, which was about 12 feet deep, and dismembered the limbs with a spade, and placed them beside the coffin over which he sprinkled a small quantity of earth. This grave has been left open for upwards of three weeks for the reception of bodies, having only a slight covering of earth and boards. [259]

The similarities between Dickens description of the desolate church graveyard and this piece in *The Times* are striking. In both instances the bodies of the deceased are treated with disregard, shoved into an ill-fitting space for the purposes of efficiency, profit, and expediency. In both pieces, the author expresses concern for the possible effect of the corpses emitting a contaminating airborne illness that would spread and effect the population.

Dickens's focus on the church burial ground becomes more pointed when one considers that his exposure to the issue went beyond the articles in the London papers. Indeed, evidence exists that Dickens possessed a collection of lectures given on the topic by medical doctor, social critic, and firm believer in the miasmic theory of contagion G.A. Walker (1807-1884), a man whose published works and efforts were singularly and publicly focused on alleviating the problem posed to the public by the abuse of the burial grounds.[260] Dickens, then, would appear to have more than just a casual knowledge of the controversy surrounding the handling of bodies at church graveyards throughout London. A careful reading of Nemo's burial, however, reveals that the biological risk posed from uncovered corpses in this passage is presented as a

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[259] "St. Anne's, Blackfriars," *The Times*, September 04, 1849.

[260] See Kate Flint, "introduction to The Second of a Series of Lectures on the Actual Condition of the Metropolitan Graveyards, 1847, by G.A. Walker," in *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change*, ed. Kate Flint (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 157; For works by Walker himself, see George Alfred Walker, *Gatherings from Graveyards; Particularly Those of London* (London: Messrs. Longman and Company, 1839); George Alfred Walker, *On the Past and Present State of Intramural Burying Places* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852).

metaphor of the moral and ethical malaise that, in Dickens's opinion, had come to dominate nineteenth-century England. Put another way, the disease that spreads from the decaying corpses in that graveyard – and it seems entirely plausible that the illness that kills Jo and, in turn, disfigures Esther originated at Nemo's grave – is there not just for its own sake but as an aspect of a sick culture driven by the overarching Victorian ideologies of greed and self-interest.

Disease in *Bleak House* is, after all, more moral than scientific; disease most often operates within the novel's narrative structure as a great equaliser, acting as a kind of executor of moral judgment. As discussed earlier in this analysis, the allusion to disease created by Dickens description of the "stagnant river" that surrounds Chesney Wold and the sweating pulpit and mould in the little church in the park are symptomatic of the moral negligence of British aristocracy characterised by the Dedlock family.[261] Similarly, in chapter 46, Dickens establishes an implicit connection between the "corrupted blood" and the "infection and contagion" festering in Tom-all-alone's and the vacuous bureaucratic rhetoric of political elite "both in and out of Parliament."[262] In both of these cases, Dickens structures his narrative universe in such a way that disease originates not from the random transfer of microscopic organisms, but from the violation of the Dickensian moral code. It is also interesting within the context of this study to recognise that both of these instances of moral trespass are actualised within the context of a specific place; the property of Chesney Wold and the slum of Tom-all-alone's act as a geographical "ground zero" for these morally-derived contagions.

Considered within the context of this Dickensian moral-biology, the graveyard in which Nemo is buried becomes an important aspect of the novel's treatment of

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[261] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 18.
[262] Ibid., 654.

sacred place. Of course, the spiritual and sacred connotations of burial grounds are deeply embedded within cultures throughout history.[263] However, Dickens solidifies these connections by infusing his narrative with specific allusions to the sacred. The passage above, detailing the burial of Nemo's body after the inquest, is carefully crafted to highlight the gross disparity between the dominant cultural association of the graveyard as a sacred place and the appalling treatment of the unknown law writer. The reader is introduced to the burial place as a "hemmed-in churchyard," the adjective suggesting that the graveyard – like both the church in the park and the Dedlock cemetery– is in a position of spatial and perhaps moral subjection. Given that most churchyards in the nineteenth century were adjacent or in close proximity to an actual church itself, this passage seems to suggest that the church acts as a kind of negligent witness, watching – and perhaps even obfuscating – the events that take place in the churchyard. Indeed, Dickens, without naming the church in particular, anthropomorphises the houses surrounding the churchyard, describing them as silent witnesses "looking on." In doing so, Dickens emphasises the importance of place as a viable, albeit metaphorical, medium of action and theme within the narrative universe of *Bleak House* while, at the same time, subtly distributing the responsibility for the treatment of Nemo's body equally between the gravediggers and those silent homes – and perhaps the silent church – watching the burial take place. Such a reading is supported by the fact that, as Rugg notes, "churchyards [were] generally owned by the national Church; legislation governing churchyards [was] almost exclusively

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[263] For a more developed discussion of the cultural and historical dimension of graveyards as sacred places see Jane Hubert, "Sacred Beliefs and Beliefs of Sacredness," in *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places* ed. David L. Carmichael and others (London: Routledge, 1994), 9-19 and Julie Rugg, "Defining the Place of Burial: What Makes a Cemetery a Cemetery," *Mortality* 5, no. 3 (2000): 259-275.

ecclesiastical."[264] Dickens's work seems to suggest an awareness of the intimate social, legal and institutional relationship between the church and the burial grounds – an awareness that implicates the ecclesiastical establishment in a wilful abdication of its responsibility to administer the rites of life and death with honour and integrity.

This incongruity between the spatial associations of a Christian burial ground and the actual events that took place when Nemo was buried is seized upon by Dickens as he fills the passage above with parallel extremes of sanctity and horror, all locked within an quasi-liturgical framework of prose. The author's repeated references to Nemo as "our dear brother" and his command to "sow [the body] in corruption, to be raised in corruption" are obvious references to important and familiar aspects of the Anglican liturgy for Christian burial in Victorian England.[265] The satirical invocation of these sacred rites is sharpened by their proximity to the language of abjection as Dickens inserts words like "shameful," "savage," and "abomination" throughout the passage. This juxtaposition presents the reader with a dilemma in which he or she is required to confront the tension between the two associative extremes present within the spatial confines of the graveyard. Dickens exploits that tension, using it to his rhetorical advantage. By radically – and negatively – redefining the associative nature of the burial ground, Dickens is able to redefine the nature of the institutional powers that are spatially and authoritatively responsible for its governance, maintenance, purpose, and existence. The passage, then, possesses implications that reach much farther than a single call for social reform on the issue of burial practices in mid-nineteenth-century urban areas. G.A.

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[264] Rugg, "Defining the place . . " 265.
[265] See United Church of England and Ireland, "The Order for the Burial of the Dead," in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1825), 179-183.

Walker, the burial reformer whose works, as mentioned above, were included on Dickens own bookshelf, echoed that conviction when he wrote

> The moral evils resulting from intramural sepulchre equal, if not surpass, the physical. They disgrace and degrade us to the lowest rank of civilized beings. They teach the sad, the humiliating truth, that the holiest of feelings are openly trampled on in this land which boasts so loudly of its Christianity, and that abuses of the most revolting kind are winked at and tolerated for the sake of gain. [266]

Dickens, like Walker here, sees reform as part of a much larger moral problem facing mid-Victorian Britain. The call for specific legislative and social change is folded into a much broader and more damning indictment of a religious culture whose self-interest and elitism has led to actions and behaviour wholly incompatible with its once sacred purpose.

Here, as with Chesney Wold and Tom-all-alone's, Dickens defines – or perhaps redefines – the associative qualities of a particular place in order to reveal the systemic moral inadequacies that he perceives to be so corrosive to Victorian England. Put another way, places within *Bleak House* are radically affected by the climate of the novel's narrative/moral/thematic universe. This pattern of spatial representation throughout the novel implies that Dickens is concerned with specific social reforms only insofar as they are indicative of a much more fundamental shift in the moral and relational ethos under which the nation operates. Within this passage in particular, the Victorian church, inextricably linked to the churchyard by proximity, responsibility, and perceived purpose, is identified as the institutional enactor of this fractured moral system. While a similar dynamic takes place as Dickens indicts the social and political elites within the framework of his narrative depiction of Chesney Wold and Tom-all-alone's respectively, the charge against institutional Christianity is

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[266] G.A. Walker, *On the Past and Present State of Intramural Burying Places*, (London: Longman and Company, 1852), p. 8.

perhaps more severe than these when one considers that the cultural dominance of the church was built upon its supposed moral and ethical authority as communicators of divine authority and wisdom. In this passage, Dickens suggests that the church has abdicated this mantle and it has become simply another thinly veiled agent of savagery and barbarism.

The churchyard in which Nemo is buried is reintroduced several chapters later when Lady Dedlock, driven by curiosity about the deceased law writer, makes a trip to London to see the man's final resting place with her own eyes. Her identity obscured behind a veil, she searches the city streets until she is able to find Jo and pays him to take her to where his late friend is now buried.

> By many devious ways, reeking with offence of many kinds, they come to the little tunnel of a court, and to the gas-lamp (lighted now), and to the iron gate.
>
> "He was put there," says Jo, holding to the bars and looking in.
>
> "Where? Oh, what a scene of horror!"
>
> "There!" says Jo, pointing. "Over yinder. Among them piles of bones, and close to that there kitchin winder! They put him wery nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to git it in. I could unkiver it for you with my broom if the gate was open. That's why they locks it, I s'pose," giving it a shake. "It's always locked. Look at the rat!" cries Jo, excited. "Hi! Look! There he goes! Ho! Into the ground!"
>
> The servant shrinks into a corner, into a corner of that hideous archway, with its deadly stains contaminating her dress; and putting out her two hands and passionately telling him to keep away from her, for he is loathsome to her, so remains for some moments. Jo stands staring and is still staring when she recovers herself.
>
> "Is this place of abomination consecrated ground?"
>
> "I don't know nothink of consequential ground," says Jo, still staring.
>
> "Is it blessed?"
>
> "Which?" says Jo, in the last degree amazed.
>
> "Is it blessed?"

> "I'm blest if I know," says Jo, staring more than ever; "but I shouldn't think it warn't. Blest?" repeats Jo, something troubled in his mind. "It an't done it much good if it is. Blest? I should think it was t'othered myself. But I don't know nothink!"[267]

Here many of the themes suggested in the readers' first encounter with the burial ground become more pointed. Indeed, the dialogue between Jo and Lady Dedlock, though brief, is a critical key in unlocking the nature and dynamic of the churchyard as a sacred place. The first question the secretive woman asks once she has located Nemo's corner of the churchyard is whether or not "this place" is "consecrated ground." The implications of her question are staggering. The reader, recalling his or her first encounter with the churchyard at the moment of Nemo's burial, undoubtedly anticipates Jo's doubtful response. What is more, it seems that Lady Dedlock, though this is the first time she has seen the grave, knows the answer to her question at the moment she asks it, for she, perhaps unconsciously, asks if the "place of abomination" is blessed. In a single line of this tragic and yet comedic dialogue, Dickens establishes a kind of meta-reading of the churchyard as a sacred place. The reader is, in essence, reading Lady Dedlock as she reads the disturbing spatial reality before her. Like the readers of Nemo's burial, Lady Dedlock struggles to make sense of her culturally conditioned spatial associations of the churchyard as sacred and the sensorial encounter of a burial place overrun with rats, covered with bones, and resting beneath a kitchen window. While Dickens, as discussed above in my analysis of the little church in the park, does not portray the graves surrounding the Dedlocks' land in a positive light, his description of the burial grounds surrounding Chesney Wold as "noble mausoleums rooted for centuries in retired glades of parks among the growing timber and the fern" is a stark contrast to the condition of Nemo's hurried

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[267] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 242, 243.

burial – a comparison that is seemingly not lost on the shocked Lady Dedlock.[268] Dickens is able, in the character of Lady Dedlock, to reproduce and perhaps even heighten the initial sense of experiential and spatial dissonance that his reader experienced when Nemo's body was brought to the churchyard several chapters earlier. Her response to these changed spatial realities is not mediated through the strident moralising of the novel's third person omniscient narrator. The reader, through the eyes of Lady Dedlock, experiences this place – a place wrought with existential conflict - with a more secure sense of authenticity.

The importance of this passage, however, extends beyond these narratological implications. Lady Dedlock's question regarding the consecration of the churchyard firmly establishes this place under the governance of the church. In the earlier passage describing Nemo's burial after the inquest, the church's administrative and sacred responsibilities to the burial grounds was *implied* by it spatial proximity to a nearby church as well as the narrator's quasi-liturgical rhetoric. In this passage, however, the question and subsequent discussion about the churchyard's consecrated status makes the connection between that place and established Victorian Christianity explicit. Sacred places, as mentioned in the opening chapter of this study are sacred insofar as they are recognised by individuals as places set apart for or dedicated to some aspect of community with the divine. The process of blessing or consecrating something is the process of formal designation. What is of particular interest in this passage is the underlying question of who is or is not doing the consecrating. In the nineteenth century, it is clear that the process of blessings or consecrating burial grounds was a duty held forth by the established church.[269] Lady Dedlock's question, then,

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[268] Ibid., 20.
[269] See Robert Phillimore and Walter George Frank Phillimore, "Burial," in *The Ecclesiastical Law of the Church of England*, 2nd ed. (London: Sweet and Maxwell,

acknowledges the authority of the Christian establishment to manage and, ultimately, to consecrate burial grounds like the one to which Jo has taken her. In this way, Dickens is able to remove any ambiguity regarding the identity of those ultimately responsible for the conditions of the churchyard and the contested practices taking place therein. The discussion of consecration, in only a few lines, is able to bypass the notion that the choice to locate these encounters within a forgotten and crowded London graveyard was solely driven by a desire to see burial reform become law in Britain. Dickens' concern in this passage is clearly focused on the question of who possesses the cultural, moral, and spiritual authority to allow or disallow a supposedly sacred place to deteriorate to such a degree.

Dickens seems to be suggesting that the moral failure of strains within Victorian Christianity has compromised its ability to perform its most basic, sacred functions. Jo echoes this very sentiment when he answers Lady Dedlock by suggesting that perhaps the ground had been consecrated, but it "an't done it much good if it is." The street-sweeper who "don't know nothink," realises that, just as the cross atop St. Paul's Cathedral made little sense as it stood so far off, the church's consecration of the graveyard had little, if any, effect on Nemo and the other faceless "no-ones" whose rotting corpses poisoned the air. In uniting Jo and Lady Dedlock in this brief encounter, Dickens is able to portray the two extremes of Victorian society. What is intriguing, however, is that, though these two individuals inhabit very different social positions, they are united in that they both, based on their encounter with this sacred place, make implicit challenges to the potency and influence of the church in such a dynamic time.

1895), 2:650-701. For earlier reference to the practice, see John Wesley, "Thoughts on the Consecration of Churches and Burial Grounds," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley*, ed. John Wesley and Joseph Benson (London: Conference Office, 1812), 249-251.

The implications of these challenges are both profound and, for nineteenth-century readers, deeply unsettling, for they suggest a rhetorical vote of no confidence in dominant expressions of Christianity and provokes questions regarding a fundamental realignment of cultural trust, power, and authority. The portrayal of the churchyard, however, provides a subtle yet important rationale for this radical destabilisation of Christianity's place and authority in the Victorian social consciousness. It is telling that, throughout the entire encounter, both Lady Dedlock and Jo view Nemo's grave from behind an iron fence. It is intriguing to consider the narrative and rhetorical reasons for Dickens's choice to depict Lady Dedlock and Jo outside of the churchyard, "holding the bars and looking in." In placing the characters outside of the churchyard, Dickens sacrifices the detail of a close encounter with Nemo's grave in favour of a more subtle allusion to spatial and metaphorical inclusion and exclusion. As Jo tries to explain the exact location of Nemo's grave to Lady Dedlock, he tells her, "I could unkiver it for you, with my broom, if the gate was open . . . It's always locked." That the gate is "always locked" suggests that its role as a boundary marker is permanent and not occasional. While the gate was a common feature of churchyard architecture, its metaphorical role here goes beyond mere narrative acquiescence to structural norms. Instead, I would argue that the gate acts a unique and aggressive boundary marker reflecting the desire of those with authority over its opening and closing to enforce spatial inclusion and exclusion.

While the locked gate most certainly works to keep visitors such as Jo and Lady Dedlock – whatever their intent – from coming into the churchyard, an inverted reading of this bounded sacred place would suggest that the gate is locked as a way of containing the associative elements of those buried inside. The conditions that gave rise to the call for burial practice reform were evident much earlier than the mid-

nineteenth century – dating back nearly one hundred years. As the affluent classes within British society – particularly those within urban settings – began to recognise the deteriorating conditions of urban churchyards, many began to look for other places in which to bury themselves and their loved ones. This desire gave rise to enterprising businessmen who began work on developing exclusive and well-maintained cemeteries at a price. In 1832, one such figure, George Frederick Carden, received permission from Parliament to begin construction on just such a project and, one year later, the Kensal Green Cemetery opened to the public. Kensal Green – and the other great private cemeteries that opened throughout the Victorian era – was new, safe, and clean places in which the more privileged members of nineteenth century could be interred. In sharp contrast to the piles of bones, partially covered corpses, and scurrying rats that characterised Nemo's churchyard, one visitor described the serene beauty of Kensal Green's grounds:

> After a pleasant walk of between two and three miles along the Harrow road, the handsome and substantial-looking Doric gateway meets the eye on the left, standing a little back; we pass through, and the grounds of the Kensal Green Cemetery are before us. These are extensive, comprising forty-six acres, and are surrounded with a lofty wall on either side of the gateway, now almost covered by a rich belt of young forest trees, evergreens, and shrubs . . . In the interior the grounds are divided by broad winding and straight walks, the rest being laid out in grassy lawns, relieved by parterres of flowers, clumps of trees and shrubs, and, above all, by the glitteringly white monuments of every possible outline, style, and size, from the simple flat stone, up to places large enough for their owners to reside in whilst living.[270]

These two places, the churchyard visited by Jo and Lady Dedlock and the spacious and manicured grounds of Kensal Green, could not be more dissimilar. The ease with which the author of the passage above enters the cemetery grounds and meanders through the beautiful gardens is, at once, markedly different from the locked gate that

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[270] J. Saunders, "London Burials" in *London*, ed. Charles Knight (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851) 4:170-171.

separated Jo and his companion from seeing Nemo's grave for themselves. Situated on the outskirts of London, Kensal Green had positioned itself as a singularly unique place in which to be interred; large portions of the cemetery had been consecrated by the Church of England and, as a private cemetery, it was able to charge fees for the right to be buried within its grounds. This exclusivity was in stark contrast to the churchyard that, in ecclesiastical law, belonged to the parishioners and the local church. While the church was able to charge a fee, it could not turn a parishioner away based upon his or her inability to pay. The establishment of Kensal-Green effectively set into motion a two-tiered system of burial in which those who possessed adequate means were able to be buried in the landscaped exclusivity of the private cemetery while those without were left to be buried in the rapidly deteriorating churchyards.[271] Here, then, enterprising men buoyed by the economic ideology of market capitalism identified the burial of the dead as a new potentially profitable market. In so doing, the exclusivity inherent within competitive economic systems became intimately enmeshed with one of humanity's most sacred rites of passage.

As demonstrated throughout this study, social exclusivity, whatever its genesis, is inevitably expressed spatially. While Dickens's description of the churchyard does not make direct reference to the mid-nineteenth-century emergence of private "garden cemeteries," the content and tone of his scathing rhetoric is evidence that he is keenly aware of the fact that Nemo is buried in such a way precisely because he is a "no-one." Thomas Laqueur, in his excellent study of the history of funerary customs and practices amongst the poor in the seventeenth,

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[271] Admittedly, some poor were able to save enough money over the course of their lives to be able to be buried in private cemeteries, but, before legal restrictions came into practice in the 1840's, the burial plots sold to the poor were treated with a marked level of disregard: "Three coffins wide, twelve deep, they were stacked." Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals," *Representations* No. 1 (1983): 116.

eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, argues that "in a world in which money was a major determinant of social standing [the pauper funeral] spoke of abject poverty; in a society of voluntaristic association, it proclaimed the failure to create bonds with one's fellow men . . . [it] became the locus of . . . anxiety about dying bereft of the . . . signs of communal membership."[272] Lacqueur's observations reveal the depth of the social stigma attached to the funeral practices of the poor – practices that he, throughout his study, directly links to the place and fashion in which the body is finally interred. Dickens directly links the social implications of Nemo's burial, made evident in Lady Dedlock's horrified reaction to the condition of the churchyard, to the sacred burial themes of spatial consecration and abomination. Dickens was not alone in this association; earlier in the nineteenth century, British essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) noted that

> nothing tends to keep up, in the imaginations of the poorer sort of people, a generous horror of the work-house more than the manner in which pauper funerals are conducted in this metropolis. The coffin nothing but a few naked planks coarsely put together – the want of a pall, . . . the colored coats of the men that are hired, at cheap rates, to carry the body, altogether give the notion of the deceased having been some person of an ill life and conversation, some one who may not claim the entire rites of Christian burial,--one by whom some parts of the sacred ceremony would be desecrated if they should be bestowed upon him.[273]

The similarities between the earlier description of Nemo's burial and Lamb's observations are startlingly clear. Like Dickens, Lamb views the manner and *location* of the deceased's burial as indicative of a man possessing "an ill life and conversation" and who "may not claim the entire rites of Christian burial." Both Nemo and the nameless deceased in Lamb's account are carried away by a poor and anonymous group of inexpensive men for hire, a procession that is the antithesis of

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[272] Ibid., 117.
[273] Charles Lamb, "On Burial Societies and the Character of an Undertaker," in *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. Thomas Noon Talfourd (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 414.

the ostentatious procession that takes place later in *Bleak House* at Tulkinghorn's funeral. What is perhaps more important is that, for Lamb and Dickens, the disregard for the deceased is observed specifically within the context of the burial as a sacred act – taking place within a sacred place. The narrative pathos in the description of Nemo's churchyard is, as mentioned earlier, heightened by Dickens's juxtaposition of the words "consecration" and "abomination." In the same way, Lamb combines "sacred" and "desecrated" alongside one another to demonstrate the experiential disconnect.

The gate, then, can be read as the narrative actualisation of the public desire to designate an-other place of burial for an-other kind of person. In this way, the locked gate that surrounds the churchyard in *Bleak House* comes to symbolise the spatial enforcement of an economic, social, and moral quarantine in which citizens without resources, citizens like Nemo, are buried ignominiously, without blessing, without dignity, and without the honour of mourners coming to visit their grave. This boundary reintroduces Dickens's use of spatiality as a tool for illustrating his conviction that popular expressions of nineteenth-century Christianity have either lost or sacrificed the moral and spiritual authority by which they could effectively and impartially impart the hope, love, comfort, and relief – all central aspects of the Christian message – to those members of society whose lives have been adversely affected by the rapid changes of that century.

Conclusions

This analysis of sacred place in Dickens's *Bleak House* was originally framed within the context of the confusion and change that characterised the nineteenth century. Dickens employed place as an important narrative device with which he was able to portray both the causes and effects of that confusion. In that same way, place

in *Bleak House* becomes a powerful – though perhaps critically neglected – vehicle through which the author is able to advance the plot, themes, and ideological emphases that have come to characterise the popular and critical opinions of the novel. This chapter also began by emphasising the central importance of Bleak House itself as a spatial and social paradigm for the novel itself.

