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**GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA: THE PERSONAL STYLE
OF A PUBLIC WRITER**

Peter Blake

D.Phil

University of Sussex

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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Summary

This thesis examines the work of the nineteenth century journalist George Augustus Sala. Previous studies of Sala have focused upon the biographical aspects of his life at the expense of critical analysis of the prolific contributions he made to newspapers and periodicals. This thesis will readdress this imbalance by a close reading of Sala's visual and textual output together with an examination of the contemporary debates and issues surrounding his work. In particular it will suggest that Sala's journalistic style was a product of the very different mediums he was working in, and how this personal style along with his innovations in form would influence the New Journalism at the end of the century. For so long a misunderstood and neglected figure, this thesis will endeavour to reposition Sala at the centre of nineteenth-century media culture rather than at its margins.

My research links Sala's role as an engraver, illustrator, and scene-painter to his career as an essayist for Dickens's *Household Words*. It will demonstrate how this in turn influenced his experiments with the form of the novel which would impact on his work as the pre-eminent Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. In an age of rapid press and cultural transformation my research will highlight Sala's engagement with theories of urban modernity and commodity culture; gambling, finance capitalism and the uncertainty of modern life; the culture of literary bohemia and the plight of the poor and the oppressed; and the role of the journalist. I will pursue Sala's commitment to sensationalism and realism in his novels, and his fluctuating opinions on race, slavery and imperialism in his travel writing. This thesis will also shed light on Sala's relationship with some of the most important journalists, authors, and artists of the nineteenth century – Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Mary Braddon, WP Frith, Henry Vizetelly, Frederick Greenwood and W.T. Stead.

Necessarily interdisciplinary in focus, my research draws on critical work by cultural historians and literary theorists like Tim Barringer, P.D. Edwards, Mary Gluck, Lynda Nead, Deborah Nord, Matthew Rubery, Richard Sennett, Ralph Straus, Catherine Waters and Ruth Yeazell, among others. By examining contemporary periodicals, newspapers and letters this thesis will contribute to the burgeoning field of nineteenth-century print culture, while adding to the knowledge and understanding of the man many considered to be the 'beau-ideal' of a journalist.

List of Figures

1. Title-page for <i>Sketches by Boz</i> by George Cruikshank (1837)	p. 6
2. Illustration from Pierce Egan's <i>Life in London</i> by George Cruikshank (1820)	p. 10
3. Frontispiece to Alfred Bunn, 'A Word With <i>Punch</i> ' (1847) illustration by G.A. Sala	p. 31
4. <i>The Lady's Newspaper</i>	p. 35
5. Sala's illustration from <i>Heads of the Headless</i>	p. 37
6. Illustration from Sala's <i>The House that Paxton Built</i> (1850)	p. 45
7. Illustration of Alexis Soyer from Sala's <i>The House that Paxton Built</i> (1850)	p. 47
8. W.P. Frith, <i>Ramsgate Sands</i> (1852-4)	p. 66
9. W.P. Frith, <i>The Private View of the Royal Academy 1881</i> (1883)	p. 69.
Front cover of <i>America Revisited</i> (1882) by G.A. Sala	p. 319

George Augustus Sala: The Personal Style of a Public Writer

Contents

Introduction	i-vi
1. A Visual Apprenticeship	1- 71
2. Tales of Two Cities: Part 1 - London	72-130
3. Tales of Two Cities: Part 2 - Paris	131-183
4. Interlude - A Russian Digression	184-210
5. Novelist and Man of Letters	211-261
6. 'There really is a world outside Fleet Street'; Completing the Journalistic Education: Sala as Special Correspondent	262-336
Conclusion	337-350
Bibliography	351-367

Introduction

Two book-length studies of George Augustus Sala appeared in the twentieth century; Ralph Straus's *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (1942) and P.D. Edwards's *Dickens's Young Men: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (1997). The titles and timing of both books are significant. Sala's neglect for the first fifty years after his death was no doubt exacerbated by the publication of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* in 1918. Strachey's work set in motion a tide of anti-Victorianism that seemed to be unstoppable. Ezra Pound's coining of the term 'Victoriana' in the same year was, as John Gardiner has stated, 'used to attack rather than to celebrate the past.'¹ But the eminent Victorians Strachey was attacking were the members of the intellectual aristocracy, the grand old families like the Arnolds and the Mannings, establishment figures attached to the universities, the schools and public service. By titling his biography of Sala *The Portrait of An Eminent Victorian*, Straus was engaged in not only reigniting interest in a Victorian figure who would otherwise have been left to disappear into obscurity, he was also ironically flagging Sala's lack of credentials in having ever been such an 'eminent Victorian.' Sala did not attend a public school, he had no university education, and even worse his mother was, of all things, an actress

¹ John Gardiner, 'Theme-park Victoriana' in Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff (eds) *The Victorians Since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p. 168

at a time when to be a female in that profession meant you possessed at best dubious morals, at worst a propensity to prostitution.

When writing his own biographical work on Sala at the end of the twentieth century, P.D. Edwards remarked that Straus's biography went too far in that it 'erred on the side of generosity' and over-exaggerated Sala's celebrity and his gifts.² Straus's indefatigable research certainly displays a real affection and warmth for its subject and it still remains a remarkable piece of research nearly seventy years after publication. But where Straus was meticulous in the facts and details of Sala's life he was not so fastidious in his dissection and analysis of Sala's work. Straus would dismiss Sala's writing on Europe in this manner; 'It will hardly be necessary to give in any detail the story of Sala's wanderings over Europe...'³ On Sala's Australian visit Straus remarked that 'It is hardly necessary to speak of his Australian tour in any great detail – there are the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* to be consulted by those who may like to know how the Land of the Golden Fleece appeared to a much-travelled and highly inquisitive Englishman in the 'eighties.'⁴ In fact when looking closely at Sala's career, his pronouncements on Australia can be seen as an extension of his interest in democracy and class fluidity, his shifting ideas about race and slavery, and in terms of style they are a culmination of all the different mediums he found himself operating in, a style that would greatly influence the new wave of journalism of the 1880s and 1890s.

² P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's Young Men: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p.p. 3-4

³ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable and Co., 1942) p. 179

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 248-9

The title of Edwards' work, *Dickens's Young Men* underlines how canonical Dickens had become and how neglected and marginal Sala (and Yates) had remained, despite the best efforts of Straus. It was the early twentieth-century portrayal of the strait-laced, conformist and oppressive Victorians by writers like Strachey that had led at the end of the century to a renewed interest in the marginal figures of the nineteenth century; Victorians who seemed to confound all of these stereotypes. Nearly a hundred years after his death, P.D. Edwards was keen to throw light on the darker side of Sala's character like his penchant for pornography, his brawls, and his drinking. The fact that Edwards devoted as much time to Yates's story meant that inevitably there would be omissions and oversights regarding Sala's career. Like Straus, Edwards' research on Sala's life is impeccable and he goes further by making a concerted effort to criticise Sala's novels while his analysis of Sala as a Special Correspondent is insightful and revealing. But by beginning his study with Sala's first contribution to Dickens's *Household Words* Edwards neglects Sala's first career as an engraver and illustrator, a career that I contend was crucial to the development of his writing style. Edwards also fails to analyse the rest of the extensive contributions Sala made to *Household Words*, thereby missing crucial aspects of his burgeoning style. It is hardly surprising that both Straus and Edwards concentrate their studies on Sala's life for it was the most colourful of lives and Sala was one of the most colourful and personal of writers. This thesis will also contain biographical detail and will trace a linear chronology in order to assess his work for similar reasons. But for too long Sala's colourful life has been the sole focus of writers at the expense of a sustained effort to encapsulate his style and the theories underpinning his writing.

However, in recent years there has been a slow but steady increase in interest in Sala's work. In 1993 Judith McKenzie edited his letters to Yates, another considerable piece of scholarship that has added to our knowledge and understanding of the two men.⁵ Recent work on *Household Words* has begun to recognise the importance of Sala to the magazine's uniformity of message.⁶ But Sala still remains at the margins of nineteenth-century studies. This thesis, while certainly not proposing to be the last word on Sala, tries to give a voice back to this marginal figure and hopes to provoke new discussion and research on him. By close textual analysis and extended quotation of Sala's pronouncements this thesis has endeavoured to display Sala's considerable range. An anonymous reviewer of a collection of Sala's articles from *Household Words* entitled *Dutch Pictures* commented in 1861 that 'A fair view would not be obtained of Mr. Sala's labours by anyone confining his attention to his works of fiction, his photographs of Foreign Travel, and his Essays on Social Subjects.'⁷ This thesis wholeheartedly concurs and would add Sala's labours in the visual field in order to complete the 'fair view' of Sala's oeuvre.

Chapter 1 traces Sala's journey from childhood blindness through his immersion into the illustrative world. It will argue that the work he produced in the visual

⁵ Judy McKenzie (ed.) *Letters of George Augustus Sala to Edmund Yates* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1993)

⁶ see Sabine Clemm, *Dickens, Journalism, and Nationhood: Mapping the World in Household Words* (New York: Routledge, 2009)

Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens's 'Household Words': The Social Life of Goods* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)

Catherine Waters, 'Fashion in Undress': Clothing and Commodity Culture in *Household Words*' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 12.1 (2007) ,

Catherine Waters, "Much of Sala, and but Little of Russia": "A Journey Due North," *Household Words*, and the Birth of a Special Correspondent' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42:4 Winter 2009 p. 307

Jonathan V. Farina, "'A Certain Shadow': Personified Abstractions and the Form of *Household Words*." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42.4 (2009): 392-415

⁷ *Athenaeum* No 1772 Oct 12 1861 p. 472 cited in Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 159

medium influenced his written style and his ability to produce ‘word-paintings.’ It will also highlight the origins of Sala’s life-long interest in the metropolis and will discuss those visual influences that exacerbated this concern. But it will also analyse his early textual work for *The Family Herald*, his synthesis of the visual and the verbal in his panoramas and his early experiments in form in the *Book of the Symposium*. In chapters 2 and 3 Sala’s apprenticeship to Dickens on *Household Words* as its second most prolific contributor is assessed. Of Sala’s one hundred and sixty articles for the weekly magazine it was the two metropolises of London and Paris that figured most consistently and importantly. London was Sala’s natural domain, a city of world importance and problems that Sala endeavoured to find the answers to. Paris was a diversion both intellectually and physically. Writing for Dickens inculcated an imaginative style in Sala along with a commitment to portraying the realities of daily life in these cities. Sala stresses his commitment to improving the lot of the poor and in an age of rapid press and cultural transformation he engages with theories of urban modernity, commodity culture, finance capitalism and the uncertainty of modern life. Chapter 4 is an interlude, a diversion from the metropolises of Paris and London, and from the daily grind of journalism. In Sala’s first foreign trip as a Special Correspondent to Russia we can trace his burgeoning desire to become a novelist, his ability to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, and his first faltering steps at a theory of travel. Chapter 5 assesses Sala’s decision to abandon journalism and to become a novelist. It will analyse his use of realism and sensation and will highlight his own anxieties at this move away from professional journalism to that of man of letters. Chapter 6 highlights Sala’s forging of a new style of foreign reportage as the pre-eminent Special Correspondent for the *Daily*

Telegraph. The conclusion will assess Sala's impact on a new wave of journalists at the end of the century.

In 1859 E. S. Dallas proclaimed that 'The rise of the periodical press is the great event of modern history.'⁸ At the heart of this critical period in the history of the press was George Augustus Sala. In 1859 he had just started working for the *Daily Telegraph* after serving a seven year journalistic apprenticeship under the tutelage of Charles Dickens on *Household Words*. He was also contributing a series of articles on William Hogarth to William Thackeray's new shilling monthly periodical, the *Cornhill*. All three of these publications were pioneering in terms of their style, content and target audience. It would appear, then, that Sala was 'a product of the 1850s', as Joel H. Wiener described his friend and fellow journalist, Edmund Yates.⁹ In fact Sala's style of writing came about because of the work he had undertaken in the visual field in the 1840s, and he was to be crucial in the transformation of the image of journalism well into the 1890s. But this study will begin in the 1830s with that most Victorian of images, a sick child struggling to cope with the vicissitudes of modern life.

⁸ E.S. Dallas (unsigned), 'Popular Literature – The Periodical Press' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 85 (January 1859): 100

⁹ Joel H. Wiener, 'Edmund Yates: The Gossip as Editor' in Joel H. Wiener (ed) *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England* (Westport, Connecticut, 1985) p. 261

1. A Visual Apprenticeship

In 1834 at the age of six years old George Augustus Sala went temporarily blind. His nurse had inadvertently left the doors and windows of the cottage in Edgware he was residing in wide open. Sala had just suffered from an attack of the measles and in his autobiography, written sixty-two years later, he still believed that it was the result of this sudden exposure to the elements that led to ‘a horrible attack of inflammation. I turned purple, I lost my hearing, and some time afterwards, I lost my sight.’¹ In fact Sala had suffered from ‘a known uncommon complication of measles called encephalomyelitis, which is an inflammatory condition of the brain resulting from a reaction to the measles virus.’² Encephalomyelitis can lead to blindness and ‘deafness is also a known outcome of such an episode. Recovery may be slow and there may be residual disability.’³ Looking back on the event, Sala was obviously deeply physically scarred by the ordeal. Aside from all the unconventional treatments he was subjected to (having his eyes rubbed with ‘golden ointment’, his ears pierced and his head shaved), he also overheard his mother’s maid refer to him as ‘that miserable little

¹ George Augustus Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala*, Vol. 1 (Cassell & Co. , London, 1895) p. 11

² B. Beeson & W. McDermott, *Textbook of Medicine* (London: W.B. Saunders, 1975) pp. 201-2

³ *ibid.* p. 202

object.’⁴ Sala recalls that ‘the contumelious expression of the lady’s maid cut into my heart as though with a sharp knife.’⁵ But it was the disorienting mental effect that loss of sight must have had on the young boy’s perception of the world around him that would be the most important product of this unfortunate incident.

Blindness in whatever form must have been especially uncomfortable in an early Victorian culture that was just beginning to live in what Jean-Louis Comolli has described as ‘a sort of frenzy of the visible’ due to the increasing ‘social multiplication of images.’⁶ What Comolli specifically had in mind was the growth in access to visual information which the illustrated press and photography brought with them. It could also be argued that Sala’s temporary blindness was to be a considerable influence on his relationship with modernity. His ‘personal’ style of writing and his early experiments in illustration all became elements of a modernity that was to reach its culmination in the power of the press during the second half of the nineteenth century. Paul de Man defines modernity as involving ‘a freshness of perception that results from a slate wiped clear.’⁷ De Man believes that ‘the human figures that epitomise modernity are defined by experiences such as childhood or convalescence.’⁸ This point is reinforced by John Ruskin who was endeavouring in the 1850s to define the capacities of a new kind of observer: ‘The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify, - as a blind man would see them if suddenly

⁴ Sala (1895) pp. 14-15

⁵ *ibid.* p. 15

⁶ Kate Flint, *The Victorians and Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 3

⁷ Paul de Man, ‘Literary History and Literary Modernity’ in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press 1971) p. 148

⁸ *ibid.* p. 147

gifted with sight.⁹ What we can endeavour to trace is how Sala's long, dark ordeal without sight created within him a freshness of perception which in turn led to a more modern way of looking at the world once the blindness had been lifted.

Throughout the misery of his loss of sight he found sweet relief in the sound of his sister Augusta's voice reading to him from the Bible as well as fairy tales, history books, travel books, biographies and extracts from the newspapers. It is a poignant image, that of the man later to be dubbed 'king of the Journalists', being first introduced to the power of the press by his older sister while he sat blindly and impotently by. Sala himself called these two blind years 'sightless and profitable'. Profitable because 'during those dark twenty-four months I learned, thanks to a loving sister who was always reading to me and telling me stories, the greater part of that which was long afterwards to be useful to me as a journalist.'¹⁰ But the image also provides us with an insight into the gestation of Sala's love affair with the press as well as illustrating his embracing of the new visual culture that was to transform the very same press.

When his sight was finally restored nearly two years later, albeit leaving one eye forever a 'duffer', the first task he set himself was to learn the art of writing. This was achieved by assiduously studying the 'columns of the Times newspaper.'¹¹ At the same time his father's solicitor presented him with a folio edition of the *Universal Penman, Engraved by George Bickham, Printed for the Author, and Sent to the Subscribers if Living within the Bills of Mortality* (1733). In his illuminating essay,

⁹ Cited in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer; On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999) p. 95

¹⁰ G.A. Sala, 'George Cruikshank: A Life Memory', in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1871) p. 547

¹¹ Sala (1895) p. 18

‘Shared Lines: Pen and Pencil as Trace’, Gerard Curtis notes that the same George Bickham was responsible for a series of books that by stressing the importance of penmanship and repetitive exercises enabled the student to flourish in calligraphy, and by extension in the devising of pictures and drawing of animals.¹² This educational training ‘stressed...the aesthetics of a written graphic line that easily flowed between text and image.’¹³ Sala informs us that he used to sit on a little low stool with the *Universal Penman* propped up against another book while he copied ‘not only the different styles of handwriting, but also...the emblematic sculptures at the top of the pages...like swans, like eagles with outspread wings, like the waves of the sea, like ships in full sail, and like festoons of flowers.’¹⁴ Sala’s education was thus mirroring the growing importance taking place between writing and drawing or the verbal and the visual in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Pen and Pencil

The importance of these two mediums was being ‘constantly reinforced in the Victorian city environment.’¹⁵ The streets, particularly the streets of the metropolis, which were to be Sala’s playground, were being turned ‘quite literally into environments to be read’, with advertising hoardings, billstickers, signwriting, window displays and ‘spectacular promotions.’¹⁶ Mass production used visual means to circulate ideas and to stimulate desire, while in the pages of the press the dissemination of engraved and photographic images was being made possible because

¹² Gerard Curtis, ‘Shared Lines: Pen and Pencil as Trace’, in Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (California; University of California Press, 1995) p. 30

¹³ *ibid.* p. 30

¹⁴ Sala (1895) p. 19

¹⁵ Curtis (1995)p. 29

¹⁶ Kate Flint, (2001) p. 5

of the reduced costs of printing technologies. Curtis notes that ‘the partnership of the textual and the pictorial line, begun in *The Penny Magazine* (first edition March 1832), culminated in the *Illustrated London News* (first edition 1841), one of the great cultural achievements of the Victorian period.’¹⁷ Kate Flint notes how periodicals like *The Penny Magazine* and the *ILN* ‘relied as much, if not more, on images as on words in their representation of the world.’¹⁸ Meanwhile, book illustration was reaching a new level of sophistication especially in the works of Charles Dickens and William Thackeray, and Flint notes that the pictorial images did not merely mirror the text but ‘provided an interpretative gloss.’¹⁹ Dickens was notoriously fastidious in his desire to find the best artists possible to deliver representations of his novels, while Thackeray, as an illustrator of his own works, saw the relationship between image and text as a self-conscious dialogue. Judith L. Fisher notes that this is emphasised in the subtitle to *Vanity Fair* (1847); ‘Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society.’²⁰

What all this visual stimulus amounted to in terms of the press and book production was an ideological struggle between pen and pencil, the verbal and the visual; a struggle that ultimately culminated in the subordination of image to text. Text and image had come to be seen as compatible, and indeed necessary, in the first half of the nineteenth century. George Cruikshank’s illustration of himself and William Hone, illustrator and writer, sitting at the same table creating their particular brand of art in perfect equality was an example of this. So too was Cruikshank’s title-page for the monthly parts of Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz* (1837), depicting Dickens and

¹⁷ Curtis (1995) p. 29

¹⁸ Kate Flint (2001) p. 3

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 4

²⁰ Judith L. Fisher, ‘Image versus Text in the Illustrated Novels of Thackeray’ in Christ and Jordan (1995) p. 61 For more on Dickens and illustration see Stein, Richard L., ‘Dickens and Illustration’, in John O. Jordan (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 167-88

Cruikshank, artist and illustrator, rising above the crowds in a hot-air balloon viewing all things together and comprehensively. (see fig.1)

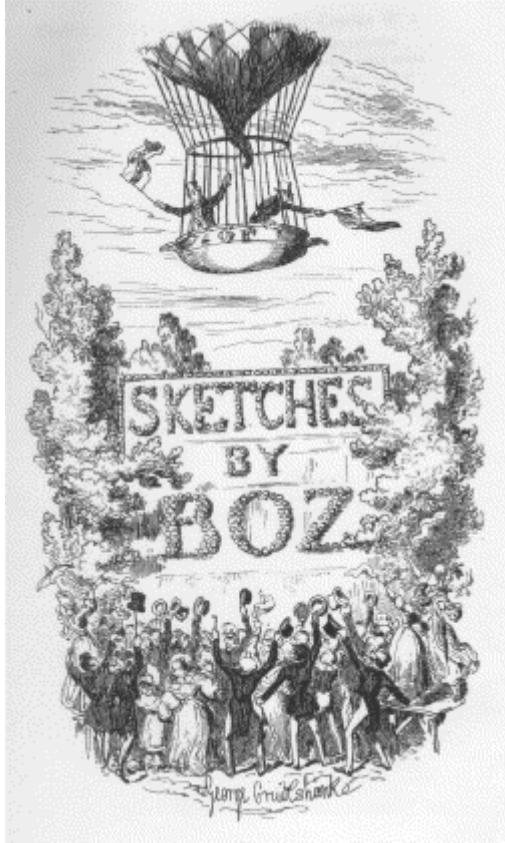


Fig. 1 title-page for *Sketches by Boz* by George Cruikshank (1837)

But by the second half of the century book and periodical illustration was not the creative and imaginative force it had been. The focus changed from excitement and sensation to elevation and improvement. Illustrators themselves felt that the imaginative as well as physical contributions they brought to novels were being neglected, and this culminated in Cruikshank's polemical attacks on Dickens and W.H. Ainsworth.²¹ In the twentieth century book illustration had come to be viewed as being as outmoded as the fiction it attempted to illustrate. The pictorial had largely

²¹ *ibid.* p. 27 See G. Cruikshank's *The Artist and The Author* (1871) and Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times and Art*, 2 vols (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1992-6) for more on this attack on writers.

given way to the photographic, and although large swathes of the press clamoured for engraved images, most of these images were derived from photographs. In his autobiography, the artist William Powell Frith relates how on its appearance photography became known as the ‘foe-to-graphic’ art and how it destroyed ‘line and all other styles of engraving as effectually as it has put a stop to lithography.’²² The more ‘respectable’ publications continued to consider the embellishment of their pages with these engravings as vulgar and ‘low-brow’. In terms of visual art the rise of the Pre-Raphaelites had introduced a keener appreciation to the detail of nature and the vividness of colour, and by their engravings for illustrated editions of poems, books and periodicals had given the art of engraving a new found respectability. But this was offset by the (ironically) incredible popularity of William Powell Frith and his photographic, social panoramas whose dense narrative content placed more importance on ‘reading’ the painting than appreciating its poetic visuality.

What I want to display in this chapter is the way that Sala’s early career mirrored this battle between the pen and the pencil. Sala’s immersion into the world of engraving and other visual forms throughout the 1840s meant that he was directly involved in a new form of print that was becoming what Andrew King and John Plunkett describe as ‘emblematic of the modern.’²³ But as public taste changed and the pictorial became less sensational and more improving, and thus subordinate to the textual, Sala turned his back on scene painting, murals and engraving, and embraced the dominant force in the latter half of the nineteenth century, journalism.

Early Days and Artistic Designs

²² W.P. Frith, *My Autobiography and Reminiscences* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1888) p. 149

²³ Andrew King and John Plunkett (eds.) *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 386

Sala's mother had started life as a singing instructor. She made her stage debut at the age of 35 singing in an opera at Covent Garden Theatre on December 14 1827 alongside such luminaries as Madame Vestris.²⁴ Eleven months later, on 24 November 1828 she gave birth to her last child, George Augustus Henry Fairfield Sala. Sala's twentieth-century biographer, Ralph Straus, describes Madame Sala as 'the queerest mixture of *grande dame* and second-rate artiste: as much at home in a Royal Palace or a duchess's salon as in a provincial green-room or humble seaside lodgings.'²⁵ The Sala's class fluidity was to help George Augustus in later life when representing both the 'high' and the 'low' in his journalism, and would give him a keener appreciation of poverty than many of his peers. His mother's theatrical background was also a major influence on the young Sala. At the age of nine, while his brothers Frederick, Charles and Albert were attending college or school, he was given free reign in the Green Room at the St. James's Theatre. It was there that he first met the man who would have such a huge influence on his writing style, Charles Dickens. His mother was understudy in *The Village Coquettes*, an operetta written by Dickens and composed by John Hullah. Madame Sala and Dickens went on to become good friends and, as Ralph Straus conjectures, 'that night, perhaps, there was born in him the desire to become a writer himself.'²⁶ Indeed, Sala talks of the importance of his experiences at the St. James's as being akin to 'the keystone of the

²⁴ Mme. Sala sung with Paganini at his two Brighton concerts in 1831. The critic of the *Brighton Herald*, Dec. 10 1831, gives a very unfavourable report on Mme. Sala's performance. '...were we to refrain from noticing Mme Sala's vocalism, it would perhaps be less flattering to that lady than an expression of our opinion. At no time, we believe, has a very high estimate been taken of her talents; but her efforts in the present instance were of unqualified mediocrity. Her coadjutor Piozzi's professional reputation will never, we apprehend, be found very difficult to sustain.' Letter from Miss Geraldine de Courcy to undisclosed recipient. Brighton Pamphlet Box 21c in Brighton History Centre archives

²⁵ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London; Constable & Co. 1942) p. 7

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 23

arch of my life' and how his meeting with Dickens spurred on his brothers and sisters to dramatise the *Pickwick Papers*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist*²⁷

At the same time as proving their passion for the drama, the family would display their love of the visual by 'setting to work copying as well as we could George Cruikshank's illustrations to 'Oliver' and Phiz's etchings to 'Pickwick' and 'Nickleby.'²⁸ In an article written by Sala in 1871 he explains how this copying work became an obsession for him, and how whenever a new novel appeared bearing Cruikshank's illustrations it was immediately bought not for the text but in order to reproduce the latest work from Cruikshank's pencil.²⁹ The prime example of this in terms of book publishing was Cruikshank's work for Pierce Egan's *Life In London* (1820). Pierce Egan recognised the growing trend taking place among the young and fashionable for books that illustrated sporting works. Artists like Henry Alken and W. Heath were busy making their name in this field and Egan realised that if Londoners were so eager to read about country and outdoor sports then surely they would devour a work that depicted life in the metropolis. He duly created Corinthian Tom whose existence was solely for the pursuit of adventure whether it be boxing, fencing or any of the 'manly sports.' His friend was the Oxonian Bob Logic, 'who left the university with more knowledge of Bacchus and Venus than of mathematics or logic.'³⁰ Their boisterous and drunken adventures around town took the publishing world by storm and no less than sixty-five imitations of Egan's work were duly executed. (see fig. 2)

²⁷ Sala (1895) p. 87 For more on the influence of a theatrical background, albeit from a female perspective, see Claire Tomalin, *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (London: Penguin, 1991)

²⁸ *ibid* p. 89

²⁹ G.A. Sala, 'George Cruikshank: A Life Memory', in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1871 pp. 547-9

³⁰ Aubrey Noakes, *The World of Henry Alken* (London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1952) p. 141



Fig. 2 Illustration from Pierce Egan's *Life in London* by George Cruikshank (1820)

But it was clear that it was the pictorial element of the book that captured the public's imagination, rather than Egan's spurious attempts to construct a threadbare plot from Cruikshank's engravings. In fact the text of *Life in London* is one of the best examples of the written word deferring to the visual in the first half of the nineteenth century.³¹ Sala was to work with the elderly Egan many years later on the staff of a Thomas Holt periodical. In his autobiography Sala recalls that 'I had drunk deep of his [Egan's] books from my earliest boyhood. I had copied, in pen and ink, scores of

³¹ Martin Meisel, *Realisations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts In Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) p. 32

Returning to the book many years later in his *Roundabout Papers* (1860-1), Thackeray declared that 'the pictures are as fine as ever...but the style of writing, I own, was not pleasing to me; I even thought it a little vulgar...and as a description of the sports and amusements of London in the ancient times, more curious than amusing.' (Meisel 1983) p. 140

the etchings made by George Cruikshank for the illustration of 'Life In London.'³²

This work not only inculcated Sala's desire to be an illustrator, it also can be seen as the commencement of his life-long interest in how best to delineate the streets of London.

Sala's French had been improved during an eighteen months sojourn in Paris. From the age of eleven he was inducted as a member of the Pension Gogo, a large boarding-house in the Rue de Courcelles. He was earmarked as a budding linguist and on his return home to England in 1841 he 'not only spoke French like a native but for some little time found it difficult even to think in English.'³³ This time spent in Paris would affect his literary style with its overuse of Gallicisms and the prevailing 'polyglot touch to his writings.'³⁴ But it would also affect his illustrative technique with its 'rigid and systematic course of instruction in practical geometry.'³⁵ The onus on the knowledge of lines and their properties would be invaluable to Sala when it came to perfecting his engraving technique. Sala seems to have flourished in these Parisian surroundings, undoubtedly due to the educational system which was the very opposite of the 'muscular Christianity' practised at schools in England. Corporal punishment, a particular *bête noire* of Sala's, was outlawed, and organised games and sport were kept to a minimum. But despite these early pictorial experiments it seemed as though Sala was also forging a career as a writer. He had written a tragedy in rhyming couplets in French before the age of ten. His *Fredegonde* (1837) contained 'a murder in almost every scene. Somebody was poisoned, or burnt, or put to the torture *coram*

³² Sala (1895) p. 243

³³ Straus (1942) p. 30

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 30

³⁵ Sala (1871) p. 552

publico at the end of every act.’³⁶ Sala recalls in his autobiography that after seeing a French play performed in Dover entitled *La Rose Jaune*, his mother enlisted his brother Frederick, his sister Gussie and himself to translate and transcribe the play in order to be presented to a new regiment just arrived in the garrison there. Sala ‘made a fair copy of the piece, and wrote out all the parts, “cues” and all.’³⁷ Although no great success, *The Yellow Rose* was to be the first of several collaborations between the Sala clan. It also provided George Augustus with the excitement and novelty of seeing his own words being performed for the first time.

On returning to England he once again took up his pen and at the age of thirteen wrote his first ‘novel’ bearing the ‘attractive, although not very refined title’ of *Jemmy Jenkins; or the Adventures of a Sweep*.³⁸ Ralph Straus relates that Sala was devouring the Penny Dreadfuls of the period at this time, while Sala himself acknowledges the debt he owed to the ‘Newgate novels’ then in vogue, particularly Edward Bulwer Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832) and W.H. Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* (1839), illustrated by George Cruikshank.³⁹ Sala first came upon that other great influence in his literary career, William Thackeray, at this time in the form of Thackeray’s satire on the Newgate Novel, *Catherine: A Story* (1840). Lytton and Thackeray’s influence could be immediately felt, along with the Penny Dreadfuls, in Sala’s next literary production, the novel *Gerald Moreland; Or, the Forged Will* (1842). The title anticipates Sala’s involvement in the sensation novel with its focus on secrets and textual discrepancy, and its ‘lurid melodrama is a direct

³⁶ cited in Straus (1942) p. 36

³⁷ Sala (1895) p. 139

³⁸ *ibid* p. 138

³⁹ Sala claimed that the ‘Ride to York’ passage described in Ainsworth’s novel *Rockwood* (1834) was ‘as a piece of word-painting rarely, if ever, surpassed in the prose of the Victorian era.’ S.M. Ellis, *W. Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends* Vol.1 (London: John Lane) note to p. 238

acknowledgement of the “lower” forms of literature he was then reading.’⁴⁰ The tale is set in Ireland and is predictably populated with villains who smoke ‘prime havannahs’ and imbibe ‘strong waters.’⁴¹ The Irish caricatures may well have stemmed from Thackeray’s ‘Irish Sketch-Book of 1842’ and his scathing satire in *Punch* entitled ‘The Battle of Limerick’. Although clearly a juvenile production of only 12,000 words, Straus notes that, ‘its vocabulary...is considerably more extensive than that to be found in most boyish effusions.’⁴²

It is not particularly surprising that this precocious young boy should have such an extensive vocabulary because at the time he was reading voraciously ‘not only books, but such newspapers as I could afford to buy out of my pocket-money.’⁴³ Although *The Times* was too expensive, Sala ‘invested every week’ in the *Sunday Times* and the *Weekly Despatch*. He was also reading the *Illustrated London News*, *The Penny Magazine* and the *Saturday Magazine*.⁴⁴ These last three papers are of especial importance because of their visual content and the influence their images had on the young George Sala. *The Penny Magazine* had been created by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) which had been formed ‘as an upper-class offshoot of the Mechanics Institutes.’⁴⁵ The magazine contained some historical and scientific knowledge along with a selection of classical poetry. But far more important to its early readers were the stylish woodcuts that adorned its front cover. Artists like William Harvey, G. Bonner and Charles and Thomas Landseer contributed drawings

⁴⁰ Straus (1942) p. 38

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 39

⁴² *ibid.* p. 38 For more on stereotypical representations of the Irish in the nineteenth century see Leon Litvack, “Ireland and the Irish” in Paul Schlicke (ed.) *The Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