While not expressly a sacred place, the emphasis on Bleak House throughout the novel, and its particular role in the resolution of the narrative, are crucial to understanding Dickens's vision for a meaningful engagement between faith and culture in the mid-nineteenth century. Though perhaps obvious, it seems important to assert that *Bleak House* is a novel in many ways dominated by the theme of home and the domestic. Indeed, many of the novel's central mysteries possess a direct or indirect relevance to home. Esther is essentially home-less throughout the novel and it is this home-less-ness that drives the narrative forward. It is, after all, the mystery and intrigue surrounding Esther's parentage – their absence from the home – that occupies the development of the plot. Lady Dedlock's dilemma, then, is whether or not she belongs in her home at Chesney Wold or perhaps somewhere more akin to Krook's boarding house. Home, in both its spatial and existential dimensions, is a central element of plot in the novel. It is not surprising, then, to see that Dickens, searching for a place-based symbol of hope to counter the prevailing "bleak-ness" of the plot, situates his answer away from the institutions of his day, instead placing it squarely in the home.

The end of the novel is significant in that it demonstrates the doubling of the home – the literal doubling of Bleak House. Close to death, Richard learns about the new Bleak House that will be occupied by Esther and Woodcourt once they are married and suggests that going there will be "like coming to the old Bleak House

again."[274] Similarly, after Richard's death, Jarndyce explains to Ada that both Bleak Houses are to be her and her new son's home. Woodcourt himself doubles the affective association between the new and old Bleak Houses for, just as Jarndyce took in the sick and orphaned throughout the novel, the young physician uses his new home as a base from which to provide medical care to the poor. This re-generation of place is the exact opposite of the destruction of place wrought by corrupt social forces throughout the novel. It is the greed and indifference of the High Court of Chancery that bred the place-based destruction of Bleak House (formerly The Peaks), Tom-all-alone's, and countless other properties throughout London. Similarly, it was the compromised self-involvement of the church that led to the darkness and decay that marked the little church in the park. The doubling of Bleak House, however, is the novel's first indication that the goodness of the Jarndyce home at St. Albans is not an isolated place, but can, indeed, be reproduced.

The existence of the two Bleak Houses at the conclusion of the novel does not nullify the existence of places whose values run counter to the compassion and mercy that are associated with these two homes. However, it does offer a kind of resistance to the overwhelming culture of greed and corruption that is expressed via persons and place throughout the novel. This is, of course, the original role of sacred place. Sacred place is, at least in part, notable for its difference from other places. The traditionally sacred places in *Bleak House*, as I have demonstrated, are not different from other places in any substantive way. Indeed, they offer only a continuation of the oppression and exclusivity that characterise places of authority elsewhere in the novel. Churches, courtrooms, missionary societies, and manor homes all blend together into an imposing spatial expression of selfish indifference.

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[274] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 903.

Before Richard dies, he declares that he intends to "begin the world" – an act of divine re-emplacement. That work is prophetically fulfilled in the beginning of a new place at the second Bleak House. The home is the place of starting again. Though the establishment of a new and different place is, to a certain degree, revolutionary, Dickens's narrative does not call for a dramatic upheaval of the social order. While issuing threats of divine judgement in response to social negligence on the part of English elites, the author suggests a subtler path to substantive change. Against the call to social revolution, Dickens suggests that there exists within everyday people

> a residual capacity for the creative uses of habituation in making a life and a home, still, within the world – preserving for themselves something of the deeper, half-lost meaning of human society. Consciously or unconsciously, that effort to make a little world, both within the larger world and against it, is the radical inner meaning of an emotional belief in home and family.[275]

Dickens radicalism is local both in an individual and spatial sense of the word. Dickens does not position his characters in places of great authority. Jo and Esther, two characters upon which the forward movement of the plot hinges, are outsiders. Dickens seems to suggest that change occurs in the often little known establishment of places associated with inhabitants who choose to enact a new kind of ethos based in kindness and compassion.

Of course, this is a discussion on the role of sacred place and it is important to explore the extent to which this emergence of the new Bleak House at the end of the novel is some sort of assertion of sacred place. Admittedly, in *Bleak House* Dickens is more comfortable challenging religion than he is affirming it. What is important in his criticism of traditional sacred place throughout the novel is that they are criticisms directed at the institutions and its professional practitioners rather than at the notion of the sacred itself. Plainly put, in this novel Dickens does not seem to have a problem

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[275] Philip Davis, *The Victorians*, 54.

the concept of God or with the notion of sacred. Instead, he seems to be broadening the scope of spatial possibility in which the sacred can be seen and realised. The churches, cathedrals, and graveyards have been hijacked and their sacred nature compromised. In *Bleak House* Dickens positions a localised familial expression of the Christian ethos that has departed from the church. The Bleak Houses at the end of the novel possess that which the traditionally sacred places in the novel do not. As I have demonstrated, this lack on the part of the traditionally sacred leads Dickens to question whether or not they warrant the covering of the sacred any longer. In that way, it would seem reasonable to suggest that, to some degree, Bleak House is sanctified to the degree that it fulfils sacred duties.

As I have intimated earlier, the two Bleak Houses are models of security in a rapidly changing world. Here, then, Dickens echoes the notion of the Victorian "cult of the home" in which "the rituals of family life . . . provided a sense of security in a rapidly changing world. The elaboration of the house inside and out gave comfort to families confronted with the unsettling changes inherent in industrialization."[276] In contrast to the Jellyby home, the order and compassion resident in Bleak House offers a subtle mark of its sacred nature. Though Mrs. Jellyby's home is full of the business of Christian mission, it does not reflect the order that is often considered a reflection of sacred place. Indeed, Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that sacred place is, at least in part, indicated by the triumph of order over chaos, echoing the creative act in Genesis and the regenerative act in Revelation.[277] The creation of an ordered home mirrors the creation of an ordered universe.

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[276] Randolph Delehanty and Richard Sexton, *In the Victorian Style* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), 103.
[277] Tuan, "Sacred Space: Explorations of an Idea," 86-88.

Places in the novel are or are not sacred based upon the degree to which they exhibit a morality that echoes the true meaning of the faith as Dickens understood it to be, namely the affirmation of a Christian faith "primarily concerned with relieving the condition of the poor and outcast."[278] Dickens pays little attention to the supernatural role that individual engagement with the divine plays in the designation of a place as sacred. He is instead concerned with the lived expression of that faith in moral and ethical principles and practices. Dickens is able to sanctify the love and compassion expressed within the two Bleak Houses and, in so doing, suggests that the home itself could become a place in which the sacred was realised.

The future role of sacred place in *Bleak House* is secure. Far from removing the sacred from the spatial scene, Dickens affirms that it has a rightful place in the struggle to obtain an equal measure of justice for all citizens regardless of their position within society. This struggle and the role of sacred place within it, however, is not framed within the spatial confines of a church, cathedral, or mission field, but rather in the home of a family possessing a strength of moral character and mutual affection. Though suggestive of a humanistic or secularised ethos of goodwill, Dickens seems to be suggesting that the sacred has been so corrupted by its various allegiances that traditionally sacred places can no longer be relied upon as faithful witnesses to their spatial character. In that vacuum, Dickens suggests that individuals, in whatever place they may find themselves, must make up for that lack and take responsibility and stewardship for the maintenance of the most sacred admonition: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."[279]

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[278] Dennis Walder, *Dickens and Religion* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 153.
[279] Luke 6:31.

Chapter III
Somewhere In-Between:
Sacred Place in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

I began my analysis of sacred place in *Bleak House* by suggesting that an in-depth analysis of the novel must, at some point, come to terms with the narrative's complex and central dealings with notions of place. The same can, of course, be said of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Indeed, issues of spatiality are deeply embedded in all Hardy's work influenced, perhaps, by concerns about site, setting and dimensions in his earlier career as an architect. This is especially true of the ten "Wessex novels" written between 1872 and 1895.[280] Issues of place and space have received a lot of attention, direct or indirect, from the ever-growing army of Hardy critics,[281] though many, admittedly, may not frame or conceive of their discussions in those terms and note really anticipate the present enquiry by directly exploring specific connections between more or less sacred place and dwindling religious faith.

The very fact that this group of novels has come to be popularly referred to as the "Wessex novels" reveals a subtle yet undeniable focus on issues of place within these narratives. While the novels are all set within the confines of Hardy's fictional Wessex, recalling the ancient kingdom of the west Saxons, they correspond to the very real geography of Southwest England, providing a kind of narrative surrogate for

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[280] This group of novels includes *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873*), Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Wessex Tales* (1888), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

[281] For examples of this critical trend, see Joseph Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970); Roberto Maria Dainotto, "Mapping the Country: Thomas Hardy and the Return of Topography," in *Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, Communities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 34-74; Ralph Pite, *Hardy's Geography: Wessex and the Regional Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Scott Rode, *Reading and Mapping Hardy's Roads* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

the land, cities, towns, and villages of that region. While it is true that no narrative can free itself from the constraints of place, the fact that Hardy remained committed to the spatial boundaries of Wessex over the course of twenty-three years of his life as a writer reflects a unique level of connection to place. That degree of spatial focus reflects a writer attuned to the narrative implications of the ways in which place interacts with the fabric of human experience and relationships.[282]

This understanding of the personal and social dimensions of place in the "Wessex novels" has at least part of its genesis in the life of the author himself. Hardy's father was a master stonemason and Hardy, at a young age, continued in the family business in a more formalised vein by apprenticing himself to John Hicks (1815-1869), a local architect specialising in church restoration. Hicks had such a lasting impact on Hardy's life that the author's second wife, Florence Emily Hardy, later wrote that her husband felt that "if he has his life over again he would prefer to be a small architect in a country town, like Mr. Hicks."[283] This youthful apprenticeship led Hardy to London where he began work with Arthur Blomfield (1829-1899) who, like Hicks, specialised in church restoration, but enjoyed considerable acclaim within the profession, serving in leadership capacities in several national architectural organisations. Working with Blomfield, Hardy not only assisted his employer, but also began work on his own commissions. By the early 1860's, Hardy, now in his early twenties, had settled into his role with Blomfield and had begun to reflect on the extent to which he could imagine himself pursuing architecture as a lifelong career. It was during this time that he began to reassert his interest in

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[282] For a visual and in-depth examination of the nature and extent of the relationship between Hardy's fictional Wessex and the Southwest of England, see Desmond Hawkins, *Hardy's Wessex* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
[283] Thomas Hardy and Florence Emily Hardy, *The life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), 455.

writing and literature, attempting for a brief time to unite the two disciplines by writing an essay on architecture for which the Royal Institute of British Architects awarded him a prize. Hardy describes this transitional phase in his biography, written by Hardy and his wife Florence:

> [Hardy felt] that architectural drawing in which the actual designing had no great part was monotonous and mechanical; having besides neither the inclination nor the keenness for getting into social affairs and influential sets which would help him to start a practice of his own, Hardy's tastes reverted to . . . literary pursuits . . . But he was forced to consider ways and means, and it was suggested to him that he might combine literature with architecture and become an art-critic for the press – particularly in the province of architectural art . . . His preparations for such a course were, however, quickly abandoned, and by 1865, he had begun to write verses.[284]

Hardy's own abbreviated summary of this transition only hints at the emotion that must have accompanied the decision to dedicate himself more fully to a career as a writer. Hardy, however, did not abandon architecture, using it as a means of support in the early days of his career as a writer, and, perhaps more subtly, imbuing his literary work with an architect's sense of spatiality and place. While the beginning of his career as a writer was tentative, Hardy was productive, having finished his first, albeit unpublished, novel in 1867 followed by an impressive five novels over the course of the next ten years.[285]

Though he no longer needed to rely upon his career as an architect in order to support himself, the mark of the architectural mind and temperament – the ability to create new realities – was always present in Hardy's work as a writer. After all, the architect is assigned the task of transforming space into place. That is to say that he or

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[284] Thomas Hardy and Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), 49.

[285] Details of Hardy's early career are recounted in a number of excellent biographical works on Hardy, including Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy, a Biography Revisited* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ralph Pite, *Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man* (London: Viking, 2006); Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*.

she is asked to transform the open and intimidating indeterminacy of an open space or unfamiliar place into the closed and inviting familiarity of desired place. Though these definitions tend towards the phenomenological definitions of place, the role of the architect is equally vital to a social-constructionist model of place, for the architect is the individual that crafts the built landscape of a given community in order to communicate and reinforce the spatialised politics of belonging and exclusion. The architect literally designs and manages the execution of boundary-marking and ensures that the visual and emotional character of those boundaries is in keeping with the desired philosophical and aesthetical tastes of those residing therein. What is perhaps more intriguing is that the position of architect is itself a bourgeois role as he or she, formally speaking, is involved with the conceptualisation of a built environment rather than the actual implementation – the hard labour – of those plans. This dichotomy between architect/designer and builder will become an important concept to which I will return much later.

This brief exploration of the various ways in which place is connected with the role of the architect would be superfluous if it was not evidenced within Hardy's own literary works. This is, however, indeed the case. In the introduction to this work, I offered a brief rationale for the inclusion of *Jude the Obscure* in this study. It is, of course, important here to extend beyond that initial explanation and attempt to demonstrate the degree to which the mind and disposition of the architect, a mind and disposition singularly focused on the creation of and connection with place, are reflected in this novel.

Jude the Obscure, the last novel written by Hardy, is well suited for this particular analysis not because it deals with place *more* than the other novels Hardy wrote, but, rather, because the issues of spatiality within the novel are so centrally

focused on issues of religion. What is more, the tone with which the novel addresses those issues reflects an important social-spatial-theological gateway from the Victorian to the modern era – a kind of place-based *fin de siècle*. Hardy himself hinted at the extent to which the very structure of the novel, such as it is, revealed a subtle spatiality in a letter he wrote in response to a review of the novel written by poet and author Edmund Gosse (1849-1928): "Your review is the most discriminating that has yet appeared. It required an artist to see that the plot is almost geometrically constructed – I ought not to say *constructed* for, beyond a certain point, the characters necessitated it, & [*sic*] I simply let it come."[286] Here Hardy reveals that a geometric – a spatial – reading of the novel is the most "discriminating" reading of the novel that he had encountered. Interestingly, his letter to Gosse reveals a duality of place focus in *Jude the Obscure* between the social constructionist and the phenomenological perspectives; he writes of *constructing* a plot but also notes that, at a certain point, he must allow himself to *experience* the act of building as he "simply [lets] it come." This subtle revelation of the balance between the construction of place and the experience of place – borne out, as I will demonstrate, in the text – underscores the depth and maturity of Hardy's place vision in *Jude the Obscure*.

Stratified Places: Social Constructionist Modalities of Place in Jude the Obscure

Hardy wastes no time in establishing the way in which place interacts with social roles and expectations in *Jude the Obscure*. The novel opens with the departure of the schoolmaster from his post in the rural village of Marygreen, a man now shrouded in mystery but one who will come to be known as Phillotson and will play a

[286] Thomas Hardy to Edmund Gosse. Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. R.L. Purdy and Michael Millgate, vol. 2 (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1978), 93.

central role in the unravelling of the plot. Jude, living in that same Wessex village, has come to admire his schoolmaster and tearfully inquires as to why he must leave:

> "Ah--that would be a long story. You wouldn't understand my reasons, Jude. You will, perhaps, when you are older."
>
> "I think I should now, sir."
>
> "Well--don't speak of this everywhere. You know what a university is, and a university degree? It is the necessary hallmark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching. My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained. By going to live at Christminster, or near it, I shall be at headquarters, so to speak, and if my scheme is practicable at all, I consider that being on the spot will afford me a better chance of carrying it out than I should have elsewhere."[287]

Here, then, in the opening pages of the novel, place is stratified into positions of privilege and desire. Phillotson seeks to enact his "scheme" of bettering himself and has come to the conclusion that to do so he must be at "or near" the "headquarters" of Christian learning. His desire to obtain a degree and ordination – his "dream" – is expressed in terms of where he is spatially. He has come to understand that the place that he occupies is an essential component to the fulfilment of his dream. What is intriguing is by suggesting that he has a "better chance of [obtaining his goal at Christminster] than I should have *elsewhere* [emphasis mine]" Phillotson establishes an implicit comparison between Christminster and the various "elsewheres," including Marygreen, that can be found in Wessex. In that comparison, it would seem that the places that compose the latter were found lacking in their ability to give him the necessary foothold to reach the next rung on the social ladder.

Though Phillotson has now gone, his words reverberate through the consciousness of young Jude who takes to heart not only his former schoolmaster's desire to reach Christminster, but also his understanding of the role that spatiality

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[287] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

plays in the construction of social hierarchies. Pondering his recent discussion and lamenting the fact that he must stay behind in Marygreen, Jude thinks to himself that Phillotson must be "too clever to bide here any longer – a small sleepy place like this!"[288] Here then, Hardy establishes that places are constructed by the way in which they are construed. Jude, recently orphaned by the death of his father, has been relocated to be with his Aunt Drusilla there in Marygreen. Hardy implies Jude's own sense of placelessness when his Aunt blithely explains to him that she thinks it "would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too, wi' thy mother and father, poor useless boy!"[289] Jude's sense of being unwanted in this new place he inhabits finds a particular existential resonance in the departing schoolmaster. The boy is fertile soil for Phillotson's own seeds of spatial and social discontent. Jude's own angst transforms his teacher's mild suggestion that Marygreen was not the best place to pursue an academic degree and ordination into a broad based characterisation of the village itself as a place too dull and slow for clever men such as the schoolmaster. Phillotson's comments to his pupil on the road out of town and Jude's subsequent interpretation of those statements demonstrates the degree to which Hardy comprehends the dynamic by which social conceptions of place are created – how they are passed along. Though Jude most likely possessed a vague yet overwhelming sense of unease with the place he inhabited, his encounter with his schoolmaster allowed him to spatialise his dissatisfaction into place-based objects of desire (Christminster) and derision (Marygreen).

Christminster, closely modelled on Oxford, looms large in the narrative construction of *Jude the Obscure* and, as such, will have a bearing on multiple aspects of this place-based analysis of the novel. However, any brief survey of the social

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[288] Ibid., 5.
[289] Ibid., 7.

implications of place construction in the novel cannot, as demonstrated above, avoid the way in which this city acts as a marker of socially-prescribed and geographically enforced boundaries. The brief interaction with his schoolmaster and future rival, then, sets the stage for the protagonist's singular obsession. It is fitting that Hardy finally, after various attempts, settled on *Jude the Obscure* as the novel's title since, in the end, Jude's solitary obsession with the city of Christminster outlasts even his dedication to his cousin and lover Sue. That Jude spends his lifetime trying to find some way to breach the walls of the city of learning is indicative of the degree to which it stands as the novel's singular portrait of place-based social exclusivity.

The reinforcement of place-based boundaries as a method of securing a particular social and relational demarcation is reinforced shortly after Phillotson's departure. With a new spatio-cultural awareness of the antithetical relationship between rural Marygreen and the mysterious Christminster still fresh in his mind, Jude makes an attempt to find out more about his teacher's destination:

> "Where is this beautiful city, Aunt--this place where Mr. Phillotson is gone to?" asked the boy, after meditating in silence.
>
> "Lord! you ought to know where the city of Christminster is. Near a score of miles from here. It is a place much too good for you ever to have much to do with, poor boy, I'm a-thinking . . . "
>
> "Could I go to see him?"
>
> "Lord, no! You didn't grow up hereabout, or you wouldn't ask such as that. We've never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster with we."[290]

Here, then, Hardy confirms that Jude possessed no knowledge of Christminster prior to his final discussion with Phillotson. It becomes clear that the brief conversation with his schoolmaster had made an impression on the boy who, in only a few hours, is referring to the place as "beautiful." The degree to which this inherited and inflated

[290] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*. 12.

understanding of the city as a more spatially, socially, and existentially significant than his present surroundings has taken hold of Jude is evidenced by the fact that his question is directly preceded by his aunt's exasperated confession that she wishes he had simply left with his schoolmaster to Christminster. This is followed by an ominous warning, one of many throughout the novel, that "there never was any sprawl on thy side of the family, and never will be!"[291] Jude, however, does not respond to his aunt's rejection or her prophecy of doom, but, instead, is seemingly triggered into a state of rapture by the passing mention of Christminster. Again, Jude exemplifies the degree to which the socially-determined status of a place is reinforced and even strengthened as it moves from person to person and how that process of spatial idealization leads to a concomitant sense of dissatisfaction and denigration of other places and their inhabitants.

Aunt Drusilla responds to Jude's new sense of wonder by recounting her own place-based understanding of Christminster, Marygreen, and, more importantly, the relationship between the two locales. Jude's aunt agrees that Christminster is a place of substantial import, expressing surprise that a Wessex boy does "not know where the city of Christminster is." She goes on to acknowledge that there is a gulf between the here of Marygreen and the there of Christminster even though the city of learning is only "a score of miles from here." The distance between Christminster and Marygreen is, however, not measured in miles but in the perceived social status, the perceived quality, of the individuals that inhabit the two locales. Jude's aunt suggests that the city of learning is too far because it is "much too good for you ever to have much to do with, poor boy." While harsh, Drusilla's comments reaffirm both the

[291] Ibid.

schoolmaster's and Jude's understanding of the socio-spatial dialectic that exists between the rural village and this "beautiful city."

While Jude's aunt confirms the perception of Christminster as an exclusive place for people of a particular social and even moral stature, her response to whether or not Jude is able to go visit his former teacher at some point in the future, reveals a subtle yet important difference in tone. Drusilla's answer is passionate and immediately moves to the establishment of an entrenched place-based system of knowledge. Since the boy did not "grow up hereabout," he did not know that the inhabitants of Marygreen "never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster with we." Drusilla derides Jude for the foolishness of his question and, in so doing, marks him as a spatial and cultural outsider. Jude, then, experiences a double alienation; he is "too poor" to be of Christminster while, at the same time, his questions reveal that he is not a part of Marygreen.

Drusilla deepens the sense of a place-based social identity belonging to the residents of Marygreen by suggesting that the residents of Christminster have nothing to do with them, and that they have nothing to do with the residents of Christminster. At first, this comment seems like an echo of her earlier statement that Christminster is "too good" for Jude. However, upon closer consideration, one perceives that her assertion of the conduct between the two locales is not entirely passive. The residents of Marygreen are not merely victims ignored by the "folks in Christminster." Her explanation to Jude also includes a slight, yet nonetheless vital, assertion of the fact that the residents of Marygreen, in turn, take the active stance of ignoring the residents of Christminster. Her statement reveals the establishment of a place-based social identity that operates in relation to and, what is more, to the exclusion of the residents of Christminster. Here, then, is the assertion of place-based exclusivity

occurring in response to social marginalisation. Not unlike Esther and Ada's visit to the brickmaker's home with Mrs. Pardiggle, the residents of Marygreen do not deny that they are not "good enough" to reside in Christminster. And yet they have – perhaps out of necessity – crafted an exclusive place-based identity that is, like Christminster, dependent upon its exclusivity for its existence and survival.[292]

This process of spatial individuation amongst the residents at Marygreen is turned against Jude throughout the novel as they never allow him to overcome his outsider status. As I discussed earlier, Aunt Drusilla rebukes Jude because he did not grow up "hereabout" and, as a result, does not know the social rules that dictate behaviour in the village. Later in the novel, Jude is once again positioned as the outsider as he returns to the village after having spent a period of time in Christminster. The ambivalence of his "place of origin" – not quite from Marygreen and not quite from Christminster – is reflected in the villager's reaction to him as they respond with varying degrees of curiosity, mockery, and antagonism. Returning to Marygreen on a Sunday evening, Jude observes a group of villagers standing together and is "startled by a salute from one of them,"[293] an individual he did not recall knowing during his time in the village. Admittedly, the meaning of Hardy's use of the term "salute" is unclear in this passage. While it is possible that Hardy intended that the stranger simply greeted Jude with a simple wave of the hand, the tenor of the rest of the conversation coupled with Jude's surprise makes it entirely possible that the young man surprised Jude by offering an affected mocking motion of deference,

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[292] It is no mistake that Aunt Drusilla's assertion of Marygreen's place-based identity is included in the section on Christminster as, according to the text, the process by which this identity emerges is directly connected to the vision of Christminster as a place of social exclusivity.
[293] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 106.