⁴³ Sala (1895) p. 157

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 157

⁴⁵ Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) p. 15

that Louis James has described as possessing, ‘photographic realism and expert finish.’⁴⁶ First issued in March, 1832, *The Penny Magazine*’s initial circulation ran to 50,000 in its first week and had a circulation of 200,000 by the end of the year.⁴⁷ The *Saturday Magazine* was first published 7 June 1832 and was promoted by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). It was thus a religious counterpart to the secular *Penny Magazine*. Although the woodcuts were poorer James notes that ‘the less academic approach [compared to *The Penny Magazine*] made it easier to read’, and circulation settled down to 80,000 a week.⁴⁸ Although critics have debated whether these magazines were ever bought by the working classes, James notes that the sheer scale of circulation suggests that ‘it caught the taste of those packing the Athenaeums and similar institutions.’⁴⁹ Sala tends to corroborate this view later in his life in his travel book *A Journey Due South* (1885). While viewing the St. Cecilia painting by Raphael while at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna, Sala reflects on the lack of opportunities for the working classes to view the work of the Old Masters; ‘all that the common people in England knew about Raffaele’s (sic.) St. Cecilia would have been from a rude woodcut in the *Penny Magazine*.’⁵⁰ Sala provides sufficient evidence that working men read the magazine, and his testimony goes some way to explaining how a dissemination of the visual must have improved the education of the working classes. The effect of these magazines, then, was to engender a visual culture within the periodical press. These magazines would pave the way for the two giants of illustrative journalism, the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch*, both arriving on the scene in 1841 and both

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 15

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 15

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 16

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 15

⁵⁰ George Augustus Sala, *A Journey Due South* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1885) p. 200

spawning numerous successors all keen to ‘exploit the attraction of lavish illustrations.’⁵¹

In fact it was directly due to the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch* that at the age of fifteen in the year 1843, having just left school with, ‘an imperfect acquaintance with three or four languages and a capacity for drawing grotesque figures with pen and ink’, Sala decided that he might earn his living as an artist.⁵² Using the influence of one of his mother’s friends, the celebrated oboe player Grattan Cooke who was on familiar terms with all the famous artists of the day, Sala was able to obtain a letter of introduction to the man whose works he had assiduously copied, George Cruikshank, then living at Amwell Street, Pentonville Hill.⁵³ The star struck young man handed over his pen-and-ink drawings to the fifty-three year old master and proceeded to spend over two hours in his company. Sala tells us that Cruikshank ‘minutely examined my drawings, pointing out their defects, showing (with a little curved gold pencil) how the faults might be remedied, but giving me words of bright comfort and hope.’⁵⁴ Cruikshank advised the young pupil to turn his attention to etching and drawing on wood and to return to him when he had mastered these processes.

But long before the pen became dominant over the pencil, Sala’s mother, who had not been discouraged by Cruikshank’s failure to take on her son and who had been reading *Punch*, decided that ‘even John Leech’s graphic humour was not vastly superior to her son’s.’⁵⁵ And so with a little help from Charles Dickens, who approved of the young Sala’s portfolio and promised an introduction, the next day they duly met

⁵¹ Louis James (1963) p. 36

⁵² Sala (1871) p. 567

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 567

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 568

⁵⁵ Straus (1942) p. 41

Mark Lemon, then editor of *Punch*. Sala's memory of the event was not a particularly happy one; 'He [Lemon] greeted us with effusive, I may say with unctuous kindness and a whole cascade of smiles...He smiled at my mother; he smiled at me; he smiled at the drawings, and promised to look over them with a view to their favourable consideration.'⁵⁶ But as Sala relates, 'that dreadful portfolio came back to us in about a week with a polite intimation from Mr. Mark Lemon that he was unfeignedly sorry for his inability to make use of my very promising, but, as yet, immature productions.'⁵⁷ Sala was probably conscious that his artistic endeavours were not of the standard required, but what offended him so much was the urbane charm and smoothness of Lemon's performance. Lemon's rejection was another blow to his artistic confidence, coming so soon after Cruikshank's refusal to patronise him. It was also the beginning of a life-long enmity between the staff of *Punch* and George Augustus Sala.

These rejections had made it apparent to Madame Sala that professional tuition was needed if her son was ever to become an artist. In the spring of 1844 Sala signed his first articles, becoming an apprentice to a miniature painter, Carl Schiller, who lived in the then fashionable district of Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. Sala studied artistic anatomy and perspective and trained in drawing 'from the round' or drawing from plaster casts.⁵⁸ The apprenticeship was to have lasted for three years, but in fact lasted only five months. Schiller's studio was producing fewer and fewer miniatures and the commissions were drying up because of the advent of photography. Sala was thus able to witness at first-hand the effects this new medium was having on the older visual forms. In an article for *All The Year Round* written in 1859 and called 'Since

⁵⁶ cited in, *ibid.* p. 42

⁵⁷ cited in, *ibid.* p. 42

⁵⁸ Sala (1895) p. 170

This Old Cap Was New', Sala muses on how the fantastic inventions of his youth have become commonplaces in his middle-age;

Try and remember a street as you saw it in 1829, or, as I saw it in 1839. What strange novelties 1859 offers to our inspection! Look at the photographs. Could we do without photography now? And yet when the gloss was on the cap we could only go, if we wanted our portraits taken, to the gentleman in Soho or Fitzroy Square, who painted us in oils, with the column, the curtain, or the cut orange on the plate...For miniatures, there was the fashionable artist in a shawl dressing-gown and a Turkish cap, who stippled us up in ivory, with pink eyes like a white rabbit or an albino, an elaborate gold chain round our necks, and a highly finished Buhl inkstand with a great quill pen to break the background on the curiously arabesqued tablecloth....Photography has swept all these poor mediocre artists away.⁵⁹

Sala was a first-hand witness in this sweeping away of the old visual order. He was always conscious of the shifting patterns and forces of modernity on his environment and on his employment. It was these crucial changes in artistic production that would eventually force him to concentrate instead on the written word and seminal events like the demise of the miniature artist influenced his decision to shun the visual. As for his mentor, Schiller, he was forced to move with his family to Liverpool and Sala

⁵⁹ G.A. Sala, 'Since This Old Cap Was New' *All the Year Round*, 30 (1859:Nov. 19) cited in G. A. Sala, *Accepted Addresses* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1862) pp. 232-3

was left once again wondering at his artistic prospects. Ironically, it was to be the ultimate symbol of modernity that provided Sala with his next career move.

Railway Mania

The year was 1845 and ‘railway mania’ was gripping the nation. The metropolis was particularly saturated with railway schemes and it was necessary for the most precise maps and plans to be drawn and in some cases lithographed. The extraordinary amount of work required for these schemes meant that, as Jerry White has stated, ‘every clerk, lithographer and printer in London was seemingly engaged on plans and documents in respect of over 800 railway projects.’⁶⁰ These clerks and printers ‘remained at work night after night, snatching a hasty repose for a couple of hours on lockers, benches, or the floor.’⁶¹ Sala was able to draw on stone ‘both with chalk and with the pen’, and because of this he was called in to help. Reminiscing many years later he recalled that ‘I earned from time to time goodly sums by drawing the plans for incipient railways.’⁶² The geometrical work learned in France was proving vital in Sala’s new career and in fact he was remunerated to the princely amount of fifteen shillings an hour for this work, often working without a break for two whole days.⁶³

⁶⁰ Jerry White, *London In The Nineteenth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007) p. 165

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 165

⁶² Sala (1895) p. 177

⁶³ Straus (1942) p. 46

Sala was right to claim that in the year of 1845, ‘I did exceptionally well,’ for along with the high sums of money earned, he also had his first piece of writing published that year.⁶⁴ Motivated by his experience of the railway mania Sala wrote a burlesque satirising the ‘Railway King’, George Hudson. Entitled ‘Choo-Lew-Kwang; Or The Stags of Pekin’ it appeared in *The Family Herald* on December 13 1845. The *Herald* was a popular weekly periodical started by George Biggs in 1842. As its full title indicates, (*The Family Herald : Useful Information and Amusement for the Million*) it was a light-hearted production intended for the whole, predominantly working-class, family. It included within its pages fashions, articles on working-class conditions and fiction.⁶⁵ Louis James describes the journal as ‘meeting the requirements of the self-respecting family for a magazine which not only could be left about where the children might read it...but it could be read aloud at family gatherings.’⁶⁶ It was also Sala’s first foray in to the family magazine market, and one that required a certain skill in tailoring one’s writing to be accessible to both parents and children. *The Family Herald* eschewed politics and controversy, an editorial from May 3 1845 on the Maynooth question began, ‘Our readers need not be at all alarmed at the political appearance of the head of this article. It is not our intention to take the part of a partisan.’⁶⁷ The lightness of tone is epitomised in a leader addressing the vexed question of railway mania in an edition dated August 2 1845; ‘Unlike the last ’45, which is remarkable only for a national insurrection, the present is characterised by a simultaneous mania for railing over the whole of the civilised world.’⁶⁸ (their emphasis) It was to this target audience, then, that Sala began his short fictional satire with a warning to those who would blindly invest in the incessant railway schemes;

⁶⁴ Sala (1895) Vol. 1 p. 177

⁶⁵ Louis James, *Print and the People 1819-1851* (London: Penguin, 1976) p. 46

⁶⁶ Louis James (1963) p. 39

⁶⁷ *The Family Herald* (May 3 1845)

⁶⁸ *The Family Herald* (August 2 1845)

Ye who listen with credulity to the whisperings of stock-
 brokers, and peruse with eagerness the prospectuses of railway
 companies – who expect that provisional committee men will
 perform their promises, and that the red line on the ordnance
 map of today will be converted into a *bona fide* railroad
 tomorrow – listen to the history of Choo-lew-Kwang, the
 CHINESE STAG.⁶⁹

The word ‘stag’ in this context was first defined in the OED from the same year, 1845, as meaning ‘A person who applies for an allocation of shares in a joint-stock concern solely with a view to selling immediately at a profit.’⁷⁰ Sala’s use of this neologism demonstrates a budding flair for non-conventional language. The tale goes on to document the rise and fall of the avaricious and ambitious Choo-lew-Kwang. When we first encounter him he is in a suicidal state and about to jump off one of Peking’s bridges due to the great debts he owes to various creditors in the town. When he hears an English voice uttering the words ‘By Jove! What a glorious terminus that bridge would make!’ he decides to capture the speaker and turn him into the authorities, claiming a reward of five hundred taels, the going price for ‘securing’ foreigners in Peking at the time. His prisoner claims that he can make him five hundred million taels if only he releases him and follows him back to his house. Choo-lew-Kwang’s avaricious and suspicious traits get the better of him and back at

⁶⁹ G.A. Sala, ‘Choo-Lew-Kwang; Or The Stags of Pekin’, in *The Family Herald*, Dec. 13. 1845 All subsequent references are from this edition and are unpaginated.

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http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50235690?query_type=word&queryword=stag&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=8 Accessed 29/06/10 The OED’s first example of the word is taken from Thackeray in *Punch* 1845 IX. 191 ‘All the Stags in Capel Court’

his house the Englishman asks him, 'Would you object, on an emergency, to sign another name instead of your own?' 'By, Confucius, no!' cries out Choo-lew-Kwang and the Englishman replies, 'Then, by Hudson, you shall make treble the reward. You shall be a chairman – a director, a broker.' The pair disappear for six months while they prepare the way for the announcement in the *Pekin Times* that a company has been formed entitled 'The Grand Peking and Canton Junction Railway Company, with a branch to Nankin and Yuen-min-Yuen'.

The story mirrors the boom and bust taking place in the railway industry in England in the 1840s. Choo-lew-Kwang becomes an Oriental version of the vulgar Yorkshireman George Hudson; 'He wore the costliest satins and brocades; he manacled himself with chains and rings, people pointed at him as he drove along, saying – 'there goes Choo-lew-Kwang, the Railway Emperor.' But when the Englishman mysteriously disappears with half of Choo's fortune, and his wife asks him 'what's a pan-nik, because they say there's one in the railway market', it is clear that Choo-lew-Kwang's affairs have gone horribly wrong. 'His bankers failed, his brokers bolted; the Peking government refused to sanction his schemes; - to complete his misery, there came in the railway market one General SMASH.' At the end of the tale Choo-lew-Kwang cuts a miserable figure 'in dank and squalid rags, who loiters about the Peking coachstands and importunes the fares to buy dull pen-knives and mildewy sponges.'

In Sala's first published work we can trace much that would occupy him in his future writing. There is a satirical style throughout the piece, probably derived from his reading of *Punch*, and a pre-occupation with the acquisition and loss of wealth. The

use of a mock-ancient Chinese background to the story shows the influence of Charles Lamb, whose ‘pseudo-oriental fantasy’ at the beginning of his ‘A Dissertation on Roast Pig’ (1822) comes from *Essays of Elia*.⁷¹ It also pre-figures Sala’s obsession with travel, foreign culture and foreigners. In attacking such a public figure as Hudson, Sala demonstrates his willingness to hold up to ridicule men in positions of power. In Thomas Carlyle’s portrait of Hudson in his *Latter-Day Pamphlets* some five years later (1850), Carlyle scorned the way that a man like Hudson could literally speed up time and fashion himself into some sort of a king; ‘His “worth” to railways, I think, will mainly resolve itself into this, that he carried them to completion within the former short limit of time (five years); that he got them made hastily in five years, not deliberately in fifty-five.’⁷² But unlike Carlyle’s doom-laden style, Sala is capable of injecting fun and humour into his writing, along with an early indication of his bohemian tendencies. On the first night that the Englishman and Choo meet they were ‘quaffing huge jorums out of a tea kettle of a boiling liquid, which his companion called Wiss-ki-tod-hi, which, translated into our vernacular, means, ‘Aching bones and headache the next morning.’’ There are also puns on London names disguised as Chinese sites, ‘A magnificent pagoda was erected in Kapell Corte, [Capell Court] where railway business was transacted.’ Nigel Cross claims that, ‘the Bohemians were not earnest. They did not engage in the great debates on sanitary reform, democracy, culture and religion... Their achievement was to cater for the flip-side of the Victorian coin – an insatiable craving for humour.’⁷³ Humour would always be a constant in Sala’s writing, but as with Dickens and Thackeray it was used for a purpose, more often than not to illustrate the failings of the pompous and the over-reaching in

⁷¹ Gerald Monsman, *Confessions of a Prosaic Dreamer: Charles Lamb’s Art of Autobiography* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1984) p. 75

⁷² Thomas Carlyle, *Latter Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872) p. 227

⁷³ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 102

society. Hudson had climbed too far and too soon, and Sala was at hand to burst the bubble of his pomposity.⁷⁴

The Man In The Moon

The princely pay for drawing up the plans of railways was too good to last, and with little reaction to his first published work, Sala turned once again to more artistic endeavours. This time his work was to be done in oil and on linen and would illustrate some of the major events in the history of the Ancient Order of Foresters, a friendly society that had been grown out of the eighteenth-century Royal Foresters Society, and had been set up in 1834.⁷⁵ The patron of this work was George Wieland, famous

⁷⁴ Like Dickens, Sala was ambiguous to the railways as standing for a symbol of industrial progress. Just as Dickens had criticised the destruction of neighbourhoods in the face of the relentless tide of railway building in *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) and in articles like 'An Unsettled Neighbourhood' from *Household Words* (11 Nov. 1854), Sala was keenly aware that the railways have forever changed the face of the metropolis. But like Dickens he was also in awe of the sheer speed the railways have brought to everyday life, especially the journey time from London to his beloved Brighton, and just as with the advent of photography, Sala realises that rail travel has now become a quotidian experience for most people;

Since this old cap was new, I have torn down to Brighton by the express in sixty minutes. I have written a column of close 'copy' in a *coupe*; I have been swept over the houses on the Surrey side and have seen what the good folks of Vauxhall and Lambeth have had for dinner. I have seen a queen making her progress by railway, and judges going circuit, and coffins going to the cemetery, and murderers going to be hanged, likewise, per rail. Who takes any account of these wonders? We are used to them. (Sala 1862 p. 229)

Sala would return to the theme of railway speculation again and again in his career. In one of his early panoramas entitled 'Hail, Rain, Steam and Speed' (1850), a reference to JMW Turner's painting from 1844 'Rain, Steam, Speed', under the heading of 'RAILWAY MORALS', there is the instruction, 'Above all, never to be a railway shareholder if you wish to avoid...', and this is followed by the caricature of an obviously forlorn man incarcerated behind bars in what we are informed is... 'Whitecross St.' Built in 1813-15 as a prison for debtors, Whitecross Street held 500 prisoners before being demolished in 1870. It stood on the site where the Barbican now stands. For more on its ironic use here and elsewhere see chapter 2. Sala's caricature is a stark warning to those still tempted to invest in the railways.

⁷⁵ Straus (1942) p. 47

for his pantomimic performances and for owning the White Hart tavern, popular with theatrical folk being situated only a few yards away from the Princess's Theatre, Oxford Street. The Foresters' Lodge held their meetings in one of the rooms of the White Hart and because Charles Sala frequented the watering-hole and introduced his brother George to the proprietor the patronage was secured. Sala soon discovered that the new medium he found himself working in was not an easy one; 'I got on very well with the drawing; but when it came to the painting, I was perplexed...the surface I was painting on being intended for a transparency, I could not, obviously, 'prime' it, and my colours ran.'⁷⁶ Fortunately help was at hand from the chief scene-painter a few doors down at the Princess's, a Mr. William Roxby Beverly. Beverly advised that the application of turpentine would solve the problem and while in consultation with Sala the lessee and manager of the theatre, Mr. John Medex Maddox, took an interest in Sala's work and offered him a job as an assistant scene-painter there. Although it was to be another four years and under the aegis of Edmund Kean and not Maddox that the Princess's became involved in 'one of the greatest periods of the English theatre', the job was a promising one for a man whose family was so suffused with theatrical blood.⁷⁷ Beverly was to prove himself an excellent mentor teaching his pupil the 'mysteries of "sinks" and "slides"; mixing the colours and assisting with the "sets"; modelling masks for the pantomime, and inventing "effects" for the ballet.'⁷⁸

Maddox persuaded Sala to 'translate comedies and farces from the French, copy out

⁷⁶ Sala (1895) p. 178

⁷⁷ Christopher Weiner and Christopher Hibbert (eds) *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 1983) p. 640

⁷⁸ Straus (1942) p. 49 Maddox was eager for Sala to undertake other tasks in recompense for his fifteen shillings a week salary. In his autobiography Sala noted in typically generous (or 'whitewashed') fashion that, 'although very good-natured, he had a frugal mind' (Sala 1895 p. 179) Sala's great friend, Edmund Yates recalls that, 'stories of his wonderful fertility of resource in saving money were rife in theatrical circles.' (Edmund Yates, *His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1885) p. 130 Yates described Maddox as possessing, 'a short stout figure and very marked features, with a cigar always protruding from under his prominent nose, he was a constant source of delight to the caricaturists' Yates (1885) p. 130. In fact Sala was to portray him in just such a caricature with these features strongly conspicuous (reprinted in Straus, 1942 p. 55).

the parts, draw up the advertisements for the newspapers...occasionally hold the prompt-book in the wing, and help the treasurer make out his accounts.’⁷⁹ Sala spent thirteen months learning all the different aspects of the theatrical profession and would reflect on these experiences throughout his career. He must have felt at home being backstage again amidst the hurly-burly of opening night and the Green Room, a *mise-en-scene* where all kinds of unsavoury characters mingled with the actors, their friends and the paid-up staff of the theatre. This confluence of these assorted characters must surely have given Sala the impetus and confidence to revel in his own bohemian lifestyle some years later.

In the spring of 1847 Beverley was persuaded by Madame Vestris and C.J. Matthews to work at the Lyceum and Sala followed him, tempted by an increase in salary. But Sala was beginning to have serious doubts as to whether he was ever to excel as a scenic artist. The problem seems to have stemmed from the impairment of his vision as a child, although now it seemed to be manifesting itself in a type of colour blindness. He became known as the ‘gentleman in black’ and Sala declares this was because ‘I could not be prevented from mixing black with almost every pigment on my palette.’⁸⁰ Despite this impairment and the consequences it would have for his artistic career, Sala was able to join forces with Beverley’s chief assistant at the Princess’s, a Mr. Wilson, who had been commissioned to produce a panorama of Mexico City. Panoramas were developed and patented in 1787 by Robert Barker and were succeeded by dioramas, the first one appearing in London at Regent’s Park in 1823.⁸¹ But the large panoramas of world cities were only just becoming popular.⁸²

⁷⁹ Straus 1942 p. 179

⁸⁰ Sala (1895) p. 194

⁸¹ Jeremy Tambling, *Gone Astray: Dickens and London* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd. 2009) p. 22

⁸² Straus (1942) p. 50

Dolf Sternberger posits the suggestion that it was the advent of the railroad that transformed the world, ‘into a panorama that could be experienced...it turned the traveller’s eyes outward and offered them the opulent nourishment of ever changing images that were the only possible thing that could be experienced during the journey.’⁸³ Sternberger’s theory of panoramas accentuates the growing desire for visual quantification, especially of the large metropolises, that was suffusing Victorian culture. In 1844 Henry Vizetelly, then editor of *The Pictorial Times*, had commissioned a four metre-long panorama of London at the price of one shilling and sixpence, in order to tempt readers away from the *Illustrated London News*.⁸⁴ Sala and Wilson’s panorama of the Mexican capital was commissioned because of the unrest then occurring in that city and Sala dutifully ‘executed all the figures required in the foreground.’⁸⁵ This serious piece of work would be a forerunner to the numerous comic panoramas he would later design and must have excited his interest in foreign travel. But the lack of financial remuneration for the work and his growing disenchantment with scene-painting as a profession meant that once again Sala was in search of a career.

Throughout his time as a miniature painter, railway planner, and scene painter, Sala had managed to ‘accumulate a rather large collection of pen and ink drawings, mainly of a would-be comic character.’⁸⁶ These caricatures, like the one of J.M. Maddox, were mainly drawn from the people he had encountered in his working life. He had been told from the dramatist Charles Dance that there was a recently published monthly periodical ‘of a facetious kind’ going by the name of *The Man In The Moon*

⁸³ cited in Kate Flint (2001) p. 8

⁸⁴ text accompanying exhibit at Maps of London exhibition, British Library (12/02/07)

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 50

⁸⁶ Sala (1895) p. 195

that specialised in a kind of light literature of which Sala's caricatures would be the perfect visual foil.⁸⁷ On the frontispiece to the first collected volume, issued in 1847, it states that the magazine is, 'Edited by Albert Smith and Angus Reach... With illustrations by Phiz, Kenny Meadows, Hine, Nicholson, Brough, A. Mayhew, Smythe, Cham, and others.'⁸⁸ That Sala was to become one of the 'others' and to join a staff that would include many long time friends and colleagues, came about because of an introduction to Albert Smith whose early career in the medical profession had given way to what Edmund Yates described as that of a 'rollicking *litterateur*.'⁸⁹ Unlike Sala's encounter with the 'unctuous' Mark Lemon, or maybe because of it, (*The Man In The Moon* was engaged in a war of words with *Punch*) Albert Smith gave Sala 'at once remunerative work as a comic draughtsman.'⁹⁰ Sala began committing comic drawings to wood which Ebenezer Landells engraved, while Smith, Angus Reach, Shirley Brooks and Charles Kenney were the main literary contributors. The tone was satirical but in a lighter mode than that of *Punch*. Its form was also lighter than its rival, it was of quarto size and so small that 'it could be slipped into any normal-sized pocket.'⁹¹ Its size was intended to replicate one of Bradshaw's Railway Time-Tables and the text accompanying the first edition stated that it was to be 'an Act for the Amalgamation of the Broad Gauge of Fancy, with the Narrow Gauge of Fact, into the Grand General Amusement Junction.'⁹² Sala would have appreciated the pun, having just worked within the railway system. The opening editorial of *The Man In The Moon* sums up this light style;

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 195

⁸⁸ *The Man In The Moon* (vol. 1) 1847

⁸⁹ Yates (1885) p. 146

⁹⁰ Sala (1895) p. 199

⁹¹ Straus (1942) p. 51

⁹² *ibid.* p. 52

In the discussion of such light matters of the day, as may come as a kind of salad to our repast; we shall in dressing them up, at all times use more of the oil than the vinegar, where such dressing is consistent. And for our dessert we shall offer various trifles that may suit all palates, and promote chit-chat and pleasant feelings, which we hold to be the great end of a dessert.⁹³

There are jokes liberally spread throughout the pages of the magazine, both verbal as when the text reads ‘Why are oysters the greatest anomalies in nature? BECAUSE: - They wear a beard, without a chin, And leave their beds to be tucked in,’⁹⁴ and verbal and visual such as in an illustration depicting five large-nosed and oleaginous Jews with the legend ‘Gentlemen of the Jewry’ inscribed beneath it.⁹⁵ There was also a fold-out panorama in each issue, usually illustrated by Cham. The first such panorama is typical, it being titled ‘The Foreign Gentleman in London; or, the English Adventures of Monsieur Vanille.’ It depicted the perils of the metropolis as encountered by a Frenchman newly arrived there. The first scene’s accompanying text not only gently pokes fun at the French but is also a real reminder of the ever-present threat of revolution. ‘On arriving at his hotel, naturally anxious to look abroad, he puts himself in great peril, by being, for the first time, introduced to an English guillotine window-sash.’ The illustration shows M. Vanille in the act of decapitation by the afore-mentioned sash window. These comic productions would strongly influence Sala’s own panoramas and his life-long satirical view of foreigners, a view that would become increasingly disturbing in certain aspects. But being on the staff of a comic

⁹³ *The Man In The Moon* vol. 1 (1847) p. 3

⁹⁴ *ibid.* p. 4

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 359

periodical at the age of nineteen and mixing with some of the more influential journalists of the period was to surpass any formal education that Sala may have received.

The Man In The Moon's quarrel with *Punch* stemmed from Albert Smith's time spent on the staff of that magazine three years earlier and being on the receiving end of Douglas Jerrold's 'unmerciful jibes.' After his departure from *Punch* we are informed by Straus that 'nothing amiable was printed about the author of *Mr. Ledbury* [Smith].'⁹⁶ It was natural that *Punch*'s rival would submit its own series of heavy blows in the bout and these reached a climax with the appearance of a set of verses titled 'Our Flight With Punch' written by Shirley Brooks. Their sarcasm and bite were so finely administered that Mark Lemon himself was heard to utter that 'that young man is formidable. He must be sought as an ally.'⁹⁷ Lemon's utterance was prescient for Brooks actually succeeded him in the editorial chair some years later. It would have been no surprise to Sala, then, when he was called upon to provide a series of caricatures for a full-fledged attack on *Punch* not from *The Man In The Moon* but from an individual by the name of Alfred Bunn. Bunn had been the manager of Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres and in this position he had 'come in for rather more than his fair share of contemptuous attack on the part of *Punch*.'⁹⁸ In the *Punch* of October 3rd 1847 an article entitled 'Bunn's Prose', which mocked him for his 'promotion' to manager of the Surrey Theatre and derided the advertisement of his intentions, was the final straw for Bunn who determined that *Punch* should not get away with such merciless castigation. Albert Smith helped Bunn by introducing him to Ebenezer Landells, who had also been 'thrown overboard' by *Punch*, and then

⁹⁶ Straus (1942) p. 53

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 58

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 58

Sala's name was touted around as being a possible illustrator.⁹⁹ In the second week of November 1847 this collaboration produced 'A Word With Punch', a small booklet selling at 3d with the words 'No. 1 – (to be continued if necessary)' in the top left hand corner. The frontispiece looked as if it could have been a number of *Punch* itself. (see fig. 3)

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 58

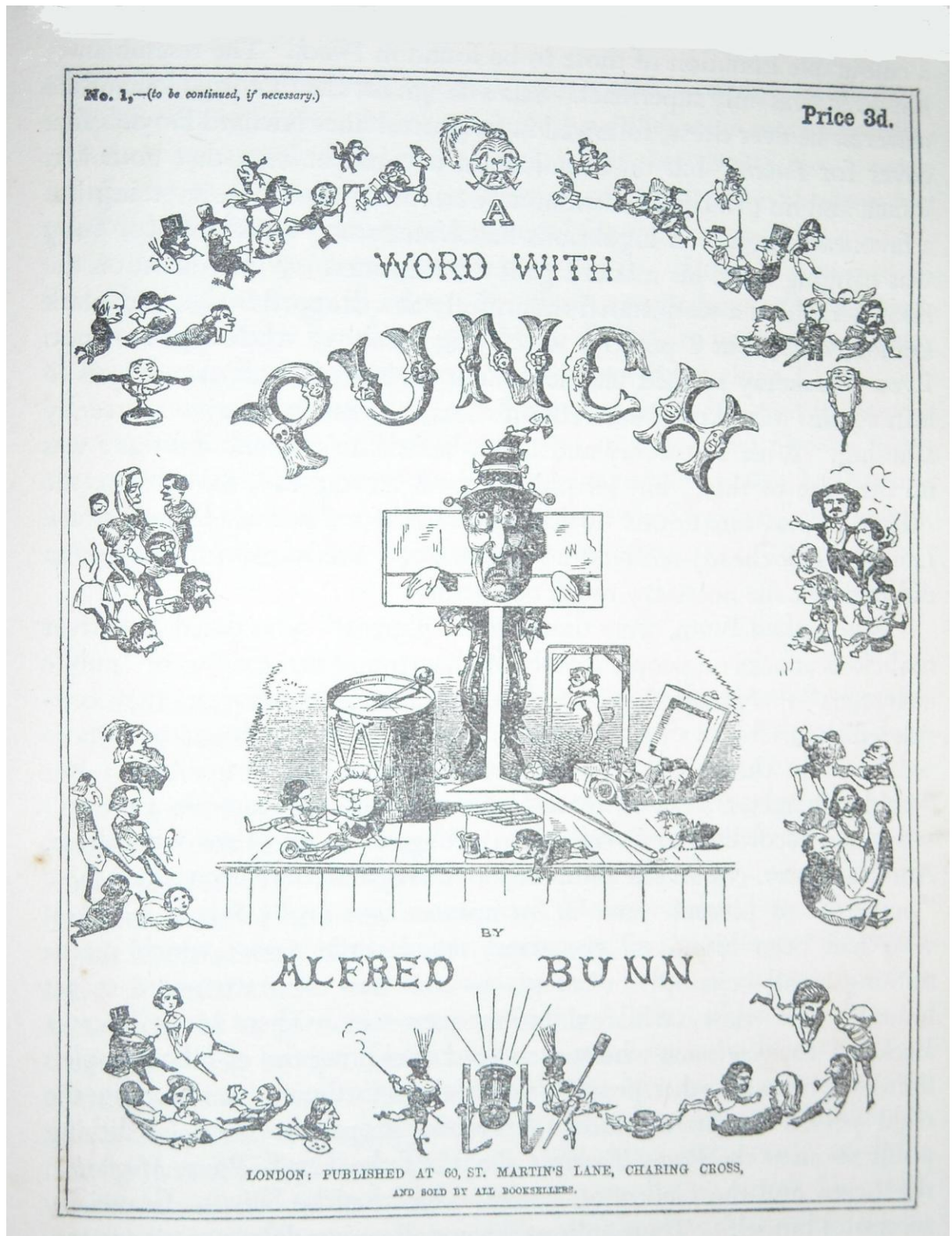


Fig. 3 Frontispiece to Alfred Bunn, 'A Word With *Punch*' (1847) illustration by G.A. Sala

Executed by Sala, his design was, in Straus's opinion, 'one of the cleverest he ever drew', and certainly its satirical intention hit the mark.¹⁰⁰ The main frame of the design shows a dejected Punch in the pillory while his dog, Toby, swings from a gibbet behind him. Around Punch's feet, in various stages of dissolution, lie the erstwhile *Punch* contributors all represented in puppet form. Thackeray lolls lazily against a drum, Gilbert and Beckett lies face down on the floor, Jerrold is a wasp staring at a dropped baton and Mark Lemon dressed as a pot-boy desperately tries to reach a pint pot. The text inside the pictorial frontispiece is no less savage an attack on *Punch's* contributors. Bunn asks if he is considered to be a public character then writers should also be considered in the public eye and as such they are fair game for any criticism they may warrant;

There will be, of course, a terrible outcry at my impertinence and audacity, in mentioning gentlemen who write for the press by their names; and I have already received many assurances that I shall be tomahawked in every journal, for daring to allude to them at all (especially in *The Times*, upon which Mr. a Beckett has some employment)...To my reply, that they have invariably mentioned me by name, I am told, that is all fair play, because I am a public character!!! Pray, Punch, are not these, your puppets, public characters? Have they not acted in public, laboured for the public, catered for the public? Has not Douglas Jerrold been hissed off the stage by the public?...and, as to Mark Lemon, there can be no doubt of his being a public

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 60

character, for he sometimes since kept a public HOUSE!!! All ceremony, therefore, is at an end between us.¹⁰¹

The savage satire worked in that the *Punch* team refused to reply to the provocation and never again insulted Bunn. For Sala it was an education in the literary backbiting and in-fighting that would dog him throughout his own career. It is interesting to note that the man who would be on the brunt of such severe and malignant attacks from the likes of the *Saturday Review* and Matthew Arnold was involved in just such an attack himself as a young man. But his collaboration with Bunn, along with his work for *The Man In The Moon*, would ensure his blacklisting from the pages of *Punch*.