"saluting" Jude as a visitor from the city of Christminster.[294] In this encounter, one can hear an echo of Arabella's mocking call of "Hoity-toity" that came as Jude verbalised to himself his plan to gain access to the knowledge that would allow him to earn a degree one day at Christminster.[295]

Jude's tells the villager that Christminster was indeed "more" than Jude had originally imagined when, as a boy, he longed to be a citizen of the "City of Light." The villager's response is antagonistic as he recounts that, upon his own visit to Christminster, he "didn't see much in it . . . auld crumbling buildings, half church, half almshouse, and not much going on at that."[296] The conversation between the two, awkward and strained, continues as the villager asks if Jude has obtained entrance into a college in the city. Jude answers that he is "almost as far off that ever was,"[297] going on to explain that his financial troubles had hindered him from being able to achieve his dream thus far. At this, the villager offers a telling reply, one that echoes Jude's Aunt Drusilla: "Just what we thought! Such places be not for such as you – only for them with plenty o' money."[298] The subtle phrasing of his response skilfully places Jude, once again, as an outsider to Marygreen. He still does not understand, as the residents of Marygreen seem to understand, that he simply cannot make it in Christminster and that he is foolish for making such an attempt. The use of the word "we" effectively ostracises Jude, positioning him as not-one-of-us. In Jude's childhood discussion with his aunt, the woman had expressed used the word "we" in a way that intimated that Jude, the village's newest resident, was, at least to some

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[294] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, both definitions of the term were in usage at the time *Jude the Obscure* was written. See *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "salute," http://dictionary.oed.com (accessed December 6, 2008).
[295] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 32.
[296] Ibid., 106.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

degree, "one of them." Here, however, the nameless villager sets the "we" and the "you" against one another, effectively heightening the distance of difference between the residents of Marygreen and Jude. What is more, the villager reveals that he anticipated, perhaps even looked forward to, Jude's failure in the city. Jude is, then, caught in a kind of socio-spatial double bind. The harsh treatment Jude has endured from the residents of Marygreen throughout his life and, more importantly, the enactment of socio-spatial boundaries around Marygreen have never permitted him to belong to that place while, at the same time, he is socially and existentially bound by his history within the village not to be able to succeed at adopting a successful life in Christminster.

Jude continuously vacillates between an idealised vision of Christminster as "the intellectual and spiritual granary of this country"[299] and a much darker image of Christminster as a city whose "buildings . . . associations and privileges . . . are not for him."[300] Hardy moves Jude's vision of Christminster back and forth along this continuum as the character encounters individuals that cannot understand the unrelenting nature of his dedication to the city. Sue, the human counterpart to Jude's spatial obsession in Christminster, regularly acts as a foil to Jude's fixation upon the city:

> 'I still think Christminster has much that is glorious . . .'
>
> 'It is an ignorant place, except as to the townspeople, artisans, drunkards, and paupers," she said, perverse still at his differing from her. 'THEY see life as it is, of course; but few of the people in the colleges do. You prove it in your own person. You are one of the very men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities, or friends. But you were elbowed off the pavement by the millionaires' sons.'
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> 'Well, I can do without what it confers. I care for something higher.'

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[299] Ibid., 106.
[300] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 109.

> 'And I for something broader, truer,' she insisted. 'At present intellect in Christminster is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stock-still, like two rams butting each other.'[301]

Sue attempts to deconstruct Jude's belief in the "glorious" nature of Christminster and, in order to do so, pinpoints the manner in which the social realities of life in the city reflect an entrenched social, educational, and economic elitism. In response to Jude's romanticised depiction of Christminster, she suggests that its chief attribute is its ignorance, an ironic choice of words for a city built upon its reputation as the nation's centre of learning. For Sue, the truly intelligent members of the city are the individuals – the "artisans, drunkards, and paupers" – who see the injustice of the city's exclusivity. Sue, in essence, challenges Jude's intellect, appeals to his way of seeing, and asks him to recognise the fact that, though he is "one of the very men Christminster was intended for," he is still "elbowed to the pavement by millionaire's sons."

Sue recasts Christminster in a unique light. While she acknowledges – indeed, her argument rests upon the fact—that Christminster is steeped in the politics of spatial and social exclusion, she does not assert that Jude does not belong there. Her argument, quite to the contrary, is that Jude is a true citizen of the city – more true that the "people in the colleges." This is in stark contrast to Jude, who puts conditions on his belonging to the city, buying into the spatio-social construction of Christminster as an exclusive city of learning and religion. After all, prior to his first visit to Christminster, the youthful Jude declares that he "will have a D.D." once he is finished at Christminster and goes on to describe the intellectual rigours he must take himself through in preparation for his eventual move to the city. Jude's planning culminates in his bold declaration that "Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and

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[301] Ibid., 144, 145.

I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased."[302] While Jude undoubtedly feels that Christminster is, or at least will be, his rightful place, his possession of that place is predicated on the terms of belonging built into a very specific, socially-constructed, portrait of the city. Plainly put, Jude must be holy and learned in order to earn the right to be called the son of Christminster, a point well made in the ancient prayer of thanks for the medieval founder of New College Oxford William of Wykeham (1320-1404) for what he did to establish a tradition of "godliness and good learning" at the college.[303]

Sue, however, attempts to redefine the city, arguing that Jude is, in essence, a "true son" of the city. She suggests that religion and education, Christminster's dual criterion of "belonging," battle "like two rams butting each other." Sue rejects the notion that Jude and the townspeople, artisans, drunkards, and paupers of Christminster do not belong to the city. Her suggestion that these are the individuals that possess rightful ownership of the true ethos of Christminster is revolutionary and echoes the spirit of David Harvey's militant particularism. While it would be excessive to assert that Hardy advocated a kind of social rebellion, Sue's assertions do seem to suggest that the author understood that the well-known spatial and social construction of cities such as Christminster possessed layers of possible place-based meaning.

Ironically, Jude briefly echoes Sue's redefinition of Christminster earlier in the novel. Catapulted into a moment of striking lucidity by the letter he receives from one of the Heads of the Colleges at Christminster, Jude momentarily appears to observe that there exists an alternative mode of belonging to the city. In a passage to which I

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[302] Ibid., 32.
[303] Thomas Ken, *The Prose Works of the Right Reverend Thomas Ken*, ed. William Benham (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1889), 294.

will return later in this study, Jude stands in the at the centre of Christminster and reflects on the history of the city:

> [He] began to see that the town life was a book of humanity infinitely more palpitating, varied, and compendious than the gown life. These struggling men and women before him were the reality of Christminster, though they knew little of Christ or Minster. That was one of the humours of things. The floating population of students and teachers, who did know both in a way, were not Christminster in a local sense at all.[304]

Jude considers the men and women enshrined in the "book of humanity," individuals that had walked on this same ground long before the founding of "the oldest college in the city."[305] He considers them a part of a shared humanity that is more essential and important – more "local" – than the exclusivity offered by the "floating population of students and teachers." Though these educated elites named and presided over the popular process of inclusion and exclusion in Christminster, they did not understand that true citizenry was forged through common human "struggle" and experience. Jude, then, becomes briefly aware of the limitations of social and spatial exclusion and, perhaps more importantly, the possibility of social and spatial inclusion.

Before this analysis moves to an examination of the phenomenological perspective of place in *Jude the Obscure*, it is important to acknowledge that Christminster is not the only place within the novel that, responding to a perceived threat to identity, strictly enforces its spatial and social boundaries. Phillotson, for example, held in "sincere regard" in his position as schoolmaster in Shaston,[306] makes the painful decision to release Sue from her marriage to him. The painfulness of his decision is punctuated by the fact that he is fully aware that Sue would become Jude's lover and perhaps wife. Honest and plainspoken about his decision when asked by the

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[304] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 111.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 237.

chairman of the Shaston School Committee, Phillotson is summarily dismissed from his post as schoolmaster. While all of the "respectable inhabitants and well-to-do fellow-natives of the town were against Phillotson to a man," he encounters an unexpected groundswell of support from the place-less "itinerants" whose presence at Shaston, mentioned in passing earlier in the novel, stands in contrast to the projected image of moral uprightness so stringently projected by the established members of the community.[307] The moral traditionalists at Shaston are eventually successful in enforcing its place-based definition of the town and Phillotson is eventually compelled by the experience to move to Marygreen.

While Phillotson's own expulsion is evidence enough of the politics of place in Shaston, it is interesting to consider the actions of those who objected to his ouster, the "phalanx of [dis-placed] supporters and a few others . . . whose own domestic experiences had been not without vicissitude." That these men and women were place-less provides an important insight into the way in which being established "in-a-place" works in *Jude the Obscure*. Hardy seems to suggest that spatial fixity and lack of common experience breeds personal, moral, relational, and, in turn, spatial rigidity. Those who have suffered and those who are without a place are more likely to subvert the prevailing social definitions of a given place, a practice that, in turn, affects the ways in which the moral and spatial boundaries of a community are enforced. Echoing the themes evident in Sue's argument and Jude's momentary musings about who "belongs" at Christminster, these residents of Shaston reflect the degree to which Hardy sensed that the future direction of society would be redefined by those who found themselves "outside" the spatial and moral boundaries of the late nineteenth-century establishment.

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[307] Ibid., 239.

Place as a social construct used to spatially identify those who adhere to specific moral, social, physical and behavioural codes is evident throughout *Jude the Obscure*. In the passages above and elsewhere, Hardy imposes an intricate web of social hierarchies on his map of Wessex. The points on the map, the places, are overlaid by patterns of dominance, submission, rebellion, and ascension that come to give texture to the expression of belonging and exclusion throughout the novel. However, as discussed throughout this research project, the social constructionist theory of place, as implied in the passages from *Jude the Obscure* discussed thus far, is dependant upon the vital role place plays in the lived experience of each individual. And it is to these phenomenological expressions of place that we now turn.

From the Womb: Phenomenological Place Perspectives

In her excellent analysis of Thomas Hardy's representation of art in his literary works, Alison Byerly observes that, for "Hardy, architecture . . . is an art that derives its value from its association with human lives."[308] While places in *Jude the Obscure* are not solely architectural in nature, Byerly's observation, I would argue, can be applied to the much larger spatial world in the novel. What is more, though Hardy, as demonstrated above, clearly infuses the description of and events surrounding places in *Jude the Obscure* with the reality of spatial politics, the essential human connection with place as experienced in the individual and collective lives of a community is the most critical aspect of a successful reading of place in the novel. Timothy Oakes, speaking of Hardy more broadly, emphasises the fundamental link between place and the individual when he writes that the "sense of place evoked by Hardy is based not on a stable and enclosed location, but on a tense relationship

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[308] Alison Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Cambridge studies in nineteenth-century literature and culture 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 176.

between dwelling and detachment."[309] Hardy builds into his narratives the fundamental human expression, the fundamental human need, for a place in which to dwell. For Hardy, places are so crucial precisely because they provide the spatial loci in which individuals can experience the hopes, dreams, fears, and love that define human nature.

In *Jude the Obscure* there exists a fundamental relationship between individuals and the places that they inhabit. Here again, Heidegger's philosophy of "being-in-the-world," closely linked with his concept of *dasein*, provides an important philosophical framework for our reading:

> This characteristic of *Dasein*'s Being – this 'that it is' – is veiled in it 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the 'thrownness' of this entity into its 'there'; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over.[310]

Heidegger's ontology has generated such an interest amongst scholars occupied with the matters of spatiality precisely because it addresses the human knowledge that, though we do not know our precise origins, we do know that we have been "delivered over," we have been "thrown," *into* this world. We have been hurled into our "there." In so doing, Heidegger legitimises spatiality – and place – as a foundational element of human experience. Places are not derived from some more basal element of human existence. Rather, spatiality becomes the *context* for human existence. Heidegger acknowledges the spatiality – the "there-ness" – of human experience as the primary modality of human experience. The metaphor of being "thrown," though perhaps

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[309] Timothy Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 3 (September 1997): 517.
[310] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1978), 174.

crude at first glance, suggests a certain violence, chance, and ambiguity that is resonant with the tone and themes evident in *Jude the Obscure*.

This notion of an arbitrary and unwilled "thrown-ness" – what Heidegger calls *geworfenheit* – into the spatiality of human experience, though a subtle theme throughout the novel, comes sharply into focus at several points in the novel's sixth and final part, "Christminster Again." Sue and Jude, having decided to move back to Christminster with their two biological children and the enigmatic Father Time, find it difficult, on their first evening back in the city, to find appropriate lodging. The weather turns on the young family and the only place they can find lodging as the night sets in is with a couple that will only accept Sue and the children. The travelling couple accept the compromise and Jude departs into the night in an attempt to try to find something more suitable for the following day. This encounter, of course, eventually leads to the climactic scene the following morning in which Sue and Jude discover the three children hanging inside the closet. What is important for this point in the discussion, however, is the lengthy and complicated dialogue that takes place between Father Time and Sue in the boarding house bedroom that evening. Hardy elevates the intensity of the encounter immediately following Jude's departure, describing the effect of the day's tumultuous events on Father Time: "The failure to find another lodging, and the lack of room in this house for his father, had made a deep impression on the boy—a brooding undemonstrative horror seemed to have seized him."[311] It is important to realise that, though brief, Hardy is deliberate about the fact that pondering his and his family's place-less-ness is what triggered Father Time's sense of despair – a despair that, at least in part, led him to murder his siblings and kill himself. One must recall that, prior to the family's return to Christminster,

[311] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 322.

Father Time had, along with his Jude and Sue, lived a nomadic existence throughout Wessex; the couple had been unable to find a place to settle since the young boy had come to live with them. The events of that evening, rendering the young family *again* on the precipice of potential placelessness, unleashed a "brooding . . . horror" in the boy.

Ignited by his fears, Father Time asks Sue whether or not it would be "better to be out o' the world than in it?"[312] Though *Jude the Obscure* was published some 32 years prior to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, young Father Time's questions bear an important resemblance to Heidegger's spatial ontology. Father Time, it would seem, ponders his immediate and, indeed, persistent experience of placelessness, the sense that he cannot develop a consistent *dasein* or "thereness," to use Heidegger's terminology, with which to fully and safely experience the world. Considering this spatial and existential predicament, Father Time questions whether or not he should be "in" the world at all. He questions the logic of his being "thrown" into an existence that does not provide a satisfactory "there" – a place – for him to exist. Sue, dejected and overwhelmed by the circumstances, is startlingly candid in her response: "It would almost, dear."[313] Sue's candour seems to only fuel Father Time whose questions grow more pointed:

> 'Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?'
>
> 'Oh--because it is a law of nature.'
>
> 'But we don't ask to be born?'
>
> 'No indeed.'
>
> 'And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to 'ee--that's

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[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid., 322.

> the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!'
>
> 'You couldn't help it, my dear.'
>
> 'I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!'[314]

Both the spatiality and arbitrary nature of Heidegger's theory of "thrownness" comes to bear in this passage. Father Time continues to assert that he should never have been born, reiterating, albeit with a slight variation, that he should never have been put "into" the *place* of human existence and experience. It is intriguing to see that, when pressed as to why people have children when they can cause so many problems, Sue replies with an appeal to a "law of nature." Though this may be interpreted as a kind of parental euphemism for sexual reproduction, it seems just as likely that, given the context of the discussion, Sue is making an attempt to offer some sort of divine or religious rationale for Father Time's questions of human existence.

The boy's immediate response – "But we don't ask to be born?" – echoes Sue's philosophical and perhaps even theological suggestion. In so doing, Father Time seems to be questioning, perhaps rhetorically, the justice of an existence in which individuals are "thrown" into the world without any apparent choice in the matter. Both Sue and Father Time consider the Heideggerian metaphysical, and ultimately spatial, possibility that they are not actors, but that they are being "acted upon." That the boy then recalls his lack of place – both spatially and relationally – in both Australia and now in Wessex again situates his angst within the framework of specific geographical and familial locales. Father Time, in a single statement surprising in its blunt ferocity, combines the ontological, metaphysical, and spatial strands of Heidegger's theory by suggesting that unwanted children be killed "before

[314] Ibid., 323.

their souls come to 'em." Doing so would effectively stop them from coming "into the world," thereby stopping them from experiencing the spatially oriented "thereness" realised in "growing big and walking about."

The spatial implications of this conversation, though pointed in this instance, are, by no means, exclusive to this passage. Indeed, the wish to never have been born is a familiar refrain throughout the novel, occurring, ironically, earlier as a justification on the part of Jude for agreeing to adopt Father Time and again later in the narrative at the moment of Jude's death. Though neither possesses the extended philosophical depth of the passage above, it is not difficult to imagine that the conversation between Sue and Father Time acts as a kind of interpretive paradigm for the spatial implications of being in existence in *Jude the Obscure*.

Hardy's emphasis on the foundational importance of place to the individual and communal lives of the characters in *Jude the Obscure* is reinforced by the way in which the author consistently blends places within the novel with individual human history and consciousness.[315] In doing so, he affirms that human experience is vitally linked to particular places and, what is more, that these places become linked in an essential way back to the individuals that experienced life via those very locales. Put another way, Hardy inscribes the experiences of human "inhabitations" with specific places upon both the place and the individuals that inhabit them.

It is important to recognise that these mutual inscriptions of experience are not, for the most part, historic in the traditional sense of the word. That is to say that these mutual experiences are not tied to nationalistic or institutional ideologies.

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[315] There exists a longstanding critical tradition regarding the important role of history within the work of Thomas Hardy in general and *Jude the Obscure* in particular; see, for example, Merryn Williams, *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Reginald White, *Thomas Hardy and History* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1974); Patrick R. O'Malley, "Oxford's Ghosts: *Jude the Obscure* and the End of Gothic," *Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000): 646-671.

Though these experiences have undoubtedly been constitutive of these historico-cultural meta-narratives, they are – in Hardy's spatial and individual remembrance of them – not exceptional. Places and the experiences that occur within them via their universality form the unavoidable and essential dialectic of human existence.

Early in *Jude the Obscure*, the young Jude, displaced in Marygreen, laments the perceived monotony of his surroundings. He juxtaposes his idealised vision of Christminster, the city of learning to which his schoolmaster has recently journeyed, to the landscape surrounding his current rural home:

> "How ugly it is here!" he murmured.
>
> The fresh harrow-lines seemed to stretch like the channellings in a piece of new corduroy, lending a meanly utilitarian air to the expanse, taking away its gradations, and depriving it of all history beyond that of the few recent months, though to every clod and stone there really attached associations enough and to spare--echoes of songs from ancient harvest-days, of spoken words, and of sturdy deeds. Every inch of ground had been the site, first or last, of energy, gaiety, horse-play, bickerings, weariness. Groups of gleaners had squatted in the sun on every square yard. Love-matches that had populated the adjoining hamlet had been made up there between reaping and carrying. Under the hedge which divided the field from a distant plantation girls had given themselves to lovers who would not turn their heads to look at them by the next harvest; and in that ancient cornfield many a man had made love-promises to a woman at whose voice he had trembled by the next seed-time after fulfilling them in the church adjoining. But this neither Jude nor the rooks around him considered. For them it was a lonely place, possessing, in the one view, only the quality of a work-ground, and in the other that of a granary good to feed in.[316]

Hardy introduces in this passage two parallel ways of seeing Marygreen This pattern of seeing places in multiple ways is paradigmatic to understanding spatiality in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude, disappointed by the place in which he lives and enamoured of the "beautiful city" about which he has only recently learned, can only see how "ugly it is here." Hardy then moves, however, to juxtapose Jude's vision of the place with that

[316] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 8-9.

belonging to the narrator, a perspective that transcends the bounds of time and sees the experiences attached to "every clod and stone." These "historic" experiences recounted by the narrator are not grandiose tales of the founding of this village community. Instead, the narrator recounts the "love matches," the "distant plantation girls [that] had given themselves to lovers," and the "gaiety, horse-play, bickering, [and] weariness" of the men and women who have been "in that place" before Jude's visit that day. These experiences, striking in their poetic ordinariness, possess an inextricable link to the ground that constitutes that particular locality. Unattached to the spatially expressed social identity and narrative of Marygreen discussed in the previous section, the experiences described by Hardy are constitutive of an alternative history, reconstituted by the villagers and unnoticed by Jude. Indeed, Hardy is at least tangentially concerned with the fact that the place on which Jude stands has been "[deprived] . . . of all history." Jude, immersed as he is, in the multiple historical and social place-based narratives in which he lives, cannot access this other history and, what is more, the true place-identity of the ground on which he stands. As such, Jude sees it only as a "lonely place" possessing no quality beyond its "meanly utilitarian air." The obfuscation of true history – one free from the ideological constraints of social necessity – in *Jude the Obscure* is, then, an obfuscation of place-identity for history, and indeed identity, is the nexus of lived experience encountered within the various locales that constitute human spatial existence.[317]

In a passage touched upon in the earlier discussion of belonging at Christminster, this rhythm of spatiality and human experience is echoed as Jude, momentarily free from his obsessive vision of Christminster, is able to unite his

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[317] Hardy recounts a similar incident of the loss of communal and spatial memory/history within a rural setting in his description of Stoke-Barehills. See Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 278.

spatial and historical vision of the city with that of the narrator and, in so doing, is able to see within that place a latent history that supersedes the city's dominant narrative of existence. Standing at the Fourways, which corresponds fairly precisely to Carfax, the ancient crossroads in the centre of Oxford, Jude drifts

> into thought on what struggling people like himself had stood at that crossway, whom nobody ever thought of now. It had more history than the oldest college in the city. It was literally teeming, stratified, with the shades of human groups, who had met there for tragedy, comedy, farce; real enactments of the intensest kind. At Fourways men had stood and talked of Napoleon, the loss of America, the execution of King Charles, the burning of the Martyrs, the Crusades, the Norman Conquest, possibly of the arrival of Caesar. Here the two sexes had met for loving, hating, coupling, parting; had waited, had suffered, for each other; had triumphed over each other; cursed each other in jealousy, blessed each other in forgiveness.[318]

The passage is striking in its similarity to the youthful Jude's encounter just outside of Marygreen. Unlike then, however, the exclusivity of Christminster has shaken him free from his delusions and he is able to reflect upon the "stratified . . . shades of human groups what had met" at that place throughout history. As Hardy wrote in his Preface to the 1912 edition of *Far From the Maddening Crowd*, " the indispensable conditions of existence are attachments to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation."[319] Again, like the associations attached to the "clods of dirt outside Marygreen," the intimacy of connection between human experience and specific locales is brought to bear as these events become embedded like fossil remains in the very foundation of the place.

Jude's recollection of these groups seems, at first glance, to recount great moments of British history and, as such, conforms to the ideological narratives to which I have argued Hardy's mode of individual and communal spatial memory stands opposed. However, a close reading reveals that these recollections are not of

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[318] Ibid., 111.
[319] Thomas Hardy, "Preface: from the 1912 Wessex Edition (Macmillan), Vol. II," in *Far from the Maddening Crowd* (London; New York: Penguin, 2003), 393-394.

the events themselves, but of simple conversations held by "men who had stood and talked" in that place. These conversations are coupled with the "loving, hating, coupling, parting," waiting, cursing, and blessing that characterises the seemingly "banal" experiences of humanity within a given place.

Hardy seems to suggest, however, that these ordinary experiences constitute the most basic and vital form of human history and, what is more, that that history is inseparable from the context of spatial locales. These experiences, normal though they may seem, constitute the sense of belonging that defines the true sense of community within a given place. These, individuals experiencing the regular rhythms of history within this particular place, "were the reality of Christminster" – the "locals" discussed earlier in this chapter.[320] The rigid spatio-social constructs that dominated the place-based narratives of Christminster, like those of Marygreen, are derivative manipulations of the more authentic, lived experiences of the men and women within its boundaries. Hardy, it would seem, eschews the rigid spatio-historical constraints of the "gown life" and its doctrinal adherence to the concepts of "Christ or Minster." For Hardy, history is

> rather a stream than a tree. There is nothing . . . nothing systematic in its development. It flows on like a thunderstorm-rill by a road side; now a straw turns it this way, now a tiny barrier of sand that . . . Thus, judging by bulk of effect, it becomes impossible to estimate the intrinsic value of ideas, acts, material things: we are forced to appraise them by the curves of their career.[321]

Hardy's history is one in which the minute decisions of men, mundane as they may seem within the context of a given moment, possess a value that is, "impossible to estimate." What is more, Jude seems to find Marygreen to be a "lonely place" largely because he is unable to uncover the reality of lived experience that was part of the village's authentic, experiential, place-based history. However, Jude's lucidity that

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[320] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 111.
[321] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 179.

evening at the Crossways allows him to access the stratified history of human experience *in* Christminster; Jude sees the "palpitating, varied, and compendious" experiences that make up the "book of humanity" and understands that those citizens of Christminster were just "like himself." Here and elsewhere, then, *Jude the Obscure* seems to suggest that a de-mythologised and thereby authentic history accessed via a specific place forges genuine human community. Jude is, momentarily at least, part of Christminster. And it is Hardy's emphasis on community, memory, social narrative, and, most importantly, spatiality, that forms the foundation for the analysis of sacred place within the novel.

Sacred Place in *Jude the Obscure*

I begin by reasserting my contention from the introduction to this research project that a more inclusive definition of sacred place is both fitting and appropriate in an examination of the topic within a narrative framework. *Jude the Obscure* undoubtedly includes sites fitting the definition of the traditionally sacred, alluding frequently as it does to a very lightly-disguised Oxford with its numerous churches. These sites will be addressed later in this analysis and will provide important insight into the novel's treatment of sacred place. However, a fully rendered portrait of the role of place and the sacred in *Jude the Obscure* must move beyond these traditional locales to encompass the variety of places and ways in which Hardy depicts the interaction between the Christian God and the spatial.

In that way, it is important throughout the discussion of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* to establish theoretical and methodological frameworks that will assist in reading the sacred in the novel. Central to the framework of such a reading is the de-centralisation of God's presence upon the earth. The notion of de-centralisation seems, at first, to run counter to the idea of place as a specific and fixed locale. One

will recall, however, that the introductory chapter to this study documented the belief in a more expansive concept of the "place of God" within the Christian tradition. This, then, provides a framework for the assertion that, in *Jude the Obscure*, the presence of the God-narrative is infused into the moral, social, and indeed spatial fabric of Wessex to such a degree that it is possible to echo the words of the Psalmist when speaking of Hardy's novel: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."[322] Of course, Hardy lacks the reverence with which David regarded Yahweh, but the principle of God's presence within and his divine ownership of *all* places are crucial to understanding what one may term Hardy's mytho-spatial redaction of the sacred within Jude *the Obscure*.

The novel establishes a narrative universe in which the action, or indeed inaction, of God is not limited to traditionally sacred locales, but expands to include all of the places within the novel. While certain places in the novel fit the mould of traditional sacred places, to limit the discussion of the sacred in the novel to those specific locales would be to deny the extent to which Hardy casts the narrative of the Christian God as part of the cultural framework of the nineteenth century – a framework that finds expression through spatially mediated experience. Sacred place, then, in *Jude the Obscure* operates on a continuum of localisation. On one end of that continuum is the "traditional" localised interaction of the divine within a particular place designated by culture as possessing the quality of being separated unto the service, remembrance, or worship of the divine. On the other end of the continuum is the admittedly precarious openness of a divine presence that covers, indeed infuses, the places of the earth, his mythic character and his overarching narrative defining the course of history and the affairs of humanity. This de-centralisation, as I have called

[322] Psalm 24:1.

it, acknowledges the spatiality inherent in the notion of divine purpose for the earth, a basic presupposition of the Christian faith that had started to erode as the notion of Victorian certainty began to give way to the questions and doubts of twentieth century modernity. Indeed, Christianity itself is fundamentally dependent upon the spatial articulation of the divine plan in the person of Jesus Christ whose brief conversation to a woman at the well echoes my earlier invocation of Psalm 24:

> 'Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.'
>
> Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'[323]

While particular places continue to maintain importance within the Christian tradition, there has always existed a latent acknowledgement that the work of God, in the New Testament evidenced through the work of the Holy Spirit, occurs where it will, as it will, fulfilling the plan of God for humanity and all of creation. In *Jude the Obscure*, the presence of the Christian God, while in certain places especially, is in every place necessarily. Though different, both are, in important ways, instances of sacred place within the novel.

A moving encounter takes place early in the novel that lends credence to the notion of a presence of God that, though decidedly spatial in nature, is not dependent upon a particular locale. Jude, hired on by Farmer Troutham to clear birds from his fields using a clacker, takes compassion on the birds under his watch, his gentle nature considering how they, like him, are simply trying to manage with what little they have. Forsaking his duty to Troutham, he encourages the birds to eat up, enjoying his newfound solidarity with them. The farmer catches Jude in the middle of

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[323] John 4:20-24.

his compassionate reverie and proceeds to grab hold of the boy, beating him with the clacker. The boy pleads with the man, explaining that he was only trying to be kind to the birds by allowing them to eat the excess corn from the ground.

> This truthful explanation seemed to exasperate the farmer even more than if Jude had stoutly denied saying anything at all, and he still smacked the whirling urchin, the clacks of the instrument continuing to resound all across the field and as far as the ears of distant workers . . . and echoing from the brand-new church tower just behind the mist, towards the building of which structure the farmer had largely subscribed, to testify his love for God and man.
>
> Presently Troutham grew tired of his punitive task . . . telling [Jude] to go home and never let him see him in one of those fields again.
>
> Jude leaped out of arm's reach, and walked along the trackway weeping--not from the pain, though that was keen enough; not from the perception of the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener; but with the awful sense that he had wholly disgraced himself before he had been a year in the parish, and hence might be a burden to his great-aunt for life.[324]

The scene is rich in both imagery and rhetorical reflection. The image of the farmer's anger at Jude's small act of kindness is set alongside the farmer's contribution to his local church, a symbol of his "love for God and man." The hypocrisy of Troutham's actions is startlingly evident as the sound of his violent punishment of Jude for his small generosity echoes from the constructed symbol of both the Divine presence and Troutham's own generosity. The image of God in the passage firmly aligned with the farmer's unmeasured fury, the narrator grants the reader a glimpse into Jude's dejected walk back home after his beating. As the boy makes his way back, crying along the way, the narrator suggests that Jude recognises, to some degree, a "flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's farmers." His encounter with Troutham has, it would seem, infused Jude with a new awareness of the way in which the world works.

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[324] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 10.

Though subtle, this brief passage acts as a kind of matrix for the de-centralised but nonetheless spatialised (terrestrial) presence of God functioning as an extension of his divine purposes (scheme). The scheme, though not immediately attributed to God, is clearly intended as such by the passage's symbolic representation of Farmer Troutham and the church tower as well as the invocation of the phrase "God's birds" and "God's gardener." God possesses the birds. God possesses the gardener. Clearly God also possesses the plan. What is more, this spatially expressed divine scheme possesses a flaw that is directly attributable to the moral incongruity of a God that allows the perpetuation of such injustice between his creations. Hardy touches again on the incident in the field later on in that same chapter as the boy reflects upon the fact "events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony."[325] Within the spatial context of the field, God's terrestrial/spatial scheme – one fraught with injustice – had become evident. The reality was "horrid" to Jude for it lacked the "harmony" he so desired. The field becomes an important frame for the novel itself. John Goode, in his well-regarded work on Thomas Hardy, suggests that the field possesses a "transcendent presence" that, in many ways, sets the thematic trajectory for the entire novel.[326]

The incident at the field becomes more central to the development of a de-centralised notion of sacred place as Jude continues to reflect upon the events that took place:

> As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed

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[325] Ibid., 12.
[326] John Goode, "Hardy's Fist," in *Jude the Obscure: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Penny Boumelha, New Casebooks (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 104.

> to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it.
>
> If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man.
>
> Then, like the natural boy, he forgot his despondency, and sprang up.[327]

The recognition of this flawed "terrestrial scheme" in the field that day unsettles the pensive Jude who, in turn, expresses his existential angst using the language of spatiality. In so doing, Hardy solidifies the foundational unity of the individual and the place that he or she inhabits. For Jude, the recognition of "Nature's logic" is equated with "growing up." This process of maturation positions him within "*centre*" of time, a position that generates "a sort of shuddering." Jude had uncovered the fact that his ethos of kindness and compassion will not work in the terrestrial field, for what is good for God's birds is *not* good for God's gardeners. The flaw of injustice is writ large in the very fabric of the Divine plan and Jude has had the blinders removed from his eyes. The "glaring, garish, rattling" of this new reality existentially shakes Jude's sensitive nature. The boy wishes that he could avoid the centre of time and return to "a point in its circumference, as you had when you were little." Jude, simply put, wants to stop the process of existential maturation. He prefers the illusions of youth for, in his experience, the illusions there create the sense of "harmony," "logic," and "rhyme" that he could not find in the field. Then, suddenly and without warning, Jude "forgot his despondency and sprang up" from his position behind the pigsty. Though this sudden transformation is jarring, Hardy seems to attribute it to Jude's status as a "natural boy." Though Jude is, in fact, a boy, Hardy's use of the word has nothing to do with his physical age, but, instead, relates to the natural and regular expression of his psyche and disposition. Jude's nature cannot stand the pressure at

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[327] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 12.

the centre of time and, as such, will continue to choose the safety of the illusions that exist at the "circumference." That Jude returns to the comfort of those youthful illusions is evidenced by his reengagement with his almost mythical idealisation of Christminster. Shortly after his resurrection from the pigsty, Jude inquires of a local man regarding the whereabouts of Christminster. Ironically, the man tells him that he must recross the Troutham's field in order to get there. Jude, however, pauses for only a brief moment before proceeding to re-enter the field from which he had been expelled earlier that same day. Jude's reengagement with the illusion of Christminster momentarily overshadowed by the "horrid" realisations that gripped him hours earlier, dictates his behaviour.

The events at the field and Jude's subsequent reflections upon it, as I have suggested, provide a matrix for understanding the way in which the de-centralisation of sacred place functions within the novel. Characters within *Jude the Obscure*, and Jude himself in particular, vacillate between illusion and reality. Phillotson, upon leaving Marygreen for Christminster, confides in young Jude that "his scheme, or dream" is to be a university graduate.[328] The intimacy between schemes and dreams in the novel is vital to understanding the way in which Hardy views the sacred in all of its manifest forms in *Jude the Obscure*. On one level, the characters in the novel pursue their various schemes to find fulfilment, love, and personal advancement only to discover, time and again, that they are labouring under the illusion of a dream. On a second, more metaphysical, level, the meta-narrative of the "terrestrial scheme," introduced by Jude's encounter in the field, is shown to be a sort of "horrid" dream/nightmare, a reality which Jude cannot accept, instead choosing to slip into his role as the "natural boy" and return to the safety of time's periphery.

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[328] Ibid., 4.

Hardy suggests in his preface to the novel that *Jude the Obscure* is "a series of seemings."[329] The illusory nature of these seemings dominates the narrative as characters attempt to navigate the multiple realties in which they operate. As they experience their existence within these different narrative realties, they encounter places and spaces in markedly distinct ways. Jude sees the field as a place of humiliation as he breaks free from Farmer Troutham's grip only to see it as a path to his beloved Christminster only hours later. Later in the novel, the city of Christminster seems like the Heavenly Jerusalem whose voice Jude hears, "faint and musical, calling to him: 'We are happy here.'"[330] In another passage, awakening to realise the elitism that permeates the colleges at Christminster, Jude sees the windows of the city "winking their yellow eyes at him dubiously, and as if, though they had been awaiting they did not much want him now."[331] Throughout the novel, Sue, unlike Jude, tries to avoid visiting churches, showing disdain for their associations with moralistic stringency. Later, stripped of her idealism by the weight of tragedy and sorrow, she retreats regularly to the sanctuary of St. Silas church at Beersheba. Here Hardy seems to be highlighting the extremity of Sue's personal, spiritual and, indeed, associative-place transformation since "Dan to Beersheba" defined the limits of ancient Israel and Beersheba neatly corresponds to the then working-class district of Oxford known as Jericho.[332] Though the places are the same, the dreams, the seemings, in which the characters choose to exist dictate the place-realities they assign to particular locales.

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[329] Thomas Hardy, "Preface to the First Edition," in *Jude the Obscure* (Orchard Park NY: Broadview Press, 1999), 39.
[330] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 17.
[331] Ibid., 333.
[332] See 2 Samuel 3:10.

It is my contention that Hardy establishes the notion of a divinely ordered universe in the hands of a benevolent Christian God as an overarching illusion/dream/seeming that dominates the lives of the characters throughout the novel. Though it is not the only illusion under which Jude and the characters in the novel labour, it is the most important for the purposes of this study as it defines the contour of sacred spatiality under consideration. The narrative universe constructed by Hardy in *Jude the Obscure* is relentless in its attempts to awaken the characters from that dream. The brute force of the experiences the characters endures effectively attempt to dislodge them from the comfort of the belief in a transcendent reality that operates with their basic goodwill in mind. In response, characters attempt to renegotiate their position within their illusory reality for, to do otherwise, would confront them with a reality too difficult to endure. As with all human experience, and especially with those represented within the work of Hardy, the tragedies are mediated via the spatiality – the places – of the novel's narrative world. Sacred places, then, function alternately as spatial agents of dissolution and accommodation, acting as experiential pivot points for the destruction and reconstitution of the individuals characters' God narrative. These characters negotiate their proximity to the centre of time, never realising that the illusions, dreams, and seemings that supports time's circumference are, at the dawn of the twentieth century, collapsing into one "glaring, garish, rattling" centre.

Hardy recognised the anxiety caused by the potential removal of cultural, social, and religious doctrine as indicative of the arrival of a new period in human development:

> Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no

> means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life, that, for them, it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit.[333]

This passage from Matthew Arnold's essay on poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) was inscribed and underlined in Hardy's notebooks. Hardy foresaw that the "immense systems" that had governed human life for so long were now coming to an end and that humanity, epitomised in *Jude the Obscure* by Jude, Sue, and other central characters, was "awakening." While Hardy's quote from Arnold imbues this process with a sense of grandeur, Hardy did not shy away from the difficulty of being at the "centre of time" instead of on its periphery. Neither Jude nor Sue survives without immense cost being rendered. Sue, surrendering finally to the faith she derided earlier in the novel returns to Phillotson. Jude, ironically, does not retreat from the "awakening of the modern spirit." It is, however, his willingness not to do so that ultimately ends his life; his trek in a terrible storm to see Sue in Marygreen, to breach ethical and moral boundaries in order to see her one last time, leads to his fatal illness. The violence of revelation, the uncovering of a universe controlled by no particular religious reality so far as humanity can determine, breaks Sue into a shadow of herself and leads Jude to behave so desperately, so recklessly, that he causes his own death.

That this new age of revelation represents a kind of *fin de siècle* is not simply inferred by Sue's capitulation and Jude's death, but is openly declared by Hardy at perhaps the novel's most infamous and tragic moment. Sue, trying to make sense of her role in Father Time's unspeakable actions, asks Jude whether she was responsible for what took place:

> 'No,' said Jude. 'It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us--boys of a sort unknown in the last generation--the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they

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[333] Thomas Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1985), 103-104.

> are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. He's an advanced man, the doctor: but he can give no consolation.'[334]

Jude's explanation of the doctor's comments is one of the most telling passages in *Jude the Obscure*, for it reveals the toll of an un-narrativised universe. It is the dark correlative to Arnold's modern awakening. Father Time has been arguably more displaced than his own father, having been conceived in England, born in Australia, abandoned by his mother as she returned to England, left with his aging grandparents, and, eventually, shuttled back to England to live with a father he never knew. This sense of displacement only exacerbates the fact that, according to the doctor's observations, children of his generation possess a new way of seeing the world.

However, Father Time, now the archetypal child of the new age, had never seen and understood the world in ways familiar to Jude and Sue:

> Children begin with detail, and learn up to the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. The boy seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars. To him the houses, the willows, the obscure fields beyond, were apparently regarded not as brick residences, pollards, meadows; but as human dwellings in the abstract, vegetation, and the wide dark world.[335]

Father Time did not see the contiguous; he did not bother or perhaps did not comprehend the distractions and narratives that surrounded him. Unlike Jude, who found solace from the weight of reality in his obsessive nostalgia for Christminster and his romance with Sue, Father Time saw only the "abstract" and its implications for "a wide dark world." Unable to comprehend the illusion *and* comfort of these "particulars" he, according to the doctor, joined other boys of that generation in seeing the world and "all its terrors." Jude then delivers the doctor's dark prophecy; ironically the prophecy runs counter to the assertion made by both Jude and Sue

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[334] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 326.
[335] Ibid., 267.

elsewhere in the novel that in fifty or one hundred years humanity will evolve to the point of understanding and acceptance of "different code of observance" for different "groups of temperaments."[336] Father Time is part of a generation that gives expression to "the coming universal wish not to live." A world in the abstract, a world without anchor, a world that is without particulars is, for these children, a world that cannot be endured. It is almost Wordsworthian, then, that the child, Father Time, becomes the leader of his family as they each, first Sue and then Jude, succumb in their own way to this wish for death in the face of the frightening realities of the coming age.[337] Father Time is not able to see a home or a field, two places possessing the potential for a wealth of human-place-associations. Instead, he mistakes them for "human dwelling in the abstract and vegetation." For Hardy, place is the access point for the construction of meaning and community. It is no surprise, then, that Father Time, unable to see place in its essence as expressions of human relationship and meaning, finds the world to possess no meaning.

Hardy's dark ambiguity about the future and the role of place within it becomes markedly sacred in a passage I would contend is central to understanding the author's vision of sacred place in the novel. Jude and Sue, both residing at Melchester, discuss their options for the day:

> She was something of a riddle to him, and he let the subject drift away. 'Shall we go and sit in the cathedral?' he asked, when their meal was finished.
>
> 'Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station,' she answered, a remnant of vexation still in her voice. 'That's the centre of the town life now. The cathedral has had its day!'

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[336] A "Utopian scheme" held by Hardy though his second wife and co-biographer considered it "doubtful" if it held his "fancy for any long time:" Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 274.

[337] In his poem Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in *Selected Poems* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 139.

> 'How modern you are!'
>
> 'So would you be if you had lived so much in the Middle Ages as I have done these last few years! The cathedral was a very good place four or five centuries ago; but it is played out now...'[338]

Hardy at once initiates the dawn of a new place-centred era by dismantling the spatial and existential primacy of sacred place and replacing it with the railway station. Hardy's vision of sacred place in the future, then, is substitutive. That is to say that the sacred has been replaced with the secular as the centre of town life. By suggesting that the railway station is replacing the sacred, Hardy is reasserting the notion that the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century plagued by a restlessness of spirit that finds spatial resonance in the continual movement of the railway station. Hardy suggests that that most potent symbol of mobility has become the new "place of worship."

The journey from cathedral to railway station is an intriguing transformation. It could easily be asserted that the railway station is a kind of no-where because it is on the way to any-where. The place is "framed by its anonymity."[339] Railways stations are homogenous places that individuals move through and that homogeneity acts as a blank canvas upon which individuals can assert themselves. The "interchangability" of the railway station creates the existential possibility for the individual within it of "being anywhere at anytime."[340] It is, in that way, a place particularly devoid of history; it lacks the existential qualities and associations of fixity upon which the notions of history and continuity rest. The traveller at the railway station is looking forwards to the destination or backwards to the point of departure, but rarely, if ever, at the place itself. This is, of course, problematic for

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[338] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 128.
[339] Trigg, "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory," 17.
[340] Ibid., 12.

Hardy's vision of spatiality in the novel, for, as I have demonstrated, authentic place is fundamentally tied up in the lived history of individual and community life. Sue suggests that she and Jude go to worship at this new cathedral – at this cultural monument to the "vice of unrest" that Hardy believes has gripped a generation. Jude's response to her is fitting: "How modern are you!" Hardy stands at the precipice of a new century and, while acknowledging the fundamental shift in the way in which individuals and communities understand and connect to sacred places, he seems unsure as to whether or not this new modern era will – like the work of church restoration – only serve to conceal the vital history of a people.

Starting Wrong: Absence of the Deity in *Jude the Obscure*

Central, then, to my assertion that the local and global notions of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* are dependent upon the alternating establishment and collapse of an overarching Christian God narrative-mythology is the competing narrative "reality" within the text of an absent or, at the very least, indifferent deity. Hardy relies upon this secondary narrative as antagonistic to the efforts of his characters to live under what he seems to consider is the illusion of an ultimately safe and ordered universe. The effort to construct these metaphysical illusions was something that Hardy had considered for quite some time:

> Reading in the British Museum. Have been thinking over the dictum of Hegel – that the real is the rational and the rational the real – that real pain is compatible with a formal pleasure – that the idea is all, etc. But it doesn't help much. These venerable philosophers seems to start wrong; *they cannot get away from a prepossession that the world must somehow have been made to be a comfortable place for man*. If I remember it was Comte who said that metaphysics was a mere sorry attempt to reconcile theology and physics (emphasis mine).[341]

[341] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 185.

While Hardy is, in this excerpt from his autobiography, considering the work of secular philosophers, his conviction that the creators of metaphysical systems seem "to start wrong" by assuming that "the world must . . . have been made to be a comfortable place for man" possesses real resonance with the fundamental Christian belief in a universe divinely ordered and orchestrated by a good and benevolent God. Hardy, however, cannot help but reflect upon the lived experience – the "physics" of life – as an overwhelming counterbalance against the established cultural significance of the Christian God.