But producing satiric attacks in three-penny booklets and comic sketches in a monthly periodical did not pay well enough to justify caricature as a sole income. Fortunately for Sala, Albert Smith also gave him work illustrating a portion of the many ‘shilling illustrated books of waggeries’ he was then writing. Published by David Bogue of Fleet Street they had titles like ‘Physiologies of Evening Parties’, and the Natural Histories of ‘The Gent’, ‘The Medical Student’ and ‘The Ballet Girl’.¹⁰² Although Archibald Henning contributed most of the drawings for these works, Sala was able to assist him and earn some much needed extra income along the way. With these productions Smith helped popularize the form of the *physiologie* in England. Catherine Waters notes how the genre ‘involves the application of a quasi-scientific method of categorizing types to the humorous study of social life.’¹⁰³ Influenced by Louis-Sebastien Mercier’s *Le Tableau de Paris* (1776-88), an arrangement of

¹⁰¹ Alfred Bunn, *A Word With Punch* (London: St. Martin’s Lane, Charing Cross, 1847) p. 3

¹⁰² Sala (1895) p. 204

¹⁰³ Catherine Waters, “Much of Sala, and but Little of Russia”: “A Journey Due North,” Household Words, and the Birth of a Special Correspondent’ *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42:4 Winter 2009 p. 310

‘eyewitness accounts of Parisian coffee-houses, changing fashions, old clothes markets, bill-stickers and so on’, they would become indispensable for the kinds of studies of life that Sala would undertake in his future career as a journalist.¹⁰⁴ Waters notes how Sala mentions his ambition to ‘bring Mercer’s *Tableau*...down to the present day’ in his preface to *Paris Herself Again* (1878-9). Indeed throughout his peripatetic perambulations across London and Paris for *Household Words*, in the description of the characters in his novels and in the representation of ‘types’ of foreigners in his travel journalism, Sala would prove the debt he owed to his early work for Smith.

Another important early influence on his style came about due to Ebenezer Landells, the man responsible for the cuts in *The Man In The Moon* and *A Word With Punch*. He had just launched what Sala described as ‘the first illustrated newspaper specially intended for the edification of the fair sex.’¹⁰⁵ This was *The Lady’s Newspaper*, and Sala was commissioned to design some of the patterns and fashion-plates featured in the paper. The time spent behind the scenes of the Princess’s Theatre as a wardrobe stocktaker must have helped Sala immeasurably when trying to reproduce the dresses and gowns of ladies of high fashion. (see fig. 4)

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 310

¹⁰⁵ Bunn (1847) p. 211



Fig. 4 The Lady's Newspaper

Working for *The Lady's Newspaper* also contributed to Sala's life-long obsession with 'collecting fashions and fashion-books'¹⁰⁶ and Catherine Waters notes how this obsession 'elicits Sala's self-confessed literary craze for costume and fashion.'¹⁰⁷ Sala would put his experience as a connoisseur of fashion and clothes to good use throughout his career, whether describing the distinctive national dress of the 'Ischvostchik' in Russia or the highly fashionable costumes of one of the scheming, criminal female characters in his novels.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p. 211

¹⁰⁷ Waters (2009) p. 310

At the opposite end of the illustrative scale from these handsome designs for ladies' dresses were the cheap and vulgar illustrations to be found in the large numbers of novels published in weekly numbers and known as 'Penny Dreadfuls.' The chief publisher among these productions was Edward Lloyd, who had already had a string of successes in the cheap fiction market with *Lives of the Most Notorious Highwaymen* and *The Calendar of Horrors*, both from 1836.¹⁰⁸ He was also instrumental in founding a series of 'People's' papers beginning with *The Penny Sunday Times* and *People's Gazette* in 1840 and a companion sheet in 1841 entitled *The Companion to Lloyd's Penny Sunday Times*.¹⁰⁹ Aimed at an artisan readership their staple fodder was sensational reportage of murders and other criminal activities. It was these Sunday papers that *Punch* satirised in 'Useful Sunday Literature for the Masses' (*Punch* 17 (1849) 116), in which a bedraggled father reads aloud to his seven young children how a man has been arrested for slashing the throats of three children and battering a baby's head with a poker!¹¹⁰

After the incredible success of the *Illustrated London News*, Lloyd hastily issued *Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper*. Sala was introduced to Lloyd's chief wood-engraver, Edward Calvert, whose duty was to engrave the designs required and then employ draughtsmen like Sala to draw the same design on the wood-blocks. Sala's knowledge of fashion and period costume was especially welcome by Calvert because many of the titles he was engraving were to do with murder and assassination set in the historic past. In 1847, the year Sala began working for Lloyd and Calvert, it has

¹⁰⁸ John Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989) p. 380

¹⁰⁹ James (1963) p. 35

¹¹⁰ reprinted in Andrew King and John Plunkett, *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) p. 346-7

been reckoned that Lloyd published thirty-eight penny-issue novels.¹¹¹ Sala recollected that one of these productions was, ‘a romance of the days of Edward IV, and it bore the attractive title of *The Heads of the Headless*.’¹¹² Lloyd demonstrated his awareness of the market he was catering for in what Sala called ‘a mild letter of remonstrance’. In it he demanded of Sala more vigour in his drawings and in particular he wrote, ‘the eyes must be larger; and there must be more blood - much more blood!’¹¹³ (see fig. 5)



Fig. 5 Sala's illustration from *Heads of the Headless* (1847)

Lloyd realised the element of sensation needed to satisfy his consumers and it was to be a lesson well learnt for the young artist who would one day with his pen so

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p. 38

¹¹² Sala (1895) p. 209

¹¹³ *ibid.* p. 209

passionately defend sensation fiction. Louis James explains how the illustrations complement the text and stresses the debt owed to the theatre in these novels;

These woodcuts and the stories perfectly supplement each other. The outstretched hands point to the power of destiny, the falling curve of the heroine's body illustrates her helpless innocence, the villain's enormous eyes – Sala as a woodcutter was told to make them larger – show devouring lust. They convey the conventional poses of both actor and stock characters, designed to evoke a crude but precise response from the back of the 'gods', or a semi-literate reader struggling to understand the story. The illustrations were more than ornament. Today, when we are deluged with pictorial art, it requires an effort of imagination to see the impact of pictures on early nineteenth-century readers.¹¹⁴

It was the imagined impact on semi-literate readers of productions like this that turned the tide of illustrative fashion away from the sensational and towards the improvement of the reader/viewer. Once again Sala was able to witness at first hand this emblem of modernity. He also realised that this was exploitation of the working-class fiction buyer. The demand for visual accompaniment to text was high but Lloyd was content with producing the cheapest and shoddiest illustrations in order to satisfy his consumers. While Sala's experiences in the theatre must have helped him with the melodramatic poses of the figures he was illustrating, he must have realised that these

¹¹⁴ James (1963) p. 150

crude woodcuts could never satisfy his artistic ambitions. Calvert's only assistant wood-engraver was a George Armstrong, now an old man but at one time apprentice to Thomas Bewick, father of modern English wood-engravings.¹¹⁵ It must have been incredibly poignant to witness this once revered engraver reduced to churning out lurid, sensational images of murderers and other criminals. Money was cited as the reason for the low standard of the designs and Sala wrote that, 'poor old Mr. Armstrong, who in his day had executed work of the highest kind, was fain to be also a 'scauper' and a slasher, because the engraver could not afford to pay him a sufficient sum for really artistic work.'¹¹⁶ Sala quickly grew dissatisfied with his work for Lloyd and Calvert, and although he always favoured the sensational over the commonplace, he realised that taste was changing and a new 'improving' style of illustration was being developed. But as ever with Sala at this period of his life, whenever disenchantment occurred in one profession, there was always another to fall back on. Once again, Sala returned to the pen.

Chat and Panoramas

There was an anti-Gallic feeling sweeping the metropolis in 1848, the Year of Revolution. That monumental event in French history had led to widespread expulsion of English workmen from French factories and the Chartist unrests back in England had left a tangible sense of anti-French sentiment sweeping London. So when

¹¹⁵ for more on Bewick see Jenny Uglow, *Nature's Engraver, A Life Of Thomas Bewick* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006) p. 321

¹¹⁶ Sala (1895) p. 210

a Parisian theatrical troupe arrived at the National Theatre, Drury Lane, to perform Alexandre Dumas's *Monte Cristo* there was a great deal of controversy surrounding the visit. Sala notes that 'theatrical, literary and journalistic London was forthwith split into two camps.'¹¹⁷ While Albert Smith represented pro-French sentiment, Sala was decidedly in the anti-French camp. His politics at this time were not what one would expect of a man who would in later years 'frequently identify himself as among the fiercest of Radicals.'¹¹⁸ The first performance of *Monte Cristo* predictably descended into riot, Sala was left with a black eye and swollen lips and after licking his wounds proceeded to 'compose a set of mock-heroic verses' entitled *The Battle of Monte Cristo*.¹¹⁹ There was no use trying to offload them onto Albert Smith, given their difference of opinion over the matter, and so Sala took them to the office of *Chat*, 'a little halfpenny weekly paper published at 304 Strand, the west corner of Holywell Street.'¹²⁰ Unfortunately there are no copies extant of this periodical. Even in 1895 Sala bemoaned the unavailability of his productions therein; 'The business arrangements of *Chat*, to say nothing of the journalistic ones, were carried on in a slightly rough and ready fashion; and for many months the publisher omitted to comply with the law requiring the deposition in the Museum library of a copy of every book, newspaper or periodical issued from the press. I am afraid that my literary contributions to *Chat* are not to be found in Great Russell Street.'¹²¹ But we do know that Sala went on to contribute short articles, humorous poems and comic essays to the magazine. We know that his 'The Australian Nights Entertainment', a product of

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 216

¹¹⁸ Vincent DeBaun, *The Story of Temple Bar: A Table of Insights into the Victorian Middle Class*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Rutgers University 1958) p. 23

Indeed Sala was to be sworn in as a special constable at Marlborough Police Court two days before April 10 1848, the date of the great Chartist meeting on Kennington Common. Sala was not alone in doing so, however, for such literary, society and historical figures as Edmund Yates, Louis Napoleon, Count D'Orsay, and John Leech were also duly sworn in. (Jerry White 2007 p. 367)

¹¹⁹ Straus (1942) p. 64

¹²⁰ Sala (1895) p. 217

¹²¹ *ibid.* p. 225-6

his time spent studying the Blue Books on transportation at the British Museum library, proved popular, as too did his 'The Natural History of Beggars'.¹²² One intriguing series which Sala admitted to 'bitterly regretting the disappearance of' was a collection of essays called 'A Hundred Different Faults of A Hundred Different Actors.'¹²³ Unfortunately we can only speculate as to the content of these essays, but Sala's apprenticeship in the theatre must have proved invaluable when writing them.

By the beginning of 1849 it was becoming obvious that all was not well with *Chat* magazine. The funds to pay the staff were proving hard to come by and when the editor disappeared one day leaving a trail of angry creditors in his wake, it looked as though time was about to be called on the venture. But a proposal to carry on the weekly with Sala as editor, Benjamin Clayton as engraver, and Richard Pond as advertising consultant, was approved and Sala found himself, at the age of twenty, as an editor of a London periodical. In place of a salary he was now to be given a share of the profits, but when those profits failed to materialise and the public failed to buy the magazine, Sala was obliged to sell his share to his two partners and once more renounce any aspirations to the journalistic profession.

Spurred on by the increasing popularity of panoramas and aware that neither art nor journalism on their own terms had remunerated him to a sufficient standard, Sala endeavoured to combine the visual and the verbal. He produced a panorama entitled 'Hail, Rain, Steam, and Speed', reflecting his respect for J.M.W. Turner whose impressionistic painting entitled *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844), depicted an early locomotive train crossing the River Thames on Brunel's

¹²² *ibid.* p. 225

¹²³ *ibid.* p. 225

recently completed Maidenhead Railway Bridge. Sala always maintained that Turner was ‘the greatest landscape painter the world ever saw.’¹²⁴ However, the similarities between the two pieces were confined to the title alone. Sala’s work is in the tradition of Cham’s pull-out comedic panoramas for *The Man In The Moon*. It was intended as a ‘comic guide-book for Continental tourists’ and reflected on the amusing antics of travellers abroad.¹²⁵ The caricatures are amusing without attaining anything like excellence, but there are signs in the accompanying text of a maturing writer growing in stature and confidence. There are tips for the greener traveller; ‘if you study Mogg’s elaborate treatise on cab fares you will find out what you ought to pay. Multiply the amount by four, and you will find what the cabman will make you pay.’¹²⁶ There are comic aphorisms; ‘too much luggage, like a little learning, is a dangerous thing’, the obligatory hawk-nosed Jewish caricature with the words ‘avoid this!!’ writ large. When contemplating foreign travel Sala falls back on the accepted stereotypes of the time – ‘Not to be too fond, if an artist, of sketching ancient castles abroad. The chances are ten to one that you get shot for a spy or made a pendant to a lamppost!!’ Finally Sala ends his first ‘book’ by advising his English adventurer to never set foot outside his front door – ‘Always to look under the bed before he gets into it, always to keep a journal of his voyagings; and never to travel when he can stay at home.’ Published by Adolphus Ackermann and priced at a shilling plain, half-a-crown coloured, it sold reasonably well and although simple and not particularly amusing Straus notes that ‘it paved the way for more elaborate panoramas.’¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Sala (1862) p. 276

¹²⁵ Sala (1895) p. 254

¹²⁶ G.A. Sala, *Hail, Rain, Steam and Speed* (London: Ackermann, 1850)

¹²⁷ Straus (1942) p. 76

Ackermann was suitably impressed and when the Pope decided to make Catholic bishoprics of Hexham, Shrewsbury and Birmingham Sala was called in to create two panoramas reflecting the anti-Catholic hysteria these measures excited. Entitled, *No Popery! A Protestant Roland For a Popish Oliver and Grand Procession Against Papal Aggression To Present the Address and Obtain Redress in Order That We May Hear Less Of His Holiness* (1850), they actively contributed to the growing tide of hatred fostered on Catholics during the middle of the century. There was an illustration of a harbour master who says he won't harbour any popes or cardinals, and a caricature of John Knox and Cardinal Wiseman with the text; 'The Kirk of Scotland used to hard Knox and too canny for any Wiseman the Pope can send them.' By including anti-Catholic sentiment and poking fun at the difference between foreigners and Englishman, Sala was nailing his populist credentials to the mast. His time spent illustrating for Penny Dreadfuls and his writing for *The Family Herald* had given him a unique appreciation of the type of humour his readership craved. His next panoramic work would build on this knowledge by trying to predict the confusion and carnage that foreigners would bring to the streets of the capital during The Great Exhibition of 1851.

Although the Exhibition was later seen as a triumph of internationalism, A.N. Wilson notes that 'the presence of so much exotic foreign material, and so many foreigners, did not diminish the natural xenophobia of the English.'¹²⁸ It was this 'natural xenophobia' that Sala would try to simultaneously court and satirise in his three panoramas of 1850; *The Great Exhibition Wot is to Be, Or Probable Results of the Industry of All Nations in the Year '51*, *The Great Glass House Opend; Or The*

¹²⁸ A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003) p. 143

Exhibition Wot Is!!, and *The House That Paxton Built*. There were other panoramas on the same theme that year. Notably, there was Richard Doyle's *An Overland Journey to the Great Exhibition Showing a Few Extra Articles and Visitors*, published by Chapman and Hall. But none exhibited the same satiric force and outrageousness that are inherent in Sala's productions. In fact Sala's views played with those of the Exhibition's organisers for as A.N. Wilson describes 'the paradox of the exhibition was that while being international in scope, it was fundamentally designed as a demonstration not merely of British superiority to other nations, but in some way, of British independence and isolationism.'¹²⁹ Sala was more concerned, however, with questioning the idea of the Exhibition as being instrumental in the formation of a British national identity, or as a 'nation on display.' In response to the imperial context of the Great Exhibition's pretensions as the symbolic centre of the heart of empire, Sala adopted a stridently anti-colonial and anti-slavery stance.¹³⁰

Americans are satirised in these panoramas more than any other nation; in *The Great Glass House Opend* (sic) there is a caricature of a Southerner spitting in an Englishman's hat underneath Sala's typically beautiful handwriting that reads – 'Extraordinary Politeness – An American gentleman actually apologises for using another gentleman's hat as a spittoon'. (Dickens's 1842 travel journal through America, *American Notes for General Circulation* had viciously lampooned the ubiquitous American habit of spitting.)