> As to this winding up about a God of Mercy . . . I might say that the Good-God theory having, after some thousands of years of trial, produced the present infamous and disgraceful state of Europe – that most Christian Continent – a theory of a Goodless-and-Badless God might perhaps be given a trial with advantage.[342]

Hardy finds the evidence for the traditional interpretation of the universe lacking and, in the face of such evidence, suggests that a new metaphysic be established. This new metaphysic is, interestingly enough, not one of an absent God, but of a God who is "goodless" and "badless," a God who is, in the end, indifferent to the plight of humanity upon the earth. Hardy frames this evidence against the "God of Mercy" narrative within a spatial context, arguing that the "infamous and disgraceful state of Europe" has been designated in the popular imagination as a "Christian continent." The narrative has, in essence, generated, within the European continent, a place of its own. That place is sacred – bearing the name "Christian" – by virtue of its stated allegiance to that narrative's ideological tenets. This, of course, possesses important implications for the "broadening" of the notion of sacred place to, at least in part, include all of the land which operates "as unto" the Christian God.

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[342] Ibid., 406.

Though Hardy's statements regarding the absence of this "God of Mercy" and the ascendancy of the "Goodless-and-Badless God" of indifference were written and published after the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, I would suggest that these ideas were present in an embryonic form, even haunting the characters in *Jude the Obscure*. The experiences that yield these moments of insight, these breakthroughs of Hardy's alternate reality, are not uniformly sacred in nature, but, instead, cast light on the existential emptiness and arbitrary brutality of human existence, casting the shining message of the Christian God narrative into sharp relief. The crumbling of these "meta-narratives" is, of course, most powerfully rendered in the wake of the staggering tragedies that befall the characters throughout the novel. Nowhere is that sense of tragedy more powerfully displayed that with the horrific deaths of Father Time and his two half-siblings. In the aftermath, Sue, whose resilience of spirit has been a trademark throughout the novel, attempts to assemble some kind of transcendent meaning to the events:

> And I was just making my baby darling a new frock; and now I shall never see him in it, and never talk to him any more . . . We said . . . that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us--instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word.[343]

While Sue – revealing her own adherence to a Hellenistic metaphysical narrative of beauty, truth, and purpose – addresses her angst using pagan frames of reference, the implications of the passage are clear. Sue and Jude have trusted in the benevolence of a transcendent goodness beyond themselves. This metaphysical system has asked them to take it "at its word." Sue's lament, situated within the context of late Victorian Britain, suggests that metaphysical systems – be they Christian or pagan –

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[343] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 328.

leave the faithful "[stabbed] in the back for being such fools." They are awakened to the seeming ambivalence of this governing power that has broken its word and abandoned their family.

A scene more direct in its antagonism towards the Christian narrative takes place soon after Sue is allowed back into their room to see the bodies of her children. As they wait for the coroner's inquest

> a subdued, large, low voice spread into the air of the room from behind the heavy walls at the back.
>
> 'What is it?' said Sue . . .
>
> 'The organ of the college chapel. The organist practising I suppose. It's the anthem from the seventy-third Psalm; 'Truly God is loving unto Israel.''
>
> She sobbed again. 'Oh, oh my babies! They had done no harm! Why should they have been taken away, and not I!'
>
> There was another stillness--broken at last by two persons in conversation somewhere without.
>
> 'They are talking about us, no doubt!' moaned Sue. ''We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!''
>
> Jude listened—'No--they are not talking of us,' he said. 'They are two clergymen of different views, arguing about the eastward position. Good God--the eastward position, and all creation groaning!'[344]

This passage functions almost liturgically as Jude and Sue engage in a kind of call and response pattern with the neighbouring church. As Jude and Sue sit with their dead children, the words from the neighbouring church seep into their room in an almost organic, living sense. The "subdued, large, [and] low" presence – for, indeed, Jude and Sue do not know immediately what it is that is with them – spreads "into the air." Jude discerns that it is the anthem from Psalm 73, entitled "Truly God is loving unto Israel." While the irony is striking, it is perhaps more important to realise that the organist plays alone, the words of the Psalm itself not present. The song, recognisable

[344] Ibid., 326-327.

to Jude by the familiarity of its form and structure, frames the absence of its sacred content. This absence of content is highly suggestive of an absence of presence as it offers form without substance. This absence is emphasised by the fact that the song comes to them "from behind the heavy walls." The narrative of divine consolation and presence is found lacking as Jude and Sue fail to be comforted by both the proximity of the neighbouring sacred place and the wordless hymn.

The sense of existential absence suggested by the music from the neighbouring church coupled with her inability to frame any particular meaning from the ashes of her suffering overwhelms Sue who asks why her "babies should have been taken away, and not I!" Though Sue seems to have some vague awareness of the absence implied by the organ music, she responds to the "call to worship," such as it is, and pleads to the invoked Christian deity for some reason for the day's events. Her answer is, again, absence. However, this time it is starker and more bare, unadorned in silence. Even the frame has collapsed and she is momentarily confronted with the sense that there is no answer to her question.

The stillness is broken by voices from outside of the boarding house. Sue, worn by mockery implied by the anthem from Psalm 73, makes the assumption that the two are talking about Jude and Sue, and laments that Jude and Sue have become a "spectacle" amongst creation, echoing the words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 4:9. In doing so, Sue equates herself with the apostles of Christ. In the following verse Paul writes that these apostles "are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised."[345] By positioning herself alongside the apostles, Sue asserts her blamelessness in the face of her great suffering. Combined with her earlier sorrow at the injustice of the death of

[345] I Corinthian 4:10.

her children, her use of the passage in I Corinthians deconstructs Paul's assertion that the suffering of the blameless is all "for Christ's sake." Sue uses Paul's words as a protest against the justification offered for suffering within the Christian cultural narrative. She, like Jude earlier in the novel, questions the "devotional motto that all is for the best."[346]

Jude corrects Sue, explaining that the two men are, in fact, clerics, and that they are not speaking about Jude and Sue, but about the nineteenth-century ecclesiastical controversy over which direction the priest should face when administering Holy Communion. Sue's plea for answers to her suffering is, indeed, met with a response. This response possesses a content that her encounter with the organist's music lacked. Though it lacks the beauty of musical accompaniment, their words are personal, spoken from the mouths of God's chosen representatives here on earth and, as such, possess the ability to offer both definition and compassion to Sue's plight. However, the content of the clergymen's words only deepens her sense of isolation and lack of faith in the Christian tradition. The two men do not speak, directly or indirectly, of Sue's plight. They do not ponder the nature of suffering or even pontificate on the goodness of God. The debate, bogged down in the doctrinal and ecclesiastical mire, is not only irrelevant to the plight confronting Sue and Jude, it is, in the face of the couple's suffering, cruel. The two men are immersed in the narrative to which they have dedicated their lives – a narrative Hardy seems to be insinuating has little relevance to the suffering of humanity. The "Good-God theory," about which Hardy wrote in his autobiography and on behalf of which the two clerics inadvertently speak, is alternately found to be empty, silent, and cruel.

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[346] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 204.

It is intriguing that the content of the clergymen's discussion is spatial in nature offering, again, a subtle revelation of Hardy's sense that an individual's most deeply held beliefs are readily expressed within the context of his or her spatiality. It is fitting, then, that the priests' discussion revolves around an arcane issue of liturgical spatiality, one that possesses little bearing to the world outside of clerical and theological circles. Hardy makes a purposeful effort to illustrate the indifference of the clergymen's discussion in spatial terms. In response to the discussion, Jude, like Sue before him, invokes Paul's letter to the church in Rome. What would be an ironic turn of phrase highlighting the chasm between the horror of the dead children in the boarding house bedroom and the trivial doctrinal discussion on the eastward position, takes on a more subtle level of import when one considers the inherent spatiality of the passage quoted by Jude. In Romans 8:22-24, Paul situates the existential yearning for resolution from this troubled world within the hearts of humanity and then, in the portion of the passage quoted by Jude, moves to broaden that sense of longing to include what the apostle calls the groaning of "creation." The created order Paul speaks of undoubtedly encompasses the physical spatial dimension of human existence from which and upon which even the most advanced societies construct places of their own. Jude, in essence, trumps and, in some sense, dismantles the clergymen's discussion of sacred spatiality by invoking the sacred longing of all of creation to be free from the pain of lived existence. Jude's use of a more sacred spatiality is not, of course, reverential, for he, by this time, has nearly freed himself from his cognisant acquiescence in the Christian meta-narrative. Instead, his use of scripture demonstrates a willingness to disassemble the sacred reality under which he lived for so long and which now, in the face of such suffering, seems entirely impotent.

The violence of Jude and Sue's suffering collides with the notion of a universe ordered under the authority of a wise and benevolent Creator. Like Jude lying down behind the pigsty, the couple senses the "horrid" lack or "rhyme" and "harmony" reflected in the "logic" of the Christian cultural narrative. It is significant to consider that Jude edits his reference to Romans 8, cutting his quotation short so as to avoid the optimistic ending in which Paul asserts that "we are saved by hope" and that "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."[347] Far from assuaging their sorrow, Jude and Sue see the cold reality of an indifferent universe run by a "goodless" and "badless" God, if by anyone at all. The two have now moved into the centre of time, unprotected by the comforts and illusions of their place on the circumference. From the centre they can see the great and empty sky and "bleak open down" of Hardy's narrative universe. The reality of suffering weighs heavily upon the couple and it is from this point that their paths begin to separate. Jude attempts to find his way without his faith, taking solace in his relationship with Sue. He soon realises, however, that the trauma has exacted a more severe toll upon his partner. Sue is driven into a life of faith, embracing the orthodoxy for which she had, earlier in the novel, derided Jude. He observes that the depth of her "bereavement seemed to have destroyed her reasoning faculty. The once keen vision was dimmed."[348] Sue is not unlike *Daniel Deronda's* (1876) Gwendolen Harleth who, after the drowning death of her husband, fixates on his "dead face" in the water, complains that she "can't sleep much" and becomes strangely silent in conversation, "as if her memory had lost itself in a web where each

[347] Romans 8:24, 28.
[348] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 349.

mesh drew all the rest."[349] Sue's flight into religious fervor is shown throughout the novel as an inadequate source for the personal strength and conviction that had been her defining characteristic prior to the death of her children. She cannot sustain herself beneath the burden of such suffering and spends the remainder of her life apart from her true love and, what is more, laboring beneath what she, at some level, knows to be an illusion.

Of course, as I suggested earlier, suffering is a motif that runs throughout *Jude the Obscure* and is not restricted solely to the novel's climactic final chapters. While the scenes described above are both gripping and telling descriptions of the novel's theological metaphysics, Jude, Sue, and the characters throughout the novel, confronted by suffering, move back and forth between the centre and the margins of time, between seeing and not seeing the stark realities of a world without the comfort and support of a Christian narrative. Jude, crushed by Sue's marriage and embarrassed over his night spent with Arabella, attempts to resurrect his spirit by visiting the local writer of a well-known hymn, "The Foot of the Cross" that had, in his dejected state, "moved him exceedingly.[350] Jude journeys to meet the man only to find that the hymn writer's only interest seems to be in the potential money he can make from the song's publication. Jude leaves the man's home feeling foolish for having taken such a meaningless journey and, upon arriving home to Melchester, realises that he had missed an invitation from Sue to come visit her and Phillotson for dinner that day. Frustrated, Jude felt "a growing impatience of faith which he had noticed of late in himself more than once of late made him pass over in ridicule the

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[349] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 597, 659, 592; the parallels between Sue and Gwendolen are made more intriguing when one considers that while Sue did not detest her children as Gwendolen detested Grandcourt, in the scene preceding the children's death, she does lament their existence in the face of their poverty and suffering.
[350] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 186.

idea that God sent people on fools' errands."[351] Jude felt compelled to take this journey, as if he had been "sent" out by God, to meet this writer, only to realise that his trek was meaningless. A similar flash of doubt is cast toward God's "terrestrial scheme" as Sue, repulsed by her marriage to Phillotson, hides away in the clothes-closet beneath the stairwell. Denying that she is fully responsible for the way she is behaving, her husband asks to whom he should assign blame. She responds, "I don't know! The universe, I suppose – things in general because they are so horrid and cruel."[352] Jude considers the adversarial role of Providence when he reflects upon his family's history with marriage by likening it to the "house of Jeroboam,"[353] of whom God says:

> Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.[354]

And finally, Phillotson, having willingly released Sue and, as a result, been expelled from Shaston, tells Arabella that cruelty "is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would!"[355] These passages, then, reflect the steady establishment within *Jude the Obscure* of a competing narrative of reality that acts as a foil to the Christian narrative of divine justice, goodness, and mercy.

Question of Presence in the Wilderness

Journey is a major thematic motif in *Jude the Obscure*, and one that is of vital importance to the understanding of place and the sacred in the novel. Jude and, to a lesser degree, the other characters in the novel are in a constant state of movement. Whether walking or taking the train, the mobility of the characters in the novel is

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[351] Ibid., 188.
[352] Ibid., 213.
[353] Ibid., 273.
[354] I King 14:10.
[355] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 307.

striking to even the most cursory reader. This sense of movement, however, is not idealised. Instead, it is symptomatic of a loss of place. Scott Rode, in his excellent analysis on the way in which Hardy uses roads in his novels, writes that "[*Jude the Obscure*] answers the question: where can a person live who has no places to live? The answer is the road. The road is his only home, his sanctuary, his refuge. Jude's only place is the road because he is permanently displaced."[356] Jude's fundamental lack of place, his inability to gain stable access to a place to call home, drives his travels, drives him to the road. Though the road offers Jude his only real "home," it is not infused with any sense of romance. The narrative motif of the road as a means to a destination or a metaphor for possibility does not work in *Jude the Obscure*. Roads lead to dead-ends. Roads fold back upon themselves. Roads become infused with the very lives of the men and women who travel upon them. Arabella, upon encountering Phillotson upon the road outside Marygreen, confides in him by saying "all the past things of my life that are interesting to my feelings are mixed up with this road."[357] Earlier in the novel, Jude, walking with Sue upon that same road that he had walked along with Arabella when they were courting, recognises that now, walking with his cousin, it was "as if he carried a bright light which temporarily banished the shady associations of the earlier time."[358]

This intersection of life and road and the corresponding sense of dislocation are emphasised by the way in which Hardy frames each section of the novel with the word "at." The word suggests a momentary, temporary connection with the different cities, villages, towns, and areas that follow it. Jude and the characters in the novel are never "in" these different places, but are, instead, only temporary visitors "at" them.

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[356] Rode, *Reading and Mapping Hardy's Roads*, 117.
[357] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 345.
[358] Ibid., 181.

As John Goode points out, "'At' . . . implies a double negation of the subject since although it defines a location it does not suggest, in fact in most cases it positively denies accommodation – thus at various stages the characters are placed but have no place."[359] In using "at" in each section, Hardy exacerbates the sense of spatial impermanence about the events that take place within that particular place. Viewed as a whole, however, the repetition of the word "at" combines to form an overwhelming sense of wandering – a collection of provisional visits that always result in another encounter with the road. Spatial permanence gives way to spatial temporality.

What becomes clear is that the characters in *Jude the Obscure* are on a perpetual journey. This emphasis suggests that Hardy is, at least tangentially, aware of the novel's function as a kind of "journey narrative." If this is indeed the case, the presence of the sacred in the text is highly suggestive of a link between the novel and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), a case made most forcefully by Norman Vance in his recent analysis on the role of the "secular apocalyptic" in the work of Thomas Hardy.[360] Indeed, there exists evidence beyond the mutual emphasis on the journey motif. Apollyon makes an appearance near the opening of *Jude the Obscure* and Hardy himself recalled how his reading of *Pilgrim's Progress* as a young boy had made a lasting impression upon him.[361]While Bunyan's work had an undoubted influence upon Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and the thematic connection between the two works is intriguing, the notion of pilgrimage, the central way in which the idea of "journey" works in *Pilgrim's Progress*, does not, I would argue, resonate with the type of journey undertaken in *Jude the Obscure*. Pilgrimage, after all, implies a

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[359] Goode, "Hardy's Fist," 98.
[360] Norman Vance, "Secular Apocalyptic and Thomas Hardy," *History of European Ideas* 26, no. 3-4 (2000): 201-210.
[361] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 16; Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 476.

journey towards a sacred objective and, while Jude is admittedly on a perpetual quest for the "Heavenly city" of Christminster, he never reaches that place he originally envisaged. *Pilgrim's Progress* also, by virtue of its allegorical style, places only a symbolic emphasis on place. Allegory emerges "out of a dialectic between the literal and the metaphorical [from which] the analytic reader . . . produces meaning . . . [In] formal allegory, the author deliberately creates structures that guide, even dictate how interpretation of a particular work must proceed."[362] To read *Jude the Obscure* allegorically, then, mitigates the deep entrenchment of place within the fabric of human experience. Place in *Jude the Obscure* is not static, but is full of multiple, changing meanings.

I would, instead, suggest that Hardy's novel parallels the biblical account of the children of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. The two narratives, of course, pivot on the notion of journey, of a perpetual sense of motion propelling them forward. Both also rely on the ubiquity of the God-narrative as a force and presence – both gracious and antagonistic – throughout the journey. And, perhaps most importantly, both rely on the importance of place as an integral aspect of their personal and theological metaphysical system. The Israelites are, like Jude, propelled by a place-driven dream, a dream that is dependant upon the notion that things will be better "there" than they are "here." The Israelites are told that they will come "up out of [slavery in Egypt] unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey,"[363] a description not unlike Phillotson's original description of Christminster to Jude as the "headquarters" of Christian scholarship. Like the appearance of the burning bush to Moses and his subsequent declaration of Yahweh's intention to free

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[362] Kathleen Swaim, *Pilgrim's Progress, Puritan Progress : discourses and contexts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 23.
[363] Exodus 3:9.

and restore his people, Phillotson's words to Jude activate a latent faith in a transcendent reality that is expressed via place.

Admittedly, the story of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness may seem, at first, to fit the pilgrimage motif that I suggested does not resonate with *Jude the Obscure*. However, in both narratives, what initially seems to be a pilgrimage to a holy/wholly different place quickly disintegrates into a wandering, nomadic existence in which the narrative protagonists never arrive at any destination. It is at this point that *Jude the Obscure* comes to an end with Jude dying alone in his bedroom at Christminster. The biblical account of the Israelites wanderings ends in a subtle yet similar way with the death of Moses and, with him, the death of the narrative of wandering. What I am suggesting is that the placeless wandering of Israel in the wilderness is related to but separate from the story of their entrance into the Promised Land. Indeed, according to scripture, the original generation of Israelites died before they were eventually able to enter the land of Canaan.

Central to my reading is the work of Walter Bruegemann, the foremost theological scholar on the role of place in the biblical narrative. He argues that, though oftentimes neglected within the field of biblical studies, "a sense of place is a primary category of faith"[364] within the biblical tradition. This becomes important when one realises that faith is an external motivation that expresses itself through experiential encounters. Brueggemann's assertion, then, intends to situate place at the internal and experiential centre of individuals within the biblical narrative. In his effort to create a paradigm for what he calls "land as a prism for biblical faith," Brueggemann divides the encounter of God's people with place into ways of

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[364] Walter Brueggemannn, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 4.

interaction with the land. In this way, the work of Brueggemann closely parallels Kort's establishment of various "place-relations" to define the ways in which individual characters understand and interact with the places they inhabit within a fictional narrative. Brueggemann links the development of Israel's relationship with Yahweh to the development of their relationship to the land – to their relationship with place.

One of these stages in the development of this relationship with the land is what Brueggemann refers to at the "wilderness tradition." Brueggemann eschews the idea that wilderness is a stage "on the way to" the Promised Land, instead defining it as an end unto itself – a vital opportunity to express the fidelity of their relationship with their God.

> Wilderness is not simply an in between place . . . It is a space far away from ordered land. It is . . . entry into the arena of chaos . . . like the darkness before creation . . . Displacement . . . is experienced . . . Wilderness is formless and therefore lifeless. To be placed in the wilderness is to be cast in to the land of the enemy – cosmic, natural, historical – without any of the props or resources that give life order and meaning. To be in the wilderness . . . [is to be] in a context hostile and destructive.[365]

Far from being a tangential foray into biblical scholarship, Brueggemann's paradigmatic analysis of Israel's relationship to the land in the wilderness provides the theoretical framework for a meaningful relationship between the biblical account of Israel's wanderings and unending sense of movement that characterises *Jude the Obscure*. Though Brueggemann describes the trials of Israel's wilderness experience, his description of an untethered descent into a place of chaos bears directly upon the narrative experience of Jude and the other characters in Hardy's novel. The only place, as Rode suggested, for the characters is the road, a road leading deeper into the wilderness, deeper into a chaotic place full of enemies, both cosmic and natural, and

[365] Ibid., 27-28.

devoid of the "resources that give life order and meaning." The stops, such as they are, along the way provide only the momentary rest of being "at-a-place" as opposed to "in-a-place." The wilderness narrative, framed within the context of Brueggemann's theory, avoids the problematic lack of resolution inherent in reading the novel as a kind of pilgrimage; pilgrimage, after all, always implies a direct focus on destination. However, the focus of the narrative arc in both *Jude the Obscure* and Israel's wilderness tradition soon becomes centrally focused on the expressions and experiences encountered in the chaos of the journey itself.

While direct evidence of Hardy's use of the wilderness narrative in his construction of *Jude the Obscure* does not exist, the text itself does make use of the biblical Moses, the central figure in the Exodus narrative. The novel's epigraph – "the letter killeth" – although a quotation from Paul in I Corinthians 3:6, is, in its substance, a direct reference to the Jewish law written, according to the biblical narrative, as Moses led the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. The law handed down from Moses reappears in the *Jude the Obscure* as Jude is hired to reletter the words of the Ten Commandments written on the wall of a small church in Aldbrickham:

> Jude went out to the church, which was only two miles off. He found that what the contractor's clerk had said was true. The tables of the Jewish law towered sternly over the utensils of Christian grace, as the chief ornament of the chancel end, in the fine dry style of the last century.[366]

Again, Hardy invokes the image of Moses the lawgiver, the one who returned from Mount Sinai with the stone tablets upon which, according to scripture, God himself had written the law (Exodus 31:18). By accepting the task of relettering the Ten Commandments, Jude, like Moses, becomes a proxy law-giver, an irony that is not missed by Sue who comments, "It is droll . . . that we two, of all people, with our

[366] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 289.

queer history, should happen to be here painting the Ten Commandments! You a reprobate and I – in my condition."[367] The irony of their lifestyle and their assigned job eventually leads to their dismissal from the post – to their loss of place – and closer to their eventual return to Christminster. It is there at Christminster that Hardy draws the final and perhaps most vivid and provocative parallel between Jude and Moses:

> [He] daily mounted to the parapets and copings of colleges he could never enter, and renewed the crumbling freestones of mullioned windows he would never look from, as if he had known no wish to do otherwise.[368]

Here Jude looks out from atop the buildings of Christminster and ponders his inability to gain access to the place, the city, the "Heavenly Jerusalem" that drove him into the wilderness. This "mountaintop" view of the inaccessible Promised Land closely mirrors the biblical account of Moses climbing atop Mount Nebo, looking out at Jericho and hearing from the Lord that, to spite his forty years of wandering, he would only be allowed to see the land he had been promised and that he would, instead, die in the wilderness.[369] Hardy's invocation of the biblical character Moses and, what is more, the narrative parallels between the two characters at several points throughout the novel, provides compelling evidence for reading echoes of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites in the story of *Jude the Obscure*.

The endless journey of the characters in Hardy's novel, like Brueggemann's description of the wilderness above, is one fraught with enemies and battles that, as I suggested earlier, strike at the very existence of a divine reason and order under which the narrative universe and spatiality operate. By throwing the characters in the novel into a continuous journey without resources or the comfort of place, Hardy situates

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[367] Ibid., 292.
[368] Ibid., 333.
[369] Deuteronomy 34:1-5.

them in an environment in which, as Brueggemann says of the Israelites in the wilderness, "buoyant trust is rapidly turned into grim resentment," for "faith rapidly erodes in situations of landlessness."[370] The effect of having set out towards a place of such staggering beauty and promise, only to find oneself wandering endlessly and without purpose, encountering hunger, hardship, and trial, challenges the fidelity of the promise. Indeed, the very existence of a transcendent power possessing the ability to dictate the conditions of such placeless wandering – a wandering that could end up being a sentence to death – seems arbitrarily exacting and cruel.[371]

What becomes important in the comparison between the Hardy's Wessex and the biblical wilderness is that very notion of what constitutes sacred place. Where does God reside and act? The existence within the Christian tradition of the sacredness of all creation would suggest that the divine is, as I suggested earlier, some places especially and everywhere necessarily. Yi-Fu Tuan, suggesting the ambiguity of what exactly constitutes sacred place, writes that "it is *not* this, *not* that."[372] If, then, the overarching presence of the divine inhabits all places, making them all sacred to a certain degree, then God must be present in the wilderness. This is the crucible of faith for Israel in the desert:

> Being in the wilderness is enough. Being there alone, abandoned, is unbearable. Inevitably the issue of God's presence is raised in a desperate question. Is he a god who lingers with the owners and supervisors in Egypt? Is he a god who awaits his people in the good land? And is the wilderness an in-between moment without him? Or is wilderness a place that he prefers because of its peculiar character? . . . Israel is not abandoned in wilderness . . . [But] it has only goodness [and] covenantal generosity . . .[373]

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[370] Brueggemannn, *The Land*, 29.
[371] Numbers 32:13: "And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed."
[372] Tuan, "Sacred Space: Explorations of an Idea," 89.
[373] Brueggemannn, *The Land*, 38, 39.

Brueggemann's questions, framed around the biblical account of Israel in the wilderness, are provocative when considered in the light of the wanderings of the characters in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude, Sue, Phillotson and Arabella are thrust into the wilderness, people without a place, forced to live "at" and not "in." In this wilderness, in this condition of wandering, can the characters rely upon "goodness and covenantal generosity?" For Jude and, to a lesser degree, Phillotson, who idealise Christminster as a kind of "Promised Land," does God "await" them in the "good land?" And is the wilderness an "in-between moment without him?" The biblical narrative hinges upon the notion that God reveals himself in the goodness and promise in the place-less wanderings of the wilderness. The void is made sacred and the notion of sacred place becomes mobile. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy asserts otherwise. He dismantles the theological and philosophical theories of the transcendent *and spatial* ubiquity of the divine. The wanderings throughout Wessex do not reveal the unique goodness and promise of God. Nor does God await Jude and Phillotson in the "good land" of Christminster. The wandering of the novel's characters possesses all the trials and suffering of the wilderness experience and yet denies them the solace and recompense of divine presence.

The unravelling of trust in the divine is the central function of wilderness living in *Jude the Obscure*. The placeless wanderers in the novel are confronted, like the Israelites, with challenges to the notion of a good God who has called them to believe in the possibility of a meaningful destination and existence. Lucy Snow, the heroine of Charlotte Brontë's (1816-1855) *Villette* (1853), whose own wanderings are also characterised by suffering, responds to circumstance with deference to divine will: "I did not, in my heart, arraign the mercy or justice of God . . . I concluded it to be part of his great plan that some must deeply suffer while they live, and I thrilled in

the certainty that of this number, I was one."[374] In sharp contrast, however, Hardy's narrative steadily erodes the notion of a God who travels with his people in the wilderness, establishing instead a deity that is indifferent to, or perhaps even initiates, the chaos in the wilderness. In a vain attempt to escape the pain of the wilderness, the wanderers in *Jude the Obscure* travel throughout Hardy's Wessex. Even Jude surrenders his Promised Land of Christminster, if only periodically, throughout the novel, hoping to find a place in which he can live freely and safely.

Hardy subverts the sense of safety Jude and the other wanderers seek. The language of journey in *Jude the Obscure* is often suggestive of a kind of existential and transcendent battle. Jude moves to Melchester and, recognising how close he is to Sue and her new husband Phillotson, rationalises his decision to stay there by invoking the image of war: "The proximity of Shaston to Melchester might afford him the glory of worsting the Enemy in a close engagement, such as was deliberately sought by the priests and virgins of the early Church, who, disdaining an ignominious flight from temptation, became even chamber-partners with impunity."[375] The idea of battle is raised once again when, later in the novel, Sue and Jude, trying to forge a life for themselves now in Aldbrickham, discuss the prospects of marriage causing Sue to suggest that perhaps Jude and she should unite "against the common enemy – coercion."[376] Though Jude, Sue, and others in *Jude the Obscure* attempt to engage forcefully with the hostile forces of suffering that characterise the wilderness through which they wander, the language of violence gives way to the language of surrender. Sue, having suffered a miscarriage in the wake of her children's death, openly and movingly surrenders to what she suspects to be the unavoidable hand of God: "We

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[374] Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 157.
[375] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 185.
[376] Ibid., 277.

must conform . . . All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!"[377] Sues words of surrender to the suffering that characterise wilderness existence are echoed in Jude's final moments as he, listening to the mocking calls of the scholars outside his window, he murmurs, "Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!"[378]

Confronted with such suffering, it is intriguing to note that these travellers, and perhaps Jude most of all, possess little choice when it comes to their wanderings. While a pilgrimage – tumultuous though it may be – is a freely chosen journey, the journey of wandering is one of desperation, one in which the traveller, exposed to danger and at the mercy of the elements, is quite simply lost. Jude is driven, perhaps cursed, by a heightened sense of spatial and existential displacement – a lost-ness – that drives him into the wilderness. Hardy vividly portrays this drive early in the novel as Jude walks home from his first glimpse of Christminster:

> It had been the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on, to cling to--for some place which he could call admirable. Should he find that place in this city if he could get there? Would it be a spot in which, without fear of farmers, or hindrance, or ridicule, he could watch and wait, and set himself to some mighty undertaking like the men of old of whom he had heard? As the halo had been to his eyes when gazing at it a quarter of an hour earlier, so was the spot mentally to him as he pursued his dark way.[379]

The "yearning of Jude's heart" is to find some sort of anchor to alleviate his sense of displacement. Hardy is careful to contextualise what could be considered a mere "psychic yearning," within the spatial field. Hardy suggests that this relentless searching for a home, for an anchor, is endemic to late Victorian culture. Early in the

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[377] Ibid., 331.
[378] Ibid., 392.
[379] Ibid., 19.

novel, upon Jude's first arrival in Christminster, he decides to take a job as a builder. The narrator suggests that Jude would accept his employer's recommendation "as a provisional thing only. This was his form of the modern vice of unrest."[380] In a similar passage much later in the novel, a broken Jude arrives in Christminster with his family on Remembrance Day, and, in a flurry of emotion, addresses the crowd, saying "I was . . . a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days . . . I am in a chaos of principles – groping in the dark – acting by instinct and not by example.'[381] In these two passages, Hardy describes a prevailing "spirit" or "vice" that afflicts Jude and, by extension, the other characters in *Jude the Obscure*. The characters are restless, moving, unable to settle. Jude describes his existential dilemma in markedly spatial language, saying that he is in a state of "chaos" that leaves him "groping *in* the dark." His attempt to find orientation and his inability to find a place in which to be marks him as a part of this age of transition. It is an age of place-less-ness. It is an age in which movement has displaced settlement. Throughout the novel, Jude labours under the assumption that he will eventually settle, eventually find a home. He is, however, continually pushed back to the road by the realisation that the "admirable place" he seeks does not exist at Christminster, Shaston, Marygreen, or Melchester. An "admirable place" does not exist at all. The Promised Land is an illusion designed to draw him into the wilderness.

Some Places Especially: The Traditional Sacred in *Jude the Obscure*

As I suggested earlier, Hardy's use of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* exists along a continuum of locality. Having sufficiently analyzed the role of "de-centralised" place in the novel, I now turn to examine the particular role of place as it

[380] Ibid., 79.
[381] Ibid., 316, 317.

is expressed in specific locales. It must be said that not all of these places are "traditionally" sacred, though the novel does include a fair number of churches, cathedrals, and the like. However, they are distinguishable from the concept of scared place in the novel discussed above in their geographical locality and demonstrable sacrality.

Christminster

Christminster looms large in *Jude the Obscure* and while it is "only a city," it is so consistently wed to the notion of the sacred throughout the novel that it cannot honestly be considered anything other than the most important representation of localised sacred place in the novel. It is well established that Christminster acts as a narrative stand-in for the real life Oxford. While obvious – the city's geography, architecture, and place names are all mirrored in the real-life Oxford – this fact is not unimportant. For centuries, Oxford had been considered the older of the nation's two centres for ecclesiastical training and, by the time of Hardy's writing, was had become, in large part, symbolic of the monetary, educational, and religious elitism that characterised the era. However, it is perhaps just as telling that Hardy chose "Christminster" as the name to replace Oxford. Dividing the name in two, the sacred implications of the first half of the name, "Christ," becomes readily apparent, Hardy here wasting no apparent energy on subtlety. What is more telling for the purposes of this analysis is his decision to combine "Christ" with "minster." While "minster" admittedly acts as a suffix to several cities throughout England, the historical implications of the word itself are intriguing. From at least the thirteenth century onwards, the term was understood to mean a religious house or a church attached to a monastery. The implications for the reading of Christminster as a sacred place

become obvious; the name of the city itself invokes a direct association with the most traditional symbols of place-based sacrality.

Returning to the text itself, twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the novel, Jude refers to Christminster as "the most Christian city" in the country.[382] Hardy continues the association by alluding or directly referring to the place alternately as "the heavenly Jerusalem," "a city of light," the Garden of Eden, the Promised Land, and even God himself.[383] Christminster's importance to the plot resides in its singular ability to determine Jude's course of action throughout the novel, even when doing so makes little practical sense. That the city is so blatantly depicted as possessing sacred qualities makes the implications of Jude's behaviour even more telling. Hardy seems to be asserting that Jude's irrational and self-destructive attachment to the city of Christminster is in some large part attributable to its associations with the Christian faith.

This seemingly unstoppable pull that Christminster exerts on Jude is one of the most intriguing aspects of the novel. The precise nature of this dynamic is difficult to ascertain as it seemingly defies reason. However, its narrative and sacred place-based implications make it impossible to avoid. I would assert that the way in which Christminster dominates Jude's existential, psychic, and spatial being is anchored in the role of what I will term a cultural and personal nostalgia of place. As the work of Oresme, Bradwardine, and Brueggemann assisted in defining the parameters of a de-centralised notion of sacred place, I turn to the work of another scholar whose work bears directly on the relationship between place and nostalgia.

Dylan Trigg offers important new insights into the interconnectedness of memory, time, and place and, in so doing, provides the framework for a meaningful

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[382] Ibid., 88. 340.
[383] Ibid., 61; 20; 333; 32.

understanding of the unending pull of the Christminster, as a sacred place, on Jude. Trigg begins by establishing a theory that posits that memory is not linear in its relationship to time. Central to Trigg's argument is the work of philosophers Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962). Trigg highlights Bachelard's critique of Bergson's theory of time by noting the emphasis the former places on the "distinction between genuine time and constructed time."[384] While affirming Bergson's experiential theory of time, Bachelard criticises Bergson's implicit "conception of one single time carrying our soul away for ever and ever."[385] For Bachelard, time is experienced in each moment, lived for that moment, and then evaporates into the nebulous past. Conceiving the passage of time in this way "[disrupts] the homogeneity of time" by introducing the possibility of gaps in the human perceptions of the past.[386]

These gaps in our recollection of the past, Bachelard argues, are the building sites of constructed time. Edward Casey, building on Aristotle's assertion that time disperses, echoes Bachelard when he suggests that "memory is itself mainly collective."[387] Memory – the past – stands apart from lived-time. Instead, memory attempts to collect the fragments of temporal experience in order to create a sustainable and viable vision of personal history. Applying this theory directly to the study of place, Trigg describes the process by which a given locale is embedded into our memory as a process of personal and psychic trust in the reliability of ourselves to recreate the place-as-lived to spite the fact that that place will unavoidably be altered

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[384] Trigg, "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory," 5.
[385] Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. Mary McAllester (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000)., 18.
[386] Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, 29; "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory," 5.
[387] Edward S Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Studies in phenomenology and existential philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 181.

due to loss of proximity, the temporality of experience, and the natural changes that take place in a given place due to inhabitation and decay. This act of re-creating the place from the remnants of dispersed experience and then assembling them into a discernable and acceptable order, according to Trigg, falls to imagination. Imagination infuses the work of memory and fills in the holes punctured in the words, events, and places of time in order to construct a meaningful *memorable* relationship with the past.

> The prevention of place slipping from our timescale . . . elevates imagination to the role of preserver of the past. As preserver of the past, the imagination is also the agent that reconciles the otherness of the world with the insidedness of the subject. More specifically, the imagination is employed to blur the division between inside and out . . . meaning that belonging to place is not interrupted by the discontinuous breaks in memory. In the interaction between time and place, therefore, the deadline of time structures the lifeline of place.[388]

The places that populate the spatial landscape of our past are, then, constructs, fueled by the reconstituting work of imagination. Here, then, is the crux of Derrida's assertion that there exists "a past that has never been present."[389] The past re-collected by an individual is one that is inevitably different than which actually occurred. The individual, according to Trigg, utilises imagination to fill in gaps that exist in his or her vision of the past. Imagination therefore allows the individual to perform the important work of conceptualising and narrativising the purpose and meaning of his or her experience and, indeed, existence.

Memory, then, is inseparable from imagination as the two work in tandem to maintain spatial and temporal fidelity. It is important here to point out that the need for imagination and memory intensifies in proportion to the personal connection to a particular place. For example, one need not remember the post office one visits while

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[388] Trigg, "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory," 6.
[389] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21.

visiting an aunt for Christmas, for that place would not necessarily forge a lasting impression upon the visiting niece or nephew. Put another way, memory and imagination need not be employed to "remember" because the individual's investment in that place's continued "existence" within memory is not necessary. On the other hand, the home in which one spent one's childhood is of extreme personal, and in turn, psychic importance and the ability to reconstruct it within memory becomes vital. Trigg asserts that as temporal or spatial distance from or physical changes to a place occur, there is a concomitant increase in the work of imagination to construct a memory of the place that is in keeping with the perceived original experience of it. Here is where Trigg introduces the concept of nostalgia. For Trigg, nostalgia depends on "an image of the past as temporally isolated . . . as a temporal episode, singular and heterogeneous."[390] The isolation of this place-image, frozen in its temporality, creates a psychic environment in which "place is thus fixated on" creating a "bind between fixing and fixation" that deepens as the fidelity of the place and/or the recollection of it is threatened.[391] Nostalgia, then, is fixated memory. It depends on this psychic binding in order to connect "the self to a place and time."[392] The childhood home, the rocking horse at a grandmother's house, the church in which a couple was married: all of these become "sites" for the deployment of nostalgia as time, distance, and physical change or deterioration take hold and the need to reconstitute the experienced "reality" of these places increases. These changes or deteriorations, however, are not mundane occurrences; Nostalgia is enacted when an individual "moves from memory to a state of asymmetrical dependency, a dependency often invoke by the sudden or unwanted fragmentation of the self in

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[390] Trigg, "Altered Place: Nostalgia, Topophobia, and the Unreality of Memory," 8.
[391] Ibid., 8.
[392] Ibid., 7-8.

place."[393] Memory becomes nostalgia when a person's psychic wellness is dependent upon the preservation of a constructed continuity of a particular place.

Nostalgia, however, is a precarious state that possesses its own rules by which it functions. It operates on a continuum of desire and aversion. The individual experiencing nostalgia desires proximity to the place about which they are fixated and yet he or she experiences an aversion to such a "real-life" encounter precisely because to do so could destroy the carefully constructed "nostalgic-reality" that he or she has constructed. Nostalgia necessitates a high psychic investment that inevitably seeks its own preservation. Nostalgia occurs precisely because the place-as-remembered no longer exists and the self, at least subconsciously, realises that to allow oneself to re-experience the place in lived time would confront the nostalgic fixation with its obvious unreliability. This reveals what Trigg calls the "double-intentionality between resignation and resistance: resignation of the loss of place, but resistance against time as it threatens to undo what memory has established.[394]" Trigg invokes Freud to argue that nostalgia is a type of neurosis that fixates – and indeed manipulates and recreates – a moment that has now passed. To maintain that illusion is vital to the maintenance of reality in which the individual has invested considerable mental, emotional, and existential effort. This back and forth, this desire and aversion, this sense of ambivalence, as Trigg refers to it, is a central characteristic of nostalgia.

Finally, Trigg suggests that the reintroduction of the site of spatial fixation in the context of lived time often results in a kind of break with the nostalgic place forged by memory and imagination. In such an encounter, "imagined memory . . . collides with objective time, which overpowers the imagination."[395] The illusory

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[393] Ibid., 10.
[394] Ibid., 8.
[395] Ibid., 9.

nature of the constructed memory becomes apparent and the individual's dependence upon it to construct the spatiality of his or her psychic existence is disrupted. He or she is displaced by the difference between the illusion and the objective lived experience before him or her. This disruption demands a reconstitution of spatial reality that can be difficult and traumatic for the individual.

Returning to *Jude the Obscure*, Trigg's theories of place, memory, time, and nostalgia provide the framework for understanding the pull of Christminster on Jude in the novel. What is more important for the purpose of this study is the fact that that understanding necessitates, given Christminster's status as a decidedly sacred place in the novel, the involvement of the sacred in that development. Jude's ambivalence towards Christminster comes as a result of his nostalgic fixation upon the city. He experiences both desire for and aversion towards the city as he attempts to negotiate the nature of his relationship to it.

Jude's sense of displacement is evident since he was a young boy in Marygreen. One can trace the "fragmentation of the self" that leads to nostalgia as Jude is sent off to live with his Aunt Drusilla who, it becomes obvious, did not welcome his presence. The trauma initiates the movement from memory to nostalgia, from simple memory to fervent fixation. Jude's search for a place "to anchor on, to cling to" makes him especially susceptible to the dependence upon a place that is "admirable."[396] Jude has never known the existential sense of stability that comes with relational and spatial fixity. Perhaps subconsciously recognising "his own sporadically controlled, partially understood world, he substitutes the image of a

[396] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 19.

unified, stable, and understandable one."[397] Given the fact that he has never possessed a place or history of his own, it is a natural psychic progression for Jude to become fixated on Christminster.

It is peculiar, however, that Jude's "memory," such as it is, of Christminster is not personal. Indeed, at the moment of his first introduction to Christminster, he, much to the surprise of his aunt, does not know that the city even exists. What I would suggest is that Jude experiences what I will term a "common memory" of Christminster. Just as memory and, to a greater extent, nostalgia, both aided by imagination, construct place in order to preserve individual identity, Christminster as a place became so vital to the national and spatial identity of Wessex – and, given its reputation, England – that it possessed a place in the memory of communities and individuals. Marianne Hirsch taps into this notion of a collective memory, a concept she refers to as postmemory. Her theory is strikingly similar to Trigg as she suggests that postmemory depends upon "connections to its object or source . . . not mediated through recollection but through an *imaginative investment and creation* (emphasis mine).[398] Hirsch, then, echoes the idea that memory is "constructed." However, she suggests that while memory is most often associated with the recollection of fragments of past experience, a unique kind of memory construction occurs for those that "grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of a previous generation"[399] Hirsch asserts rightly that individuals can possess a particular kind of memory – a learned memory – that comes from the narratives that preceded them. In order to illustrate this point, one

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[397] Ramon Saldivar, "*Jude the Obscure*: Reading and the Spirit of the Law," in *Jude the Obscure: Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebooks (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 34.
[398] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.
[399] Ibid., 116.

may consider the changing nature of the histories a culture tells its children. The narrative of history is communicated differently based upon the political, social, cultural, and religious agendas present within a given society at a given time.

Intriguingly, Hardy himself seems to mirror this notion of a learned memory, of an inherited sense of what constitutes reality. In his *Literary Notebooks,* Hardy included the work of one of the principal figures in Victorian psychiatry Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), author of twelve books and editor of the *Journal of Mental Science*. Hardy records a passage that demonstrates that Maudsley possessed theories on memory strikingly similar to those of Hirsch and Trigg:

> The individual brain is virtually the consolidate embodiment of *a long series of memories*; wherefore everybody, in the main line of his thoughts, feelings, & conduct, really *recalls the experiences of his forefathers*. Consciousness tells him indeed that he is a self-sufficing individual with infinite potentials of freewill; it tells him also that the sun goes round the earth (emphasis mine).[400]

Evidence of Hardy's use of Maudsley's theories in *Jude the Obscure* has been addressed critically.[401] Regardless of that fact, the impact of Maudsley's work upon the narrative construction of Jude's vision of Christminster seems clear. Broadening, then, the understanding of memory to include the narrative constructs inherited by an individual from a given community or culture, makes it quite simple to define the contours of Jude's psychic relationship with Christminster. The past mediated through another individual is not unique to human experience, nor is it unique to literature of the period. Indeed, Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a novel in which the story of specific places – Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange specifically – are mediated *to* Lockwood *via* Nelly Dean's recollection.

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[400] Henry Maudsley, *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (London: K. Paul, Trench & Co., 1886)., 318-319; quoted in Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, 1:201.
[401] Patricia Gallivan, "Science and Art in *Jude the Obscure*," in *The Novels of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision Press, 1979), 126-144.

Throughout *Jude the Obscure*, then, we can see the formation of this cultural postmemory of Christminster. After all, Jude first hears of Christminster from the departing Phillotson who suggests that the city is the "headquarters" of a university education and Christian service. The builders outside of Marygreen who agree with his assessment that the city is like the Heavenly Jerusalem also solidify Jude's inherited memory of Christminster. Similarly, Vilbert, the duplicitous travelling physician, the "hunchbacked old woman of great intelligence," and the travelling carter who tells Jude that the city is full of "noble-minded men . . . able to earn hundreds by thinking out loud" and that the streets are full of "beautiful music everywhere" create an idealised image/memory of Christminster that, though it haunts Jude for his entire life, does not originate from his own lived experience. That his vision of the city comes from "unreliable and vague witnesses"[402] matters little to Jude as these narratives, these communal memories of the nature and character of Christminster, take hold and fuse to his sense of internal displacement and intense longing for a place of his own as he transitions to the fixation and dependency that characterises his nostalgic view of the city.