¹²⁹ *ibid.* p. 142

¹³⁰ for more on the Great Exhibition as a colonial project see, Tim Barringer, 'The South Kensington Museum and the colonial project' in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds.) *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 11. For more on the Great Exhibition as a 'nation on display' see Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

In *The House That Paxton Built* there is the caricature of a slave owner sitting on two of his slaves with the accompanying text, ‘American Planter’s Arm Chair made of ebony – a very free and easy invention supported on slavery.’ (see Fig. 6)



Fig. 6 Illustration from Sala’s *The House that Paxton Built* (1850) with kind permission from The British Library

But it wasn’t only Americans that came in for the satirical treatment by Sala’s pen and pencil. Natives of New Zealand were caricatured as rabid and unapologetic cannibals. In *The Great Glass House Opend* there is a picture of a distressed looking Maori with his arms wrapped around himself with the caption, ‘Shocking Case of Starvation; I

have not tasted human flesh since I left New Zealand.’ (Sala would still be teasing his readers with mock references to cannibalism when he eventually travelled to New Zealand in 1885) The French are also predictably caricatured. With the recent revolution still in people’s minds, the Home Office and the Duke of Wellington were inundated with a series of paranoid letters predicting rioting and radical action on behalf of the French in the streets of London.¹³¹ Sala depicts a group of underfed and sly looking Frenchmen slinking away from the Great Exhibition in a miserable manner. The caption reads; ‘French socialists depart disgusted at the unaccountable apathy of the English in not wishing for a revolution.’¹³² Sala’s humour struck a chord with his contemporaries and the sketches were far superior to his earlier panoramas and the humour, if at times offensive, was at least witty and cleverly written.

Alexis Soyer and Gore House

But while the French were being harshly satirised in Sala’s panoramas there was one of their countrymen who was only at best playfully caricatured, and even then with obvious affection. In *The House That Paxton Built*, there is a caricature of a flamboyant looking gentleman resplendent with a red beret perched on his head at a jaunty angle preparing food for hundreds of foreigners and even a huge hippo. Under the title ‘Symposium Gastronomicon of all Nations’, there followed the text; ‘The Renowned Soyer exhibiting his Magic Stove, with which he pledges himself to prepare dinner sufficient for all the visitors to the Exhibition, and even the Hippopotamus himself, appetite and all.’ (see fig. 7) In *The Great Glass House Opend* there is a sketch showing thousands of foreigners all desperately trying to enter

¹³¹ Wilson (2003) p. 143

¹³² Sala, G.A., *The Great Glass House Opend; Or The Exhibiton Wot Is!!* (London: Ackermann, 1851)

a building with a sign on its walls that says, 'Now Open – Soyer's Symposium' and Sala's text reads, 'Alfresco Refreshment Rooms and Suburban Symposium.' (see fig. 7) Who was this 'Renowned Soyer' and how was it that 'Soyer's Symposium' was to prove so important to Sala's future career?

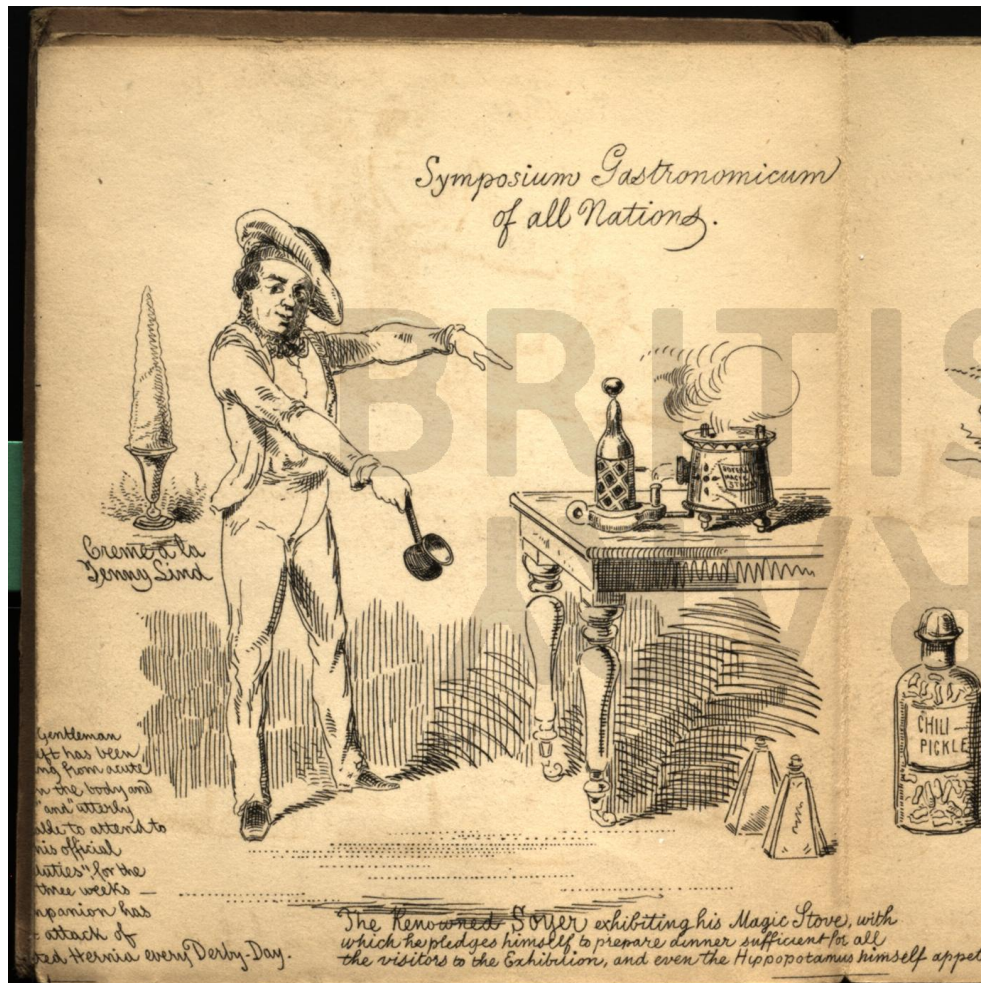


Fig. 7 Illustration of Alexis Soyer from Sala's *The House that Paxton Built* (1850) with kind permission from The British Library

Alexis Soyer had made his name in London in the 1840s as a working-class Frenchman who possessed what Ruth Cowen describes as 'exceptional cooking skills,

an ebullient personality and eye for the main chance.’¹³³ In his ‘cavernous underground kitchens’, at the Reform Club, designed and invented by his own hand, he was known for his opulent dishes for royalty and important dignitaries. He was one of the first men of his age to ‘understand the importance of nurturing a public profile, which he did through a combination of brilliant self-publicity and shameless press manipulation’, traits that Sala would not be averse to copying.¹³⁴ Along with his work at the Reform Club, Soyer had written some of the very first cookery books; notably his suitably outlandish-sounding title, *The Gastronomic Regenerator* (1846), for the upper classes, *The Modern Housewife or Menagere* (1849) for the middle classes and the *Poor Man’s Regenerator* (1847) for the working classes. As well as devising model soup-kitchens for the famine-struck inhabitants of Ireland, Soyer had also invented a portable cooker dubbed ‘Soyer’s Magic Stove’ and had emblazoned his name and face on a series of labels advertising his celebrated relishes and sauces. He was to be feted as M. Mirobolant, the excitable French chef, in Thackeray’s *Pendennis* (1848–50); ‘*miribolantes*’ referring to Soyer’s penchant for gaily coloured trousers or ‘*couleurs mirobolantes*.’¹³⁵ Thackeray, who had been a member of the Reform Club during Soyer’s heyday as head chef there, had a complicated relationship with Soyer. In *Vanity Fair* (1847–8) he describes him as ‘the immortal Alexis Soyer, who can make more delicious soup for a half-penny than an ignorant cook can concoct with pounds of vegetables and meat.’¹³⁶ There was obvious affection between the two men, they shared a real friendship ‘based on an energetic social life, a passion for the theatre, a sense of humour and - increasingly - a tendency

¹³³ Ruth Cowen, *Relish: The Extraordinary Life of Alexis Soyer Victorian Celebrity Chef* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006) p. 3

¹³⁴ *ibid.* p. 3

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p. 84

¹³⁶ W.M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Daily Express Publications, 1933) p. 161

to heavy drinking.¹³⁷ It is not surprising given their leisure pursuits that Sala would become friends with both men. But Thackeray, always conscious of his standing ‘as a gentleman, a university man and a member rather than servant of the Reform Club’, knew that there was a social gulf between them and duly mocked Soyer for his ‘faulty English and ridiculous clothes’ in the pages of *Punch*.¹³⁸ In contrast Sala, who did not possess the gentlemanly background of Thackeray, was perfectly happy to declare his friendship for Soyer even in the public arena of the periodical press. In an article in *Temple Bar* from December 1860, Sala admitted that ‘he was but a Cook’ but stated that ‘he was my dear and good friend. He quacked, certainly, - puffed himself and his eccentricity in all kinds of ways – in dress, manners, speech, mode of life; but he never derogated one iota from his dignity as an honest man.’¹³⁹ But it was to be Soyer’s eccentricities and extracurricular activities that forced the management of the Reform Club to deliver him an ultimatum; either Soyer would give up his commercial activities or he would lose his lucrative position at the club. Soyer duly resigned and *The Times* announced his departure on 13 May 1850.¹⁴⁰ In *The Great Exhibition Wot Is To Be*, Sala has a miniature version of Soyer standing in front of some of his cookbooks with the caption; ‘French Cookery in the person of M. Soyer and his books. Air: Why, oh why did Soyer resign?’ Sala was reflecting on the fact that the real reason for Soyer’s removal from the Reform Club was never made publicly known.

Sala first encountered the Frenchman at Hungerford Market. When Soyer proposed a new venture to Sala, one that would not only run concurrently with the Great

¹³⁷ Cowen (2006) p. 152

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p. 152

¹³⁹ G.A. Sala, ‘Travels In The County of Middlesex’, *Temple Bar* (Dec. 1860) p. 89

¹⁴⁰ Cowen (2006) p. 182

Exhibition, but would even rival it, the ‘most spectacular dining venue in Britain...one that would satisfy more than the appetite, it would be a feast for all the senses, encompassing art, sculpture and music’, the twenty-two year old found himself drawn into the forty year old Frenchman’s vision.¹⁴¹ Soyer intended to open the country’s first international restaurant, one that would cater for the elite as well as the masses and would be able to serve thousands on a daily basis. He even had a suitably outrageous name for this spectacle, *Soyer’s Universal Symposium of All Nations*.

The site chosen by Soyer was Gore House in Kensington (where today’s Albert Hall stands), former home of William Wilberforce and more recently the ‘silver-fork’ novelist, Lady Blessington. The latter’s thirteen year reign there, with her adopted son and lover Count D’Orsay by her side, had made the site a ‘magnetic social arena’ in which such literary luminaries as Dickens, Thackeray, Thomas Carlyle, Leigh Hunt, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Douglas Jerrold, Robert Southey, Thomas Hood, William Wordsworth, Henry Longfellow and Nathaniel Willis were known to frequent.¹⁴² But spiralling debts had ended the Blessington/D’Orsay reign and their flight and the ensuing sale of their private goods attracted 200,000 people and caused Dickens and Thackeray in particular to lament the tragedy. Soyer signed the lease on the property in December 1850 at the rate of £100 a month and immediately planned its transformation. With only six months until the opening of the Great Exhibition the house became awash with builders, landscapers and decorators. One of the workmen was Sala. Soyer had heard about his panoramas and his scene-painting and had invited him to paint a large mural in oil and monochrome on the Grand Staircase, a total

¹⁴¹ Cowen (2006) p. 208

¹⁴² *ibid.* p. 206

length of seventy feet, running up all three storeys of the house.¹⁴³ Sala actually moved in for the next three months while he executed his commission. In his article for *Temple Bar*, ‘Travels In The County of Middlesex’ (1860), Sala relates how he gained inspiration from the literary spirits of the house; he reports how he would wander through the rooms at night ‘conjuring up images of the famous time when they had been tenanted by the wise, the learned and the great’. But he also feels haunted by two phantoms, Alfred D’Orsay and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. Working eight hours a day ‘perched on a ladder or standing on planks suspended by cords from the ceiling’ it was to be by far Sala’s grandest work as an artist.¹⁴⁴ Sala recalls in his autobiography the content of his panorama;

The figures all had very big heads and very small bodies. Some were on foot, some on horseback, and some mounted on griffins, dragons, giraffes, elephants, hippopotami, camels, rhinoceroses, and mastodons; while among the characters represented were the ghosts of William Pitt and Charles James Fox, Napoleon, Wellington – the great Duke came more than once to Gore House – Abd el-Kader...Dickens, Thackeray, Mark Lemon, George Cruikshank, Jullien, Albert Smith...Douglas Jerrold, Victor Hugo...and the Marquis of Londonderry.¹⁴⁵

But despite all the hard work and the eminent, learned men displayed in the panorama Sala would only ever refer to it in terms of being a ‘most pretentious sham’. Looking

¹⁴³ *ibid.* p. 210

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 210

¹⁴⁵ Sala (1895) p. 292

back ten years later he would record that ‘I painted its walls with a grotesque nightmare of portraits of people I had never seen, and hundreds more upon whom I had never set eyes save in the print shops, till I saw the originals grinning, or scowling, or planted in blank amazement before the pictorial libels on the wall.’¹⁴⁶ Even more pretentious than Sala’s mural were the changes being made both inside and outside Gore House. The gardens were to be used for musical performances, theatrical shows, juggling and acrobatic displays. There was a giant shell, forty feet in length and planted with rare flowers.¹⁴⁷ Rummey’s meadow, at the far end of the garden, became Le Pre d’Orsay and featured a small kiosk called The Impenetrable Grotto of Ondine or The Enchanted Cascade. Inside there was the Hall of Architectural Wonders incorporating La Salle du Parnasse, a mock Grecian temple. There was La Salle de Noces de Danae, or the Shower of Gems; the Washington Refreshment Room, one of the first cocktail bars in London; La Foret Peruvienne or The Night of Stars, a recreation of a South American rainforest, and various themed rooms representing a North Pole cavern, an Italian palazzo, and a Chinese pagoda. The whole of these delights were to be transcribed and sold to the public in the form of a catalogue, or, as it appeared on the front cover; ‘a *catalogue raisonne*, artistic, historic, topographic and picturesque of that unique and gigantic establishment.’¹⁴⁸ The writing of *The Book of the Symposium, or, Soyer at Gore House* (1851), as it came to be known, was entrusted to Sala. Ruth Cowen notes that ‘the hand may have been Sala’s but the self-aggrandisement and hyperbole were all Soyer’s.’¹⁴⁹ There was certainly plenty of hyperbole. Whether it was all Soyer’s work is debatable, but what cannot be denied is the influence the book’s style had on Sala’s subsequent writing.

¹⁴⁶ cited in Straus (1942) p. 87

¹⁴⁷ Cowen (2006) p. 216

¹⁴⁸ G.A.Sala, *The Book of the Symposium, or Soyer at Gore House* (London: Soyer, 1851) All subsequent references in parenthesis.

¹⁴⁹ Cowen (2006) p. 212

He begins with what was to become a trademark digression, ‘A few words may be allowed us, in our record of the marvels of Gore House, on the subject of the mutabilities of mansions.’(5) The mock heroic opening descends into a catalogue of famous houses and their subsequent change of occupation, from Holyrood House to Crosby Hall to the Pantheon in Oxford Street. In his heavy-handed way Sala is endeavouring to illustrate the ‘magnificent’ changes taking place at Gore House. A typical sentence in this catalogue is to be found on the next page; ‘time was when it was the residence of the beautiful and accomplished Countess of Blessington; time was when it was desolate and dismantled; time IS when, like the phoenix, it has arisen fresh and revived, when its halls once more glitter with light, and its chambers re-echo with the voices of the noble and the talented; when all its former glories are called into new, and even more glorious life, by the enchanter’s wand of Alexis Soyer.’ (6/7) This change in Sala’s style from the straightforward, forthright and comic mode of his panoramas and his story for the *Family Herald*, to the more circuitous and complex sentence structures witnessed here, would become a feature of his subsequent literary productions.