Jude's "postmemory" and the sense of nostalgia to which it gives birth, is fuelled by his vivid imagination. Indeed, Jude's aunt recalls his boyhood tendency to create new realities as his "trick as a child of seeming to see things in the air."[403] The narrator echoes that sentiment, describing the relationship between Jude's imaginative vision of Christminster and his life in Marygreen in markedly spatial terms by observing that "his dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small."[404] In a

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[402] Patricia Ingham, "*Jude the Obscure*," in *Jude the Obscure: Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebooks (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 21.
[403] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 105.
[404] Ibid., 16.

scene that invokes Christminster's sacred character via its allusion to Jacob's vision of a ladder ascending to heaven upon which angels travelled back and forth, Jude climbs the repairmen's ladder in order to "see" Christminster. Jude heightens the sacred nature of his endeavour as he prays that he can see the place, likening his desire to view the city to a man seeking God's assistance in building a church. Jude's "sacred imagination" takes hold as he looks to the horizon:

> Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape, points of light like the topaz gleamed. The air increased in transparency with the lapse of minutes, till the topaz points showed themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates, and other shining spots upon the spires, domes, freestone-work, and varied outlines that were faintly revealed. It was Christminster, unquestionably; either directly seen, or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere.[405]

Jude partially admits the role his imagination may play in the vision as he confesses that his view may be "miraged in the peculiar atmosphere." Whatever the case, Jude's imaginative nature constructs his sacred "memory" and nostalgia for Christminster throughout his formative years at Marygreen.

The fusion of memory, history, and nostalgic connection to the place of Christminster hits its high mark in Jude's first visit to the city after the dissolution of his marriage to Arabella. Momentarily dissuaded by the reality of his marriage and what he thought to be his soon-born child, Jude reengages his intimate dependency upon the vision of Christminster and as he is finally able to gain entrance into the city:

> [He] had read and learnt almost all that could be read and learnt by one in his position, of the worthies who had spent their youth within these reverend walls, and whose souls had haunted them in their maturer age . . . The brushings of the wind against the angles, buttresses, and door-jambs were as the passing of these only other inhabitants . . .
>
> Speculative philosophers drew along . . . active as in youth; modern divines . . . among whom . . . were the founders of the religious school called Tractarian; the well-known three, the enthusiast, the poet, and the formularist . . . A start of aversion appeared in his fancy to move them at sight of those other sons of

[405] Ibid.

> the place, the form in the full-bottomed wig, statesman, rake, reasoner, and sceptic; the smoothly shaven historian so ironically civil to Christianity . . .
>
> [He regarded] the prelates, by reason of his own former hopes. Of them he had an ample band--some men of heart, others rather men of head; he who apologized for the Church in Latin; the saintly author of the Evening Hymn; and near them the great itinerant preacher, hymn-writer, and zealot, shadowed like Jude by his matrimonial difficulties.[406]

In this moment of staggering imaginative reverie, Jude makes clear the degree to which his "memory" of the city has been fed by the narratives of his youth and, more recently it would seem, all "he had read and learnt . . . of the worthies" who had lived in the city in years past. Jude's vision of Christminster is notable for its historical nature. While he undoubtedly anticipates Christminster as a place in which his future hopes and aspirations can be fulfilled, the reason for that anticipation is anchored in his received memory of the place, forged by the words of others and the reading he has done.

That history, as reflected in Jude's encounter that evening, is steeped in Christminster's identity as a Christian city. He conjures up the ghostly presence of the city's great churchmen, the "saintly hymn writer" Thomas Ken (1637-1711), the three "well-known" Tractarians John Henry Newman (1801-1890), John Keble (1792-1876), and Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), and the "itinerant preacher" and "zealot" John Wesley (1703-1791). Jude's memory, imagination, and nostalgia are anchored in a narrativised vision of Christminster that is sacred in its history and associations. What is more, the level of identification with these individuals, the nostalgic sense of dependency to which Trigg referred, is evident as he likens his "matrimonial difficulties" to those of John Wesley" and pays a special regard to the churchmen due to the fact that he had, at one time, shared similar vocational aspirations. Jude's imagination has, in this passage, taken full flight as he fills the

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[406] Ibid., 73-74.

gaps in his inherited memory with the vision of these "ghosts" with which he walks and, what is more, holds conversations "out loud." The narrator's observation from earlier in the novel that there exists "the embroidery of imagination upon the stuff of nature"[407] resonates with this passage as the place of Christminster becomes embroidered with Jude's imagination in order to maintain the psychic fidelity of his inherited vision of the city.

Jude's narrative of Christminster, then, is dependent upon a sacred identification with the city. The city is a place in which holy men dwell and do the work of the divine. While his vision of Christminster is undoubtedly influenced by its educational and ideological reputations, his vision of the city as sacred in nature is undoubtedly an active aspect of his nostalgic fixation upon it. It is, then, in keeping with the analysis of nostalgia above, not unexpected that proximity to the city, an encounter with the city in what Trigg calls "lived time" or "objective time," will result in a psychic disruption that deeply affects Jude. I contend that these encounters dismantle Jude's historical and imaginative constructs of the city and, with them, the sacred associations so central to their initial composition. Throughout the novel, Jude continues to come to Christminster, hoping each time that "perhaps it will soon wake up, and be generous."[408]

Still, at each turn, he encounters the reality that he is not welcome and, what is more, that the place does not possess the place-based qualities of a kind and benevolent God. This "most Christian city" is nothing of the sort. The exclusion, hardship, and derision make it seem something else altogether. The covering of the sacred narrative of Christminster to which Jude has so long adhered is removed and Jude realises that, as in a passage discussed earlier, the place really knows "little of

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[407] Ibid., 44.
[408] Ibid., 308.

Christ or Minster," of true religion or church just as building, a view intended perhaps to be unacceptably reductive. For Jude, the experience of the city runs counter to the place spoken about by his various informants and read about in his books. Near the end of the novel, Jude, crushed by Sue's return to Phillotson, returns himself to Arabella and, walking through the streets of Christminster with her in a drunken stupor, reveals the façade of the city's sacred nature:

> They went along together, like any other fuddling couple, her arm still round his waist, and his, at last, round hers; though with no amatory intent; but merely because he was weary, unstable, and in need of support.
>
> 'This--is th' Martyrs'--burning-place," he stammered as they dragged across a broad street. "I remember--in old Fuller's _Holy State_--and I am reminded of it--by our passing by here--old Fuller in his _Holy State_ says, that at the burning of Ridley, Doctor Smith--preached sermon, and took as his text _'Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'_--Often think of it as I pass here. Ridley was a—'
>
> 'Yes. Exactly. Very thoughtful of you, deary, even though it hasn't much to do with our present business.'
>
> 'Why, yes it has! I'm giving my body to be burned!'[409]

Jude's vision of the city, once so full with the memory and majesty of Christian luminaries from generations past, has now, influenced by the weight of reality, been obscured. Jude's confrontation with the events in Christminster has required him to re-construct the narrative of the city's sacred history. Jude recasts the vision of the city as the "Heavenly Jerusalem" as a place with a sacred – a violently sacred – history. Gone are the glorious images of holy men who welcomed and conversed with Jude in his imaginative reverie so many years before. Jude recalls the city's history as a place of suffering cast in the light of the sacred. Invoking the memory of Richard Smith (1500-1563) and his role in the execution of Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555) and Hugh Latimer (1485-1555) for their heretical challenge to the authority of the

[409] Ibid., 364.

Catholic Church in England. God is present in Jude's rewriting of Christminster's divine history, but the deity has become the reason for humanity's suffering instead of the inspiration for the genius. Later in the novel, Jude, once again drunk, sees the ghosts of Christminster's past – the Tractarians, Bishop Ken, John Wycliffe (fourteenth century), and John Hooker (1554-1600) – joining together, "laughing" at him, and tells Sue that "the theologians, the apologists, and their kin the metaphysicians . . . no longer interest me. All that has been *spoilt by the grind of stern reality* (emphasis mine)."[410] The history he has imagined has turned on Jude, making the revelation of the city's true nature a kind of joke. These men of Christminster's past, once regarded as phantasmal friends, now ridicule him for his foolishness in believing the notion that the city is a place of divine presence and prestige. If God is in Christminster, he has made it to be a place of violence, exclusion, and derision.

Just as Sue complained of the oppressive weight of history at the home she shared with Phillotson at Shaston, Jude's accumulated history in the city of Christminster is a weight that he cannot bear in large part because it is so markedly different from the vision and history he inherited at such a young age. At Christminster, Jude is rejected by the university, becomes embarrassingly drunk in a bar, loses his job, takes brief and ultimately shameful solace in the arms of the manipulative Arabella, cannot find a room for his family, loses all of his children, witnesses the disintegration of his relationship with Sue, humiliatingly remarries Arabella in a alcohol induced depression, and, finally, dies alone as the crowds of the city cheer the perpetuation of the spatial and existential narrative that so fixated Jude upon the city.

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[410] Ibid., 380.

Trigg's theory of nostalgic memory, as I suggested earlier, informs this unrelenting hold that Christminster possesses over Jude in the novel. The paradoxical notion of desire and distance that Jude expresses at various points throughout the novel comes as a direct result of Jude's psychological fixation upon the city. The closer Jude is to Christminster, the more apparent the degree of his nostalgic self-deception becomes. Conversely, as the distance between Jude and the city increases, the more he seems to fixate on Christminster's perceived beauty, a sentiment most poignantly depicted in Jude's creation of Christminster cakes in order to make a living. Evidence of Hardy's intentionality in constructing this pattern is found, interestingly enough, in the way in which Jude and Sue's relationship early in the novel thrives when they are apart – constructing their relationship via the letters they write back and forth – and inevitably disintegrates when they are together.

The constructed image upon which he depends thrives on distance, upon the maintenance of illusion. Psychological necessity, then, plays an important, though perhaps critically neglected, role in maintaining Jude's perpetual place-less-ness. While the exclusivity of Christminster and the various villages and towns that populate Hardy's Wessex undoubtedly contribute to his endless movement, Jude is driven to wander in order to maintain his image of what the Christminster means. That he cannot "find a place" in locales outside of Christminster can be understood, at least in part, to be a result of the fact that these other communities are "not Christminster." Just as the tragedy that marks the end of Jude's life is marked by the fact that he is with Arabella *and not with* Sue, there exists within Jude a continual angst when he is *not at* Christminster. In Jude, then, Hardy is able to create a fascinating statement on the "place of God," of sacred place, in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude is drawn to Christminster precisely because he has wed his need for an

existential and spatial anchor in his inherited memory and nostalgic belief in a Christminster that is, in large part, constructed by the city's Christian associations. Realising throughout the novel that this Christminster is an allusion, Jude moves away, retreats to the wilderness, in order to escape and to subconsciously reconstruct his picture of Christminster. However, in the wilderness of Jude's wanderings, as he moves from town to town, Hardy, the reader, and Jude recognise that God is absent. Hardy has constructed, then, a narrative universe in which the deity, spatially expressed within the places humanity dwells, is either missing or indifferent.

The Traditional Sacred

As I suggested earlier, though Christminster looms large in any discussion of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure*, it is important to realise that individual places more traditionally associated with the sacred play an important part in the way in which Hardy portrays the topic in the novel.[411] Churches are important throughout the novel and are drawn as a significant aspect of community life and existence throughout Wessex. What is more, Hardy uses his description of these places to inform his broader picture of the role of the divine at the end of the nineteenth century.

Finding Place for Sacred Place in Jude the Obscure

While Hardy, as I have demonstrated, strikes an antagonistic tone towards traditional Christian faith in *Jude the Obscure*, it is important to note that he did not see religion, and churches in particular, as a dispensable aspect of community life. Hardy, instead, sought to instil a kind of secular-reverence for local churches – an understanding that churches are important spatial and architectural expressions of human history and, as such, should be maintained with integrity. Their purpose,

[411] Though not specifically addressed in this study, Hardy does imbue his depiction of roads, and crossroads in particular, with an degree of metaphysical and even sacred import. For an excellent discussion on these implications see Rode, *Reading and Mapping Hardy's Roads*.

Hardy suggested, should accommodate the development and maturation of human understandings of the transcendent. In his autobiography he writes that his

> vision had often been that of so many people brought up under Church-of-England influences, a giving of liturgical form to modern ideas, and expressing them in the same old buildings that had already seen previous reforms successfully carried out.[412]

Architecture, for Hardy, was integral to the continuity of human civilisation, for, to borrow from Ruskin, "we cannot remember without her."[413] Hardy echoes Ruskin when he suggests that the protection of an "ancient" church "is the preservation of memories, history, fellowship, and fraternities."[414] Architecture, then, acts as a kind of anchor to the common human desire, expressed throughout time, to make existential sense from the world in which individuals and communities live.

The integral communal and memorial character of churches is underscored throughout *Jude the Obscure*. Though subtle, it seems important to note the way in which Hardy regularly introduces new towns and villages by, at some point, drawing attention to the church that is in the community. Alfredston, Marygreen, Shaston, and even Christminster, are all locales in which the church, its tower, steeple, or spires are depicted as central components of the communities' visual identity. While one may regard this as a stylistic affect left over from the author's previous occupation as a church architect, I would suggest that Hardy is attempting to demonstrate the centrality of local churches as the spatial expression of a community's collective history.

The vitality of Hardy's opinions regarding the importance of the church to the communal narrative within a given locale comes most sharply into focus in the

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[412] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 407.
[413] Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory (from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*)," 131.
[414] Thomas Hardy, "Memories of Church Restoration," in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings; Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences*, ed. H. Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967), 215.

novel's opening chapter. Describing Marygreen, Hardy gives centre stage to the description of the village church:

> The original church . . . had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood. In place of it a tall new building of modern Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a *certain obliterator of historic records* who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteen-penny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years (emphasis mine).[415]

Here, Hardy makes clear that the Victorian fad of church restoration presented a real threat to historical and existential continuity of communities small and large throughout England. Though Hardy echoed Ruskin's appreciation for the organic nature of Gothic architecture, he eschewed the propensity of architects and builders to destroy the visual and spatial integrity of a church in order to erect something wholly different in its place. This, Hardy suggests above, is an act performed by "the obliterator of historic records." As I alluded to earlier, Hardy sees place as a locale upon which history – individual and communal – is written. In *Jude the Obscure*, Brown House and its environs become a place of important personal history for Jude and his family – vividly portrayed by his carving of the words "THITHER J.F." on a stone there. Similarly, the destruction of the church at Marygreen is an act of historical erasure. History – a term, again, for Hardy not wed to religious or political ideologies – is obliterated by over-zealous church restoration. Latent within this passage may be Hardy's own sense of regret at having taken part in such projects when he was a young architect. Reflecting in his later years on the work he did on a local church called St. Juliot:

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[415] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 9-10.

> Hardy much regretted the obliteration in this manner of the church's history, and, too that he should be instrumental in such obliteration, the building as he had first set eyes on it having been so associated with what was romantic in life.[416]

Hardy recalled the "picturesque neglect" that had characterised the church before it had been restored and regretted that he, like the builders of the new church at Marygreen, had erased the village history and, along with it, the "romance" it possessed. The restored church at Marygreen returns late in the novel as Sue, having returned to her relationship with Phillotson, unwittingly meets Jude there. While waiting, Jude observed that "everything was new, except for a few pieces of carving preserved from the wrecked old fabric, now fixed against the new walls. He stood by these: they seemed akin to the perished people of that place who were his ancestors and Sue's."[417]Jude, at his final and climactic reunion with Sue, seeks out comfort of continuity and stands near the only part of the church that had not been renovated. It is intriguing to note that he does not stand beneath the cross, as Sue had done at her moment of existential crisis at the Church of St. Silas in Beersheba. Rather, he attaches himself to the historical, cultural, and familial places within the church.

Hardy's understanding of churches, then, is anchored in his understanding of the nature of place: that locales are imbued with importance by nature of humanity's need for them. Churches are important for they act as a place-based focal point for the history of individuals and the community. The act of restoration, if carried to an extreme, obfuscates that history, not unlike the history hidden in the clods of dirt at Marygreen or the streets of Christminster in the passages discussed earlier in this study. Architecture as a discipline, and church architecture in particular, records the history of people apart from ideology. Hardy, then, recasts churches "as temples of

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[416] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 182.
[417] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 376.

human tradition rather than place for the worship of a supernatural God."[418] These traditions, however, though expressive of human belief, are anchored in the experiential notion of communal identity. One will remember that Hardy's invocation of hidden spatial memory in Marygreen and Christminster were not anchored in the exclusivist narratives of those times, but, rather, in the simple rhythms of life lived – people holding conversations, lovers meeting, couples making love, dancing, playing, quarrelling, and reconciling. These are the traditions, the memories, Hardy attaches to place, and, it would seem, to churches in particular.

Building the Sacred

Hardy's personal and familial history in architecture and building, as other critics and I have demonstrated, is of tremendous importance to any discussion of place in *Jude the Obscure*. That Jude is a builder, and, what is more, a builder of sacred place throughout the novel is important to this study as it demonstrates the work of constructing the very places that occupy the subject of this inquiry. In *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, Lindsay Jones suggests that architects who affirm the search for order via place "have been particularly concerned about the crucial role of building and buildings in [the] quest after meaningful orientation."[419] Put another way, if humans seek an existential, even ontological, sense of order via spatial emplacement, what Jones here calls "orientation," then the building of places is, in essence, a way of constructing meaning, a way of searching for personal orientation.

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[418] Jan Jędrzejewski, *Thomas Hardy and the Church* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996), 67.

[419] Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), 29.

One can immediately begin to see the implications for this insight in *Jude the Obscure*. As I have discussed, from the moment Hardy introduces Jude at the beginning of the novel, he is "out of place" in every way imaginable. He is, for all intents and purposes, without familial connection, for his relationship with his Aunt is, at least at that point, strained. He has lost both parents and suffers under the emotional trauma of the family secrets that haunt their memory. He has moved to a village where his presence is decidedly not welcome and where his unique temperament and character are derided. It is, then, no accident that the young man turns to building as a career, for his search for an "anchor" finds particular significance in the act of creating places for habitation. Jude, having left Christminster determined to start a new life for himself in Melchester, admits to the connection between the course his life has taken and the building upon which he works:

> The day was foggy, and standing under the walls of the most graceful architectural pile in England he paused and looked up. The lofty building was visible as far as the roofridge; above, the dwindling spire rose more and more remotely, till its apex was quite lost in the mist drifting across it.
>
> The lamps now began to be lighted, and turning to the west front he walked round. He took it as a good omen that numerous blocks of stone were lying about, which signified that the cathedral was undergoing restoration or repair to a considerable extent. It seemed to him, full of the superstitions of his beliefs, that this was an exercise of forethought on the part of a ruling Power, that he might find plenty to do in the art he practised while waiting for a call to higher labours.[420]

Jude here perceives that building, for him, is more than an occupation; it mirrors the existential place in which he finds himself. The restoration of his life was being guided by "a ruling Power" that had provided for him the opportunity to reconstruct his self-definition as he constructed this cathedral. The work of building is seen as a discipline, a step while he awaits a "call to higher labours." Melchester is geographically and descriptively suggestive of Salisbury, a city, of course, notable for

[420] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 125.

the beautiful cathedral, possessing the tallest spire in the United Kingdom. The relationship between the fictional Melchester and the real-life Salisbury is telling as it suggestively positions Jude as a builder of one of the most well known cathedrals in all of England. Building for Jude extends beyond a means to a financial end and becomes expressive of his drive to forge for himself a place in which he can exist and thrive. The project is, of course, sacred in nature and Jude's reading of it as such supports the contention both that Jude is looking for answers to his situation within the "architectural framework" of the Christian narrative and that Hardy views the work of building, particularly the building of churches, to be an important investment of human activity.

Hardy intriguingly chooses to continue to apply Jude's construction of the cathedral at Melchester to the course of the character's life. It is at the cathedral worksite that Jude has his tense discussion with Phillotson regarding Sue's escape from the training school and at it is the same site where Jude is haunted, not by the voice of God, but by the imagined voice of Sue after she hastily marries his former schoolmaster. It is, however, the end of his time building the cathedral that proves most important as it, again, signifies a new direction for his life. Sue, having just been released from her marital obligations by her husband, escapes to meet Jude in Melchester. As they hastily board the train for Aldbrickham, Sue asks if he has stopped work on the Cathedral. He replies that he has, telling her that he was able to convince his supervisor that he should be released immediately. Sue responds:

> 'I fear I am doing you a lot of harm. Ruining your prospects of the Church; ruining your progress in your trade; everything!'
>
> 'The Church is no more to me. Let it lie! *I* am not to be one of
>
> > "The soldier-saints who, row on row,
> > Burn upward each to his point of bliss,"

if any such there be! My point of bliss is not upward, but here.'[421]

Jude begins the construction of the cathedral at Melchester with a sense of divine mandate and the philosophical notion that, in building this great sacred edifice, he would be building his life towards some great divinely directed end. As events unfold, however, the hold of traditional beliefs upon Jude's life loosens and he rereads his act of building in Melchester. His decision to leave the project, though undoubtedly fuelled by his infatuation with Sue, is contextualised within the framework of his personal beliefs in the transcendent and his desires for his future. Jude equates his continuation in the job, interestingly enough, to a kind of unnecessary martyrdom, offering a kind of precursor to his re-vision of Christminster at the Martyrs' Cross at the conclusion of the novel.

The connection between the construction of sacred places and the corresponding construction of narratives of the self exists elsewhere in *Jude the Obscure*. Though I do not wish to return to an in-depth discussion of Christminster, it is intriguing to note that, in his absence from the city, Jude constructs, in a manner of speaking, several representations of Christminster. Shortly after Jude and Sue take Father Time into their care, Jude creates a model of Cardinal College and places it on display at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show. Later in the novel, the wandering couple are discovered selling edible "Christminster Cakes" that recreate the city's "windows and towers, and pinnacles."[422] It is intriguing that Jude's creations memorialise the spatial aspects of Christminster. Again Hardy depicts Jude's obsession in relationship to the city-as-place. Similarly, Jude and Sue's humiliation at Aldbrickham was directly linked to the conflict between their work relettering the Ten Commandments at a local church and their beliefs and conduct as a couple. In the

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[421] Ibid., 229.
[422] Ibid., 301.

wake of the scandal, Sue recognises that the construction of sacred place possesses a latent acquiescence in the authority of Christian social and theological beliefs. She tells Jude, "I wish we could both follow an occupation in which personal circumstances don't count . . . I am as disqualified for teaching as you are for ecclesiastical art. You must fall back upon railway stations, bridges, theatres, music-halls, hotels--everything that has no connection with conduct."[423] The implications of Sue's comment echo Heidegger's assertion that we "do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers."[424] Building is a deeply instinctual human act, connected to a primal need to exist in a place. The building of sacred place can often be, by its very nature, an expression of the need for an individual to experience the divine in the midst of lived experience. Sacred place offers a kind of spatial sacrament – the outward sign of an intrinsically inward reality. Sue realises that Jude's work is "his own cancellation as . . . he repairs the walls that keep him out."[425] By working at the construction of churches, Jude is lending credence to the very belief system that wreaks such havoc upon his life. Sue's casual musing uncovers the important conflict at play for Jude: Jude is building that which seeks to destroy him.