But the satirical element in Sala’s writing, never far from the surface, soon comes to the fore. The next sentence is typical of the rest of the work; it is outrageously pretentious and knowingly so, and in it we can detect Sala and Soyer’s delight in the sheer affectation and ostentation of the writing; ‘the poetical mind might picture to itself that the object of the mission of this starry sylphide was to assuage the storm, to intercede with her tempestuous sire, and stay the furies of his hand; for on the marble brow rises in full refulgence the star of peace, the harbinger, we hope, of that nascent fraternity of all Nations which the Great Exhibition of 1851 will give birth to.’(11)

Despite the superfluity of the style, there is an early indication of the imaginative force of Sala's writing. The overwrought and hyperbolic style reaches its apotheosis when describing 'the Impenetrable Grotto of Ondine';

Riplets, mere sprinklings, as it were, of artfully concocted
liquers, fragrant maraschinos, oleaginous curacaos, lacteral
cremes d'amour, seem silently to meander from her enchanted
cup, and by some delightful process of Symposium
legerdemain are conveyed into the interior of the grotto through
the shafts of the slender spinacle supporting it, where such of
those dwellers on dull earth who would 'take a drop', so to
speak with Hebe, and hob-nob with the whole Heathen
Parthenon, can be accomodated by the presiding Sylphide of
the place, a fairy-like little creature, picturesquely attired as
Ondine, the immortal Naiade of de la Motte Fouque, who rules
supreme over the spirits, bad and good, hovering around the
grotto, as also over the spirits descending from Hebe's
inexhaustible cup. (34)

In his autobiography Sala would dismiss the catalogue as 'hideous rubbish', and Straus's view that 'never before can so many superlatives have been gathered together within the confines of a single essay' is just.¹⁵⁰ But reading some of Sala's later work, particularly his descriptions of the interior of French boudoirs in his novels, and in some of his more imaginative essays for *Household Words*, we can trace the incessant

¹⁵⁰ Straus (1942) p. 88

description and use of fairies and ethereal imagery back to his advertising puff for Soyer's Symposium. One interesting feature to note at the end of *The Book of the Symposium* is the fact that after expiating on the benefits of gas lighting throughout Gore House, Sala then for the first time signs off using his initials G.A.S. These initials, inserted at the end of an article, would later become recognisable all over the English speaking world as belonging to George Augustus Sala. They are also an emblem of modernity, as Sala aligns himself with the newest source of light available.

Despite the extravagant advertising puff and the huge amount of money spent on redecorating Gore House, Soyer's restaurant was doomed to failure. Designed to receive five or six thousand guests a day, in reality only a thousand came through the doors each day, a respectable figure but not enough to forestall the rising debts. A complaint from a disgruntled Temperance magistrate, Thomas Pownall, at the 'debauchery and orgies' taking place in the grounds, was the final straw and Soyer closed the doors on 14 October 1851, having made a commendable £21,000 but owing £28,000.¹⁵¹ The termination of the affairs at Gore House also precipitated the termination of Sala's artistic career. Strangely enough it was a balloon ascent that finally drew Sala to the realisation that he would never be a great artist. The ascent began from the Pre d'Orsay in the gardens of Soyer's Symposium accompanied by a Mr. Chambers and his son, and a Mr. Gardiner.¹⁵² At first the flight went well and the balloonists had ascended to a mile above the London skyline, but then a sound not dissimilar to a gunshot was heard and it became apparent that the balloon had burst. The quick thinking Chambers removed the ballast and the men hit the ground with not nearly as much force as had been expected. In his anger Sala incredibly penned a

¹⁵¹ Cowen (2006) pp. 230-1

¹⁵² Straus (1942) p. 97

letter to *The Times* ‘denouncing the folly of balloon-ascents undertaken for the mere amusement of idlers’ and declaring himself excused of rashness and stupidity because he was an ‘artist’.¹⁵³ This claim was supposed to exonerate him because he was observing the city, detailing its topography as an artist would do. But Sala’s claims for artistic status were roundly attacked in an unsparing article in the *Morning Post* which asked what had he produced to deserve such a title? It went on to lampoon his ‘scrawls’ as ‘mediocre’ productions. After Sala’s initial anger had passed he reflected on the *Morning Post*’s criticisms. Maybe their ire was justified. Maybe his artistic career thus far did not have a great deal to show for itself. Thinking of how best he could represent the fluctuating fortunes of the metropolis he had witnessed from a mile above the ground he decided that the pen and not the pencil were to be the tools of his trade. The fact that he had just had published his first contribution to Dickens’s weekly *Household Words* for the handsome sum of five pounds would certainly have helped his decision. But he was also keenly aware that there was a major shift taking place in what Nancy Armstrong terms the ‘prevailing winds of illustration.’¹⁵⁴

Michael Steig has identified that the ‘quasi-caricatural way of drawing characters’, the style epitomised by Cruikshank and Thackeray and adopted by Sala, was giving way to a simple and clearer style or ‘a blander, rather idealised style in which emblem and allusion disappeared almost totally.’¹⁵⁵ This new style was epitomised by John Leech and the other artists and illustrators working for *Punch*. Illustrators like Phiz (Hablot Browne) who had begun his artistic career illustrating in the Cruikshank fashion, were now forced to adapt their work as a consequence of this shift in taste.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* p. 98

¹⁵⁴ Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction In The Age of Photography* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) p. 137

¹⁵⁵ cited in *ibid.* p. 137

We can see this shift when comparing Thackeray's illustrations to his own novels or Cruikshank's work for Dickens (*Oliver Twist*) with Phiz's graphics for *Bleak House* (1851). The earlier illustrations provide new information not received by the reader in the text while the later graphics offer little extraneous material. Judith L. Fisher notes that 'the caricatural style offered its reader-viewers an additional narrative voice, making the image as important as the text.'¹⁵⁶ In contrast the new style, deriving from English genre painting, and epitomised in John Everett Millais's illustrations for Anthony Trollope's novels, increasingly subordinated the image to the text.¹⁵⁷ A further example is the exchange that took place between the poet Alfred Tennyson and the artist Holman Hunt. Hunt had illustrated Tennyson's poem 'The Beggar Maid' for inclusion in Edward Moxon's edition of Tennyson's *Poems* (1857). Tennyson wanted 'a literal realisation of his poem', while Hunt had endeavoured to produce 'a comprehensive image that both embodied the imaginative work of the poet and embellished it.'¹⁵⁸ Tennyson objected to Hunt's illustration because 'the picture contained elements not given in the poem.'¹⁵⁹ Because of this change Cruikshank himself was finding it increasingly difficult to obtain work in book illustration and by the end of the 1840s he was instead creating moral narratives like 'The Bottle' (1847), a Hogarthian progress in a contemporary setting. Sala's comic panoramas and his caricatures were likewise going out of fashion. In fact he only received one more commission in the visual field. Once again by Adolphus Ackermann, this time it was to be a serious panoramic study of the entire procession that accompanied the body of Wellington on its funereal pageant through the streets of London.

¹⁵⁶ Fisher (1995) p. 60

¹⁵⁷ Fisher (1995) p. 60

¹⁵⁸ Meisel (1983) p. 34

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 29

The Duke of Wellington's death on September 14 1852 was followed by preparations for a funeral unlike anything London had witnessed before, even for royalty. Ackermann was keen to commemorate the event and at first enlisted Samuel Henry Alken, son of Henry Alken, to provide the engravings. Samuel Henry's father, who we have already encountered in reference to Pierce Egan, achieved fame in the early nineteenth century through his dashing representations of horses, particularly the kind that dramatically leap over hedges in the new sport of steeplechasing.¹⁶⁰ Due to the huge number of horses taking part in Wellington's procession, Ackermann wanted someone he could rely on and Alken's son had proved himself if not as talented as his father then not far behind. With Alken working on the horses, Sala was commissioned to illustrate the carriages and figures. The finished product was of excellent quality; particularly striking was the contrast between the sable Pursuivants at Arms and the stunningly bright blues and greens of the Sheriffs of London. Alken's horses of the 17th Lancers and the 13th Light Dragoons are impressive, as is Sala's wonderful etching of the magnificent funeral car. Great attention was paid to ensure that the uniforms were exactly represented and the actual uniforms were supplied to the artists for this purpose. In keeping with the new style of illustration, and of course the seriousness of the subject matter, the commission allowed no room for caricature and the only textual accompaniment was strictly factual rather than facetious, outlining as it did the various members of the procession.

The finished panorama extended to sixty-six feet and its eventual price, the expensive sum of two guineas, reflected its wealthy target audience. When the panorama was completed Sala, 'utterly worn out with hard work', retired for a holiday

¹⁶⁰ Noakes (1952) p. 5

to Paris. While there he realised he was suffering from more than just fatigue. The physical processes required to execute the panorama had nearly rendered Sala blind; ‘The fumes of the acids used in biting-in the plates, and the glare of the bright metal itself, when the varnish was removed, had played, as I feared, almost irreparable havoc with my only valid optic; and for the second time in my life, I was within measurable distance of blindness.’¹⁶¹ The irony is that what was probably his best work as an artist was to also be the last commissioned work of his visual career. His brush with blindness was a warning, and he describes in his autobiography how ‘I never touched an etching needle or a graver again.’¹⁶² In a letter to W.J. Thomas on 8 January 1879 Sala described how ‘half blinded by the glare of the steel plates and the fumes of the acids used in biting in an enormous panoramic representation of the Duke of Wellington, I definitely abandoned art, and “took” to literature.’¹⁶³ The visual career was to all intents and purposes over and the verbal would from now on take precedence.

Visual Influences

Reflecting on Sala’s visual career we can trace his greatest artistic influence in a line he wrote for *The Book of the Symposium*. The line reads; ‘Soyer, like the great Hogarth, who could “Through the eye correct the heart” has, through “the eye”, appealed to the digestive organs of his visitors.’ (10) One of the striking elements of Hogarth’s visual art, his ability to engage his audience through the ‘eye’, is its indebtedness to the textual. The narrative qualities of Hogarth’s art led Charles Lamb to famously liken observing Hogarth’s art to reading books: ‘His graphic

¹⁶¹ Sala (1895) p. 313

¹⁶² *ibid.* p. 313

¹⁶³ Letter from Sala to W.J. Thomas 8 Jan 1879 Box 6 Beinecke Library

representations are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of words. Other Pictures we look at – his Prints we read.’¹⁶⁴ Because of these narrative qualities Mark Hallett believes that ‘Hogarth’s oeuvre surreptitiously promoted the aesthetic and social parity of text and image.’¹⁶⁵ Hogarth’s ushering in of a new acceptance for the visual would pave the way for illustrators and caricaturists like William Blake, Thomas Bewick, James Gilray, Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank. We can observe in Cruikshank’s early caricatures and his later narrative moral satires a direct line from Hogarth’s work. It was only with the advent of photography and the belief in improvement over sensation that the textual would come to dominate the visual. Gerard Curtis makes the point that ‘the rise of photography spelled the end, for with it the engraver slipped from implied artist to popular illustrator of mass-market imagery.’¹⁶⁶ Dickens’s attempts to install Cruikshank into the Royal Academy, and thus consider line engraving as an art, ultimately failed and the caricaturists and engravers never received the recognition their talents undoubtedly deserved. John Ruskin’s *Ariadne Florentina* (1876) ensured that engraving in the nineteenth century would always be looked down upon because of its contribution to what Ruskin described as the ‘industrialisation of art’. Not content with criticising the pre-1850s style of engraving as encapsulated by George Cattermole in Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), Ruskin denigrates George Du Maurier’s work for *Punch* and *Cornhill* magazine. In particular Ruskin derides the landscape of a Du Maurier illustration likening it to ‘one mass of idiotic scrabble, without the remotest attempt to express a single leaf, flower, or clod of earth.’ He goes on to suggest that ‘it is such landscape as the public sees out of its railroad

¹⁶⁴ Charles Lamb, ‘Essay On The Genius and Character of Hogarth’, reprinted in John Nichols and George Steevens, *The Genuine Works of William Hogarth* (London, 1817) p. 58

¹⁶⁵ Mark Hallett, Christine Riding (eds.) *Hogarth* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006) p. 28

¹⁶⁶ Curtis (1995) p. 35

window at sixty miles of it in the hour – and good enough for such a public.’¹⁶⁷ For Ruskin engraving is too democratic an art form, it favours the general public rather than the elite cognoscenti of art critics, and therefore can never be given the appreciation due to more elevated artistic forms.

In his subsequent textual career Sala wrote with more passion and substance about Hogarth and Cruikshank than any other artistic figures. His collection of nine essays for Thackeray’s *Cornhill* magazine were published in book form as simply *William Hogarth* six years later in 1866. Although written long after his own visual career ended, there is evidence throughout of the high esteem Sala held for Hogarth’s work, and of Sala’s identification with Hogarth in many aspects of his personal life. Indeed we can go so far as to suggest that Sala’s attempt to identify himself with the acknowledged master of engraving is an endeavour to justify his own involvement in the illustrative world prior to his journalistic career, and to reinstate engraving as a respectable and serious art form.

Sala begins his essays on Hogarth by aligning his style of historical writing with that of Macaulay and Carlyle. What he means is that he will be respectful to attention and detail when describing the time that Hogarth lived in and indeed the man himself; that is his personal qualities. Biographically, Sala’s influences were Bosworth’s *Life Of Johnson* and Samuel Pepys’s diaries (which although strictly autobiographical Sala likened to biography) because of the investment in personal detail both authors provide. Sala described Pepys as being ‘so minute, so lifelike, that between his word-

¹⁶⁷ John Ruskin, ‘Notes on the Present State of Engraving in England’ in *Ariadne Florentina* (1876), reprinted in King and Plunkett (2005) p. 400

paintings, and those of the *Spectator*, there seems a great black blank.’¹⁶⁸ But they were also great writers of the metropolis and Sala felt that Bosworth and Pepys ‘are full of those little scraps and fragments of minute cross-hatching...histories of joyous carouses, anecdotes of men and women’s meannesses and generousities and the like.’¹⁶⁹ The ‘cross-hatching’ displays Sala’s debt to his own early career as an engraver and establishes his credentials to undertake a life of Hogarth.

Writing this in 1860, Sala had by then become fully aware from his apprenticeship on the staff of Dickens’s *Household Words*, (of which more in the next two chapters), that his middle-class family audience, in this instance that of Thackeray’s *Cornhill* magazine, would prefer light gossip and sensational details about Hogarth’s life than in-depth critical analysis of Hogarth’s art. Indeed the first piece of criticism in Sala’s book comes on page 95 when describing *The South Sea, an Allegory*. Sala writes; ‘the allegory is laboured, but there is a humorous element diffused throughout the work. The comparatively mechanical nature of the pursuits from which Hogarth was but just emancipated shows itself in the careful drawing of the architecture and the comparative insignificance of the figures.’¹⁷⁰ Sala likens the South Sea catastrophe with the railway mania he had depicted so comically in his first published story. Hogarth’s humour is an essential element for Sala, as is Hogarth’s ability to emancipate himself from the ‘mechanical nature’ of his apprentice work, and parallels can be drawn here with Sala’s early constricting work for the railways as a lithographer, and his subsequent attempts to transcend the mechanical art of journalism through novel-writing. When describing the plate *The Enraged Musician*, Sala is careful not to offend his target audience and fails to mention one of the most

¹⁶⁸ G.A. Sala, *Hogarth* (London: Ward & Lock Reprints, 1970) p. 72

¹⁶⁹ *ibid* p. 5

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 95

significant parts of that engraving, the little boy urinating against the wall of the musician's house.¹⁷¹ Similarly, when coming to Plate Three of *The Rake's Progress* entitled 'Orgy', Sala shows his awareness of his audience; 'I can't tell all the things that are on the tip of my tongue...I can't tell them, at least, on *Cornhill*. There is reverence due to young readers.'¹⁷²

Sala would devote more time in describing Hogarth's 'Grand Tour' than on criticising his art. This was the famous romp from London to Sheerness accompanied by four of Hogarth's friends Tothall, Thornhill, Forrest and Scott. Sala appreciated this display of what Thackeray somewhat demeaningly termed 'a jolly party of tradesmen engaged at high jinks.'¹⁷³ In fact the 'tradesmen' slur is actually appreciated by Sala who has the bourgeois pride in his profession that he feels Hogarth must also have possessed. Indeed Sala expends a great amount of effort throughout the book detailing the exact financial remuneration Hogarth received for his works and expanding on the fact that he was the first artist to secure copyright for his work. Hogarth depicts the virtues of bourgeois hard work most obviously in his series *Idleness and Industry*. There are other similarities between Sala and Hogarth. Sala appreciates the fact that Hogarth, 'never attempted to conceal the smallness of his beginnings', and while Sala too comes from lowly origins in his later public life he would try and distance himself from them.¹⁷⁴ But Sala also appreciates Hogarth's ability to entertain and befriend the aristocracy, something he would also aspire to in

¹⁷¹ Thomas Bewick also produced engravings showing men relieving themselves against hedges, but his was a rural depiction of scatological humour whereas Hogarth's was always an urban topography. Jenny Uglow relates how 'Ruskin lamented that he [Bewick] shared 'the fixed love of ugliness which is in the English soul', also to be found in Hogarth and Cruikshank, making their work 'totally unfit for the sight of children.' Jenny Uglow, *Nature's Engraver: A Life of Thomas Bewick* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006) p. 314

¹⁷² Sala (1970) p. 204

¹⁷³ W.M. Thackeray, *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1935) p. 124

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 73

this latter part of his life. Sala admires Hogarth's anti-French sentiments, particularly in the plate *The Gate of Calais* in which the French are depicted as lean and ragged while the cheerful and plump English friar at the centre of the picture carries a massive piece of good old hearty British beef. Given the fact that one of the most well received of Sala's books, *Paris Herself Again 1878-9*, is a paean to the beauty and elegance of the French capital, there is a certain amount of irony here. As we have seen, Sala was able to adopt anti-French sentiment when it suited, but like Dickens, he adored Paris and after the streets of London was more at home there than anywhere else. But it was because Hogarth was first and foremost an artist of London, committed to 'exposing the folly and vice of its inhabitants' that Sala could so readily identify with him.¹⁷⁵ Hogarth's first-hand knowledge of London's geography means that 'his vision is bustling and dynamic, and sometimes grubby, confrontational and dangerous; the street is a truly 'public' space through which people meander and jostle.'¹⁷⁶ It is this unsanitised and inelegant depiction of London that writers like Dickens and Sala were most interested in and influenced by. It is no surprise that Sala lingers over Hogarth's *Four Parts of the Day*, in which the viewer is taken on a tour of Covent Garden, Soho, Islington and Charing Cross. Sala would imitate the concept and the subject in his own travail around London as described in his book *Twice Round The Clock*, published a year before these essays in 1859.