Conclusion

I began my discussion on the role of traditionally sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* by asserting that Hardy possessed a view of the local church that affirmed its role within the community. And yet I have suggested most recently that the construction of these traditionally sacred places in the novel is portrayed by Hardy as the perpetuation of a cultural narrative that is directly responsible for much of the

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[423] Ibid., 295.
[424] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 146.
[425] Goode, "Hardy's Fist," 108.

heartache and suffering that takes place in the novel. Such is the paradox of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure*. On the one hand, Hardy boldly declares the end of sacred place because he declares the end of a God who is all-knowing, all-loving, and actively engaged with his human creation. No place can be sacred because sacred place implies both a certain narrative construct as well as the breakthrough of some transcendent being into the lived time and space in which humanity exists. Much more subtle, yet present nonetheless, is Hardy's assertion that sacred place is a vitally human spatial expression that is central to the historical and cultural continuity of a given community.

However, upon consideration, that Hardy expresses a paradoxical and complex notion of sacred place is not at all surprising. While prominent Christian leaders in England met the publication of *Jude the Obscure* with condemnation, and indeed the themes in the novel are, as I have discussed, openly antagonistic toward the faith, Hardy openly acknowledged that he possessed a long and complicated relationship with Christianity. Like Jude, he had once considered a life as a cleric, but eventually "this fell through less because of its difficulty than from a conscientious feeling, after some theological study, that he could hardly take the step with honour while holding views [regarding theological and doctrinal matters] that he found himself to hold."[426] Though this decision to remove himself from the possibility of vocational ministry occurred early in his life, the conflict forged there reverberated through the years and into his old age where his wife remarks that

> He said once – perhaps oftener – that although . . . critics had cast slurs upon him as Nonconformist, Agnostic, Atheist, Infidel, Immoralist, Heretic, Pessimist, or something else equally opprobrious in their eyes, they had never thought of calling him what they might have called him much more plausibly

[426] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 53; Jedrzejewski, *Thomas Hardy and the Church*.

> – churchy; not in an intellectual sense, but in so far as instincts and emotions ruled.[427]

Advanced in years, Hardy still wrestled with, still held fast to, the "instincts and emotions" that bound him to the church. In this way, perhaps Hardy is not unlike Spinoza (1632-1677) who, though attacked amongst his contemporaries for what they considered to be his atheistic and materialist beliefs, was recast by the romantics, most notably Novalis (1772-1801), as a "God-intoxicated man." Though not orthodox, Hardy's feelings are suggestive of the "poetry" that Sue admits resides in the church.[428] Poetry is dependent upon rhythm and thrives upon the possibility of traditional forms of language. Similarly, Hardy considered the Church's place in the future as one that embraced not the content of its doctrines, but the rhythms of its historic relationship to the community in which it resides – a "re-casting of the liturgy" to erase its "dogmatic superstitions" and accentuate its "commemorative" character.[429]

In *Jude the Obscure*, that complexity of belief is mirrored by Hardy's insistence that place, sacred and otherwise, possesses multiple meanings at one time. Place is not static because humanity is not static. Humanity, like Jude, seeks an anchor to which they can fasten themselves and, at the dawn of a new century, the reliable anchors, the ideological and ontological narratives to which generations have held fast in the midst of suffering are crumbling. That act of fastening is, as the author suggests in his characterisation of Jude in the novel, place-based. Hardy, then, presents sacred place both as it is and as it could be. Sacred place in the novel is somewhere *in process*, somewhere *in between*. The various representations of sacred place are, like the age in which the novel was written, in flux. The associations which

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[427] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 407.
[428] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 271.
[429] Hardy and Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 359.

have defined them for centuries are being uncovered by the doubts of individuals who, like Hardy, recognise that sacred places, like all places, must evolve in its meaning in order to re-possess the spatial vitality with which they were once regarded. Hardy, in *Jude the Obscure*, is far from suggesting the destruction of sacred places, but that the nature of the sacred should be redefined. Subtly, then, Hardy in *Jude the Obscure* affirms that humans possess the ability to re-construct, to build, a new metaphysic, one that supports history, humanity, and compassion over theology, doctrine, and exclusivity – an affirmation that is lived in and experienced through place.

Chapter IV
Conclusions

Admittedly place occupies a rather mundane position in human consciousness, taken for granted by virtue of its mental and physical ubiquity. However, as demonstrated in the introduction and throughout this study, place is inextricably linked to the most expressive aspects of human nature; the individual's capacity for community, desire for belonging, longing for stability, thirst for power, and propensity for exclusivity all find expression and resonance in the concept of place. A study of place, then, is well suited for an analysis of the Victorian novel; the nineteenth century, parodied for its staid formality, was a period of rapid upheaval and change. Individuals sought to negotiate the physical, relational, and existential angst that accompanied the changes that were occurring. These negotiations were often mediated via place. An analysis of place in the Victorian novel positions the reader in a unique critical vantage point, allowing him or her to consider the various layers of spatial possibility rendered in the representation of the various places within a given narrative.

Nineteenth-century expressions of the Christian faith were, of course, varied and, as a result, investigating the role of sacred place in literature of the period is in large part a focus on the way in which places associated with the divine demonstrate an evolution of associative meaning. However, the Christian faith is not only an expression of culture but very often acts as a respite from culture. Individuals may come to religion in order to find resolution from ambiguity, answers to questions, order amidst chaos, and healing from pain. In that way, an analysis of sacred place in Victorian literature is as much about reaction as it about evolution. In a period of rapid change, sacred places and once-sacred places reflect not only the way in which

Christianity itself changed, but also how various expressions of the faith were or were not able to meet the physical, emotional, relational, and existential needs of individuals living through this tumultuous period.

While the work of authors as diverse as George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and Elizabeth Gaskell have been demonstrated to reflect a sense of the relationship between place and the sacred, this research project has focused on the role of sacred place in Dickens's *Bleak House* and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. While both novels affirm, as I have suggested, a fundamental balance between the phenomenological and social constructionist perspective, the two are, by no means, the same in their treatment of place and, more specifically, sacred place. While the chief focus of this study was explorative and not comparative, it seems fitting that the conclusion of should briefly touch upon the differences between the two and, in so doing, summarise and reassert their unique treatment of sacred place.

Jurisdiction and Locality in Sacred Place in *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure*

While both novels place a considerable amount of narrative importance upon the portrayal of sacred place, *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure* possess subtle yet marked differences in the way that they engage the topic. The most significant point of comparison is scale of sacred place within the two narratives. In *Bleak House*, sacred place is jurisdictional. Sacred place is brought to bear in specific locales with specific persons or bureaucracies upon whom the sacred qualities of that place reflect. The little church in the park and Nemo's burial ground, for instance, demonstrate the authority and, ultimately, the duplicity of the organized church and their intimate relationship with the aristocratic order in mid-Victorian England. As I discussed earlier, Dickens appeals for action in the spatially expressed issues of the day are not

presented to God himself, but to "your Majesty, . . . my lords and gentlemen, . . . right reverends and wrong reverends of every order . . . [and to] men and women, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts."[430] Similarly, Jo's comments to the disguised Lady Dedlock regarding the consecration of the burial grounds in which Nemo is buried do not imply that the act of blessing would be ineffectual. That is to say that Dickens does not suggest that these places cannot be consecrated. Instead, Jo's words seem to imply that the act of sacred spatial consecration of the place has been cancelled out – or perhaps even reversed – by the actions of the persons or institutions that possess the authority to call a place blessed or cursed.

Dickens, then, finds no fault with God in *Bleak House*, but places the blame and responsibility squarely upon individual citizens. J. Hillis Miller considers the novel's description of a nation on the verge of "disorder or decay" as part of a much broader attempt within the narrative to "indict someone for the crime . . . Someone must be to blame."[431] Though sacred place for Dickens inevitably has to do with the transcendent, he is only tangentially concerned with the precise way in which that transcendent being from whom the sacred supposedly arises interacts with humanity. Dickens challenges the church to conduct itself in a manner consistent with the beliefs they allegedly hold so dear, careful all the while, it would seem, to make sure that he does not question the beliefs themselves. Interestingly enough, God is enlisted in Phiz's illustration of the pillars adorned with scriptural warnings in the little church in the park as a way of threatening divine judgement upon those who do not practice the ethos of kindness and charity taught by Christ in the Gospel. God is, then, an agent of change in the midst of sacred place, acting through the place itself in order to restore its spatial and moral integrity.

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[430] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 667.
[431] Joseph Hillis Miller, *Victorian Subjects* (Duke University Press, 1991), 181.

Hardy, on the other hand, deals very little with the expression of faith as expressed through ecclesiastical authority in *Jude the Obscure*. Where Hardy does include expressly Christian characters in his narrative, their duplicity is very often cast in the light of the incongruity of the universal order. Farmer Troutham's abusive outburst at young Jude, set against the backdrop of the church tower he had financed for the newly remodelled church at Marygreen is cast as illustrative not of his hypocrisy alone, but of a "flaw in [God's] terrestrial scheme." Similarly, the central focus of Hardy's portrayal of the money-seeking hymn writer of "The Foot of the Cross" does not seem intended to cast dispersion upon his local congregation, but rather to suggest that God does indeed send people on "fool's errands." And finally, the two clergymen overheard discussing the eastward position soon after the death of Sue and Jude's children do not lead the couple to decry those in clerical office, but, instead, drives Sue to the conclusion that there is "something external" to humanity that seeks to restrict the most basic of human instincts. Time and again throughout *Jude the Obscure* the tragedies and injustice that befalls a character is laid at the feet of the divine, slowly uncovering the fact that he is either absent, indifferent, or cruel.

In that same vein, Hardy's portrayal of sacred place is jurisdictional only in the universal sense. Sacred places, with the possible exception of the church at Aldbrickham,[432] do not operate as an extension of some human authority. Hardy's architectural sensibility weds him to the notion that the most basic expression of place is found in the lived experience of an individual with and within a particular locale. In that way, Hardy's most meaningful descriptions of sacred places in the novel are seen through the subjective, confused, and suffering eyes of his main characters. By doing

[432] However, even the incident at Aldbrickham, though executed by the leaders of the church, is contextualised within the tradition of the transcendent when, in the wake of the event, Jude compares himself and his family to Paul's contention in II Corintians 7:2 that he is a blameless servant of God; See, Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 297.

so, Hardy is able to bypass a human "other" as an intermediary and suggest that the "other" is the one who has made the place sacred. Hardy expands the range of his accusations by narrowing the field of interaction. Sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* is the pivot point for an unmediated contest between God and humanity.

Pivotal to my assertion about sacred place in Hardy has been the notion that the myth of the Christian God is on trial within the context of place and that the universal prevalence of that myth necessitates a broad application of sacred place to encompass what I called "some places especially, all places necessarily." The uncovering of the divine myth takes place everywhere, for central to that myth is that the presence of the divine infuses all places, echoing the Psalmist's question: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."[433] Sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* is, then, both local and global and yet is united by the question of a transcendent presence. The scope of this ontological inquiry is hinted at through the sense of rapid and regular movement throughout the controlled narrative universe of Wessex. By containing his narrative within that specific and familiar locale, Hardy has established a kind of spatial laboratory in which he can test the viability of a Christian God amidst the suffering that follows the men and women of Wessex.

Though the characters in *Bleak House* do move about with regularity, with the exception of Jo who is forced to continuously "move on," the travel in Dickens's novel does not move at the same furious pace that one encounters in *Jude the Obscure*. While Dickens's treatment of sacred place does provoke questions having to do with authority, that authority is not located within the universal presence of God,

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[433] Psalm 139:7-8 (King James Version).

but rather, within the influential yet finite realm of cultural, governmental, ecclesiastical, and legal authority. In that way, sacred place in *Bleak House* is not only more jurisdictional, but it is also more localised than one finds in Hardy's novel.

For Dickens, sacred place in his novel is not universal, for his rhetorical usage of place does not necessitate such an assertion of divine ubiquity. If Hardy's notion of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* is haunted by the question of an all-present God, sacred place in *Bleak House* is bound together by the indifference and greed within the various incarnations of mid-Victorian British bureaucracy and aristocracy. This fact, coupled with the relative spatial fixity of the characters in *Bleak House*, establishes a markedly local focus for portrayals of sacred place in the novel. While places are inevitably interdependent in any given narrative, Dickens, perhaps by virtue of his intense use of descriptive language, immerses the reader in the midst of each sacred place, making each referential only to themselves and their immediate surroundings. Put another way, while the portrayals of the church at Marygreen, the cathedral at Melchester, and the spires of Christminster are connected by their cumulative uncovering of the divine illusion, the sacred places in *Bleak House* are sufficiently particularised so as to yield a more individualised reading. Dickens focus on the human-centred and systemic nature of injustice and hypocrisy within sacred places in the novel necessarily means that he must explore these individual places within the very specific geographical, social, and relational context in which they exist. This encompassing immediacy of sacred place is perhaps most powerfully rendered in the person of Mrs. Jellyby. Dickens portrays her character as a kind of sacred self – an individual whose Christian "philanthropy" is performed telescopically on behalf of African natives an ocean away. In so doing, she avoids the risk of moral or physical contamination and remains conspicuously and blissfully ignorant of the

squalor in which her own children and the natives of Tom-all-alone's live on a daily basis. In this way, Mrs. Jellyby is able to maintain a kind of individualised spatial purity. Even Mrs. Pardiggle, hardly the model for Christian missionary work, enters into the space of those on the margins of society. Mrs. Jellyby, however, maintains her sense of personal and spatial purity by ignoring or refusing to involve herself with those in need around her while, at the same time, performing works of charity to others *from a safe distance*.

This is a subtle yet stark contrast to the depiction of sacred place in *Jude the Obscure* in which sacred locales are experienced and interpreted via the matrix of the various characters' narrative quests to understand the ontological reason and justification for their existence. These narrative quests, both spatial and transcendent in nature, I would suggest, constitutes the "geometrically constructed" aspect of the plot that Hardy suggests was "necessitated" by the novel's characters.[434] It is also intriguing to note that the voice of the novel's narrator is marked by a sense of loss as he continuously moves beyond the consciousness of Jude and the other characters in an effort to establish the spatio-historical identity of various locales throughout the novel.[435] The narrator recognises that history is in the process of being erased from the spatial and cultural landscape. According to Forest Pyle, the narrator "conducts an archaeological or bibliographic 'restoration' throughout the novel in the interest of reestablishing historical continuity . . . [However,] the absence of historical continuity in the story [and] the labors of its restoration in the discourse . . . only contribute

[434] Thomas Hardy to Edmund Gosse, 1895,Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, 2:93.
[435] See Jude's encounter in Farmer Troutham's field and at the Fourways in Christminster Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 8-9, 114.

further to the sense of loss."[436] The importance of the spatial to the development of a coherent meta-narrative occurs, then, on the level of individual character as, for example, Jude engages in a lifelong search for a place to which he can geographically and existentially "anchor" himself. However, it is telling that the development of the narrator's voice himself is characterised by an attempt to fashion a kind of reconciliation of history/time as embodied within the spatial. Both the characters and the narrator are unable to find a spatial centre upon which they can construct a meaningful sense of continuity; it matters little if that centre is Jude's cathedral or Sue's railway station. Hardy suggests that these "sacred" spatial representations of order and meaning – whether they are to the God of the Christianity or the God of Modernism – lack the authenticity to resonate with the characters and narrator in *Jude the Obscure*.

In the introduction to this study, I suggested that these two novels are ideally suited for demonstrating the viability of reading for sacred place within the Victorian novel because both texts demonstrate a marked emphasis on the representation of the sacred within the spatial field and, what is more, those representations have important implications for the thematic, philosophical, and narrative force of the novels. However, it has become equally clear that Dickens and Hardy viewed the importance of sacred place in decidedly different ways. The difference between the representation of sacred place in *Bleak House* and *Jude the Obscure* becomes clear: Dickens's portrayal of sacred place is local, immanent, and self referential while Hardy's depiction of the same is universal, transcendent, and interrelated.

Final Conclusions

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[436] "Demands of History: Narrative Crisis in *Jude the Obscure*," *New Literary History* 26, no. 2 (1995): 364.

Though marked by Richard's tragic death, the conclusion of *Bleak House* is markedly optimistic. Dickens goes to great lengths to ensure that the central, and indeed many peripheral characters are "in place" by the novel's final chapter. Esther and Allen Woodcourt have settled into the new Bleak House. Mr. Jarndyce has returned to his home with a new sense of peace as the east wind that so inflamed his temperament throughout the novel has "finally departed." Ada has given birth to a boy called Richard – a subtle indication of the possibility of rebirth – and calls both Bleak Houses her home. George Rouncewell and his companion Phil are comfortably situated at the place at Lincolnshire. Even Charley, the orphaned daughter of the debt keeper introduced so many years prior, has found a home with her husband, a successful local miller who Esther hopes "will not spoil her."[437] The novel ends, then, with a fundamental emphasis of being "placed" and, with it, the overwhelming sense of being settled. The "clouds have cleared away," as Mr. Jarndyce told Rick shortly before the young man's death, and they all "can see now."[438] The displacement caused by the greed and corruption flowing from the aristocratic, legal, and religious establishments has been overwhelmed by an ethos of love, caring, and mutual concern. The collapse of the dual narrator into the first person voice of Esther is symbolic of the collapse of the various social constructs that have kept the individuals throughout the novel from being placed. Put another way, the characters in *Bleak House* collapse into place. The novel both broadens and in a sense restricts and domesticates he scope of spatial possibility in which the sacred can be seen and realised.

This is, of course, strikingly different from the conclusion of *Jude the Obscure*. The novel ends with the characters fundamentally "out of place." The

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[437] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 913; 912.
[438] Ibid., 903.

climactic scene in which Jude dies is not filled with a sense of redemption, but is punctuated with a sense of remorse as Jude echoes Father Time's assertion that he should never have been "given a place" here on earth. The cheering of the crowds amidst his final agony highlight the extent to which he is not, even in his dying moment, at home. The cheers are, of course, even more potent in their irony as they signify the Remembrance Games, an aspect of the much larger celebration of Remembrance Day. Hardy's inspiration for this event is drawn from Oxford University's annual Encaenia, a celebration of the university's history and for the conference of honorary degrees and an event whose name is a Greek word for a festival of renewal. That Jude's death is juxtaposed alongside the cries emanating from the celebration of a place to which he never gained admission and an event named for its association with the idea of renewal and new beginnings is noticeably ironic. Jude punctuates the absence of the God narrative in his concluding scene by invoking the lamentations of Job who was able to transcend suffering and whose own narrative, striking in its dissimilarity to Jude's, results in the Lord giving "Job twice as much as he had before."[439]

Similarly, Sue is out of place at the end of the novel. Upon Jude's death she is described as "tired and miserable."[440] Sue's has, in many ways, died already. Though she continues to live, the fire with which she lived her life, the fire that caused her to write her own Bible, decry the Christian faith, and disregard the sacred institution of marriage has been extinguished. She has ceased to be Sue Bridehead and has, instead, become Mrs. Richard Phillotson, a transformation that Penny Boumelha regards as a "breakdown from an original, incisive intellect to the compulsive, reiteration of the

[439] Job 42:10.
[440] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 397.

principles of conduct of a mid-Victorian marriage manual."[441] It is, in the end, her inability to maintain that aspect of her character in the face of suffering that causes her to "surrender" to her own metaphorical death. Though subtle, Sue's fundamental displacement at the conclusion of *Jude the Obscure* is highlighted in the final two lines of the novel, again held between Mrs. Edelin and Arabella.

> 'Well--poor little thing . . . She said she had found peace!'
>
> 'She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true!' said Arabella. 'She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!'[442]

The search for peace is central to the search for place, for peace insinuates a degree of beings settled existentially and spatially. Mrs. Edelin recounts Sue's assertion that she has "found peace." Again, what is significant is that the use of the word "found" implies a kind of latent spatiality. Something is hidden or obscured. It is not "with you." It is "not here." Sue asserts that she has "come into" peace, that she has "arrived at" peace. Her return to Marygreen, her journey to the marriage bed is the spatialisation of her existential search for peace. Arabella, however, questions the

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[441] Penny Boumelha, "*Jude the Obscure*: Sexuality and Narrative Form," in *Jude the Obscure: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Penny Boumelha, New Casebooks (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 53; The tragic end of Sue's life is part of an established tradition of feminist criticism of *Jude the Obscure*. These readings focus on the wide variety of female characters represented throughout the novel; see, for example, James R. Kincaid, "Girl Watching, Child-beating, and Other Exercises for Readers of *Jude the Obscure*," in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, ed. Margaret R. Higonnet (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 132-148., Simon Gatrell, "Sex, Marriage and the Decline of Traditional Community in *Jude the Obscure*," in *Thomas Hardy and the Proper Study of Mankind* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 140-171, James M. Harding, "The Signification of Arabella's Missile: Feminine Sexuality, Masculine Anxiety and Revision in *Jude the Obscure*," *Journal of Narrative Techniques* 26, no. 1 (1996): 85-111., Patricia Ingham, "*Jude the Obscure*," in *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 1996), 160-182., and Maria A. DiBattista, "*Jude the Obscure* and the Taboo of Virginity," in *Jude the Obscure: Thomas Hardy*, ed. Penny Boumelha (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 166-178.

[442] Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 397.

integrity of Sue's claim and, given Sue's character and Mrs. Edelin's earlier comments on Sue's demeanour, one cannot help but echo her suspicions. Arabella rightly *locates* peace for Sue in a place other than her marriage to Phillotson. What is more, Arabella takes her assertion one step further and says that peace became lost at the moment Sue "left [Jude's] arms." Again, peace is spoken of in spatial terms as something that, though intangible, is intrinsically tied to particular places. When Sue leaves Jude and the attending freedom and vitality that marked her when she was "with him," Sue leaves the peace of personal integrity and expression.

Both novels are, in the end, concerned with "seeing" and, of course, sight implies awareness of direction and location in space or place. For Hardy, seeing rightly means realising that God has left the land and that the narrative of his existence among people is an illusion. While the illusion gives one the impression of having "found peace," it comes, as with Sue, at the price of your freedom, will, and intellect. However, though the dawn of modernity is breaking, "the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments,"[443] and those who cannot adhere to such grand meta-narratives must blind themselves to their inability to see rightly or they must suffer the "glaring, garish, rattling" that exists at the centre of time – a process that ultimately leads Jude to die alone and placeless. For Dickens's *Bleak House*, however, the tragedy of a dream lost still holds the possibility of a new beginning. Sacred place can still exist, if only it is willing to rid itself of its ties to the madness and greed of the aristocratic and legal establishment and can reconnect itself to the needs of individuals like Jo, the bricklayer's family, and the Neckett children. It is, after all, the death of Mr. Jarndyce's "old dream" of marrying Esther that allows the second Bleak House, a place of peace, rest, comfort, and compassion for the poor to

[443] Ibid., 341.

become a reality. It is Richard's child, though his father's life was marked by tragedy, which causes Esther to feel "a new sense of the goodness and tenderness of God."[444] And, finally, it is from Richard's deathbed that the reader of *Bleak House* discovers that Dickens still holds out hope that, in spite of it all an individual can still echo the divine act and "begin the world" again.[445]

[444] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 911.
[445] Ibid., 904.

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