Cruikshank shared many of the qualities Sala admired in Hogarth, and in his posthumous reappraisal of Cruikshank Sala wrote that 'there is a wonderful wealth of technical detail in George's etching, which is, to my mind, in its every detail

¹⁷⁵ Christine Riding, 'Street Life' in Hallett and Riding (2006) p. 119

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 119

essentially Hogarthian.’¹⁷⁷ Sala would also obsessively detail the sums of money Cruikshank earned from his engravings; ‘I have heard that for an illustrative etching on a plate octavo size he never received more than £25, and had been paid as low as £10.’¹⁷⁸ As with Hogarth, Sala was most impressed by the fact that Cruikshank was ‘a walking Directory in low-life London’, and that he knew London and London life ‘better than the majority of Sunday-school children know their Catechism.’¹⁷⁹ Frederick Wedmore, writing in *Temple Bar* (the periodical that Sala edited from 1860-63) in April 1878, regarded Cruikshank’s work for Dickens’s *Sketches By Boz* as being ‘perhaps the best of all in Cruikshank as proof of that sensitive eye for what is picturesque and characteristic in every-day London.’¹⁸⁰ Indeed it was exactly these kinds of critical plaudits that Sala would be receiving for his own writing later on in his journalistic career. The *Irish Times*, reviewing Sala’s 1894 work, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known*, comments on how ‘the volumes present us with a gallery of portraits sketched with a cunning touch, with all the skill of a literary Cruikshank.’¹⁸¹ Sala’s background in the visual arts enabled him to renegotiate the skills learned in that environment and transfer them to his writing.

There was one other contemporary artist who owed a debt to Hogarth, Cruikshank and even Sala, and who had the creative ability to blur the distinctions between the visual and the verbal. This was W.P. Frith whom Sala described as ‘the painter of the most graphic scenes of English social life which we have had since the days of

¹⁷⁷ Sala (1871) p. 550

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 562

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* p. 551

¹⁸⁰ cited in Frederic G. Kitton, *Dickens and his Illustrators* (London: George Redway, 1899) p. 7

¹⁸¹ G.A. Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* (London: Cassell & Co., 1894) advertising section in endpapers

Hogarth.’¹⁸² Contemporaries also compared Frith to Dickens because, like Hogarth, his visual work contained ‘readable’ narratives. Despite having founded the group of artists known as ‘The Clique’, whose populist and democratic principles meant a commitment to genre painting over historical painting, in 1850 Frith displayed his debt to Hogarth by working on a historical representation of his arrest in France. This eventually appeared as *Hogarth Before the Governor of Calais* in 1852. But while this piece was in progress, during the summer of 1851, Frith began work on the first of his defining representations of mid-Victorian contemporary life and costume, *Ramsgate Sands* (1852-4) (see fig. 8)



Fig. 8 W.P. Frith *Ramsgate Sands* (1852-4)

¹⁸² Sala (1895) Vol. 2 p. 27

His decision to take this leap into modernity may have been inadvertently influenced by Sala as well as Hogarth. (It wasn't until 1854 and Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* that any of the Pre-Raphaelites began experimenting with studies of contemporary life) In that same summer Frith, along with six million others, visited the Great Exhibition. He also spent some time at Gore House and was pleasantly surprised at the quality of the murals to be found there. Frith relates that 'it was as if some clever scene-painter had been turned into the rooms, passages, and staircases, and told to do just what he pleased with all of them... The whole thing was original, bizarre, and magnificent.'¹⁸³ No doubt enthused by the milieu of the Exhibition which Meisel describes as providing, 'a glamour to contemporaneity'¹⁸⁴, Sala's representations of contemporary celebrities in modern-day attire on the staircase may have been the spur Frith needed to forge ahead with his vision of a 'large meaningful pattern' for the portrayal of modern life.¹⁸⁵ In his autobiography Frith relates how he asked a waiter at Gore House who had produced these murals and was told that it was George Augustus Sala. Frith then says, 'Since then I have seen sufficient evidence of Mr. Sala's prowess as a draughtsman to convince me that if he had devoted himself to art instead of to literature he would have scored a success equal to that he has secured in letters.'¹⁸⁶ This is high praise for Sala's visual talents and is evidence enough of his ability to negotiate both verbal and visual forms.

After the success of *Ramsgate Sands*, Frith produced the hugely popular *Derby Day* 1858 and *The Railway Station* 1862. Christine Riding believes that it was 'Hogarth's

¹⁸³ W.P. Frith, *A Victorian Canvas; The Memoirs of W.P. Frith, R.A.* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1957) p. 213

¹⁸⁴ Meisel (1983) p. 375

¹⁸⁵ Tim Dolin, 'Collins's Career and the Visual Arts', in Jenny Bourne Taylor (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 9

¹⁸⁶ Frith (1957) p. 213

ability to capture the throb of the city's streets and the diversity of its occupants within complex, multi-focal compositions that was the starting point for a number of pictorial panoramas of nineteenth century society, including David Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Waterloo Dispatch* 1822 and William Powell Frith's *Derby Day* 1858.¹⁸⁷ Frith's talent lay in his realisation not only of the importance of the modern in the photographic elements to his paintings, but also of the continuing desire for a narrative quality to painting. Frith realised the debt he owed to the earlier graphic artists. In his autobiography Frith says of Cruikshank that 'his wonderful series of designs called 'The Bottle', and his picture in the National Gallery called 'The Worship of Bacchus', are sufficient proofs of his advocacy.'¹⁸⁸ In 1881 Frith repaid Sala for his friendship and influence by installing him in his painting entitled *The Private View of the Royal Academy 1881* (1883) (see fig. 9)

¹⁸⁷ Christine Riding, 'Introducing Hogarth: Past and Present' in Hallett and Riding (2006) p. 33

¹⁸⁸ W.P. Frith, *My Autobiography and Reminiscences* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888) pp. 147-8



Fig. 9 W.P. Frith - *The Private View of the Royal Academy 1881* (1883)

The picture illustrates a youthful and vibrant Oscar Wilde, surrounded by enraptured devotees as he delivers the last rites to the genre and narrative art movement and expounds on aestheticism and the doctrine of art for art's sake. Although an attempt by Frith to satirise Wilde it is Frith's cronies, of whom Sala is among the most prominent in his by then trademark white waistcoat, who suffer by comparison. With their glowering demeanours and their bemusement at Wilde's outpourings they are ironically demonstrating their inability to keep abreast of modern artistic theories.

Being blinded in childhood and then recovering his sight inculcated in Sala a pursuit of the visual. Influenced by Hogarth and Cruikshank and the burgeoning pictorial press he set about developing a caricatural style of his own. When this style

fell out of favour he reverted back to the other medium he had been practising, the literary. His influences in literature, just as in art, possessed the ability to delineate the extremes of the metropolis. Writers like Charles Lamb, William Thackeray and Charles Dickens were able through the verbal to visualise London, to make it their own and to solve its many and varied problems. In the next stage of his professional career Sala set about capturing this style in his own writing using the background in the visual arts to help him. Sala's writing was described as 'word-painting'¹⁸⁹ while Frith's painting was termed 'pictorial journalism.'¹⁹⁰ Commenting on Sala's journalistic style, Catherine Waters believes that 'It was a form of "word-painting" cultivated to represent unseen people and events long before the advent of photojournalism, and it blurred the boundaries between literature and journalism at a time when these discourses were in the process of professional and disciplinary formation.'¹⁹¹

In this chapter I have tried to show that Sala's battle between pen and pencil brought about this synthesis of form, allowing him to blur the distinctions between the visual and the verbal. It was this background in illustration and the visual that would lead him to become a contributor to another of the most important illustrated newspapers of the 1850s, the *Illustrated Times*, a twopenny weekly newspaper founded by David Bogue in 1855 and initially edited by Henry Vizetelly. The newspaper published Sala's first novel, *The Baddington Peerage* in 1857, and Edmund Yates, Sala's friend and fellow journalist, began his series 'Lounger At The Clubs' in the fourth number. Yates's set of articles 'initiated a new style of 'personal' journalism that would be highly influential on the New Journalism later in the

¹⁸⁹ Wallis (1997) p. 215

¹⁹⁰ *ibid* p. 13

¹⁹¹ Waters (2009) p. 319

century.¹⁹² Sala's initiation as a novelist came after honing his imaginative and realist tendencies as a contributor for Dickens's *Household Words*, the subject of the next two chapters. His qualities as a novelist 'connect parenthetically to the New Journalism' because as Joel Wiener has noted, 'one of the basic objectives of W.T. Stead, T.P. O'Connor, and other pressmen of the 1880s and 1890s was to tell a good story clearly and well.'¹⁹³ Stead in particular emphasized the importance of the narrative element in journalism. He wanted to 'strike the reader right between the eyes' and wrote that the press is 'at once the eye and the tongue of the people.'¹⁹⁴ The next stage in Sala's career was spent harnessing the 'eye and the tongue' and setting him on course to become the 'beau-ideal' of a journalist and the painter of modern life.

¹⁹² Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds) 'Illustrated Times 1855-1872' in *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism* (London: British Library, 2009) p. 304

¹⁹³ Joel Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?' in Joel Wiener (ed) *Papers For the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 64

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* p. 65

2. Tales of Two Cities: Part 1 - London

Charles Dickens's weekly periodical, *Household Words*, first appeared on Saturday March 30 1850. Dickens's project would embrace what Sally Ledger describes as the 'commercial, cultural and political.'¹ Dickens was determined that his magazine would straddle the middle ground between the sensationalism of Edward Lloyd's *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and G.W.M. Reynolds's *Reynolds's Miscellany*, and the drab, factual inclination of William Chambers's *Chambers's Journal* (1832-1956). Crucial to all of the journalism in *Household Words* was the idea that there would be no 'iron binding of the mind to grim realities...[but it will] cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast.'² Articles would have to amuse and stir the imagination as well as inform and as Ann Lohrli has noted 'discussion of the driest subjects was to be invested with some degree of fancy and imagination.'³ The use of literary allusions and fantastical imagery was encouraged alongside informative material dealing with everyday subjects in an effort to 'traverse high and low cultural boundaries in the production of a properly 'popular' literature.'⁴ Dickens was carefully constructing a magazine that would be accessible to not only the lower-middle and working classes, but also to the middle-class reading public who were attracted to the Dickens brand (the Conductor's name was clearly visible at the head of each edition).

¹ Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 168

² Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word' *HW* March 30 1850

³ Ann Lohrli *Household Words: A Weekly Journal 1850-1859* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973) p. 9

⁴ Ledger (2007) p. 173

Politically, Dickens was horrified by the violently radical nature of Reynolds's politics and took his inspiration from *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine* (1845-48) and *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* (1846-48). Dickens and Jerrold had been close friends since 1836 and according to Michael Slater were 'in...profound sympathy in their social and political outlook.'⁵ Dickens greatly admired Jerrold's writing, particularly his scathing articles in *Punch* under the pseudonym 'Q' and novels like *The Story Of A Feather* (1843) and *The History of St. Giles and St. James* (1845), in which imaginative storytelling is combined with biting social satire. Dickens shared his friend's belief that poverty, and the state's neglect of this condition, inevitably led to a criminalisation of the poor. *Household Words* would always, in Anne Lohrli's words, 'espouse the cause of the poor and the working classes.'⁶ Sala was also a keen student of Jerrold's works, and on the eve of his departure for Russia in 1856 as Special Correspondent for Dickens's magazine, Jerrold gave him this advice, 'study everybody and don't imitate anybody.'⁷ Although Sala would come to be known as a slavish imitator of Dickens, articles appearing in *Household Words* were always subject to the scrutiny of Dickens and his sub-editor W.H. Wills and were often modified in order to appear more 'Dickensy'. Jerrold had famously refused to contribute to *Household Words* because of his belief that it was a 'mononymous production.'⁸ All articles were anonymous and only Dickens's name appeared on the front. *Household Words* would continue the tradition of protest Jerrold had helped develop.

⁵ Michael Slater, *Douglas Jerrold 1803-1857* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2002) p. 112

⁶ Lohrli (1973) p. 4

⁷ Slater (2002) p. 189

⁸ cited in *Dickens Journalism Volume 3: 'Gone Astray' and Other Papers from Household Words*, ed. Michael Slater, (Columbus: Ohio Univ. Press, 1999), xi.

As we have seen in the first chapter, Sala had been acquainted with Dickens through his mother from an early age. Their next meeting would be a momentous moment for both men. It would be the catalyst for Sala's career as a professional journalist and Dickens would discover a writer who could fulfill all of the necessary requirements he demanded from his contributors.

The Key Of The Street

Sala's description of a night in August 1851 would lead to him proffering an article to Dickens in which he reminded him that he had known him as a boy. P.D. Edwards believed that, 'it was characteristic of Sala to aim straight for the top, and of Dickens to respect a young man for doing so.'⁹ Anne Lohrli contrasts the way Sala used his old association with Dickens as a means of seeking employment with another contributor, Adelaide Anne Proctor, who 'tactfully submitted hers under a pseudonym.'¹⁰ In fact, Proctor allowed her poems to be published for almost two years before Dickens discovered that she was the daughter of his friend Bryan Waller Proctor. But Sala's paper was accepted not because of his old connection with Dickens but on its literary merit.

Sala's article, entitled 'The Key Of The Street' was duly read and accepted by Dickens and Sala was astonished to receive only hours after the despatch of the manuscript not only a congratulatory letter but also remuneration in the form of five pounds. Sala would have been even more astonished had he known that this article would lead to his rejection of the visual for the verbal, and an association with

⁹ P. D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 9

¹⁰ Lohrli (1973) p. 27

Dickens's weekly publication that would last for the next five and a half years, during which time he would contribute 160 articles. Of the 375 writers who contributed to *Household Words*, only Henry Morley wrote more articles than Sala. By far the most important aspect of Sala's articles were his reflections on the two metropolises that were to become associated with the modern experience; London and Paris, the City of Darkness and the City of Light. As with many nineteenth-century writers and artists, Sala came to associate Paris with a bohemian idyll, with a radical artistic community who were free of the moral restraint and class rigidity to be found in London. London was the city of paradox: the immense city where the population seemed to be expanding uncontrollably. The city where labour never rested and the acknowledged financial capital of the world, evident in the relentless tide of ships swarming into its newly built docks and the growth of the City as the centre of global finance capitalism. But London was also becoming 'a hell of starving, degrading and heart-rending poverty', where the growing divide between the classes was becoming more intolerable to a civilised society.¹¹ Those writing about the metropolis in the 1840s and 1850s were forced to acquire a sense of class-consciousness noticeably lacking from the 'city as spectacle' literature of the 1820s and 1830s. Dickens would become synonymous with this effort to document the inconsistencies and incongruities he witnessed on the streets of the capital. But for Sala and a growing band of non-university, non-establishment young men who associated themselves with the dissipation and bohemianism of Parisian artists and writers, and who were beginning their careers in the journalistic profession, poverty was to be an actual lived and personal experience and their writings reflect this sympathy with the working classes. The story of Sala and the two capital cities is the story of his personal relationship

¹¹ Jerry White, *London In The Nineteenth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007) p. 3

with London - which he knows intimately, both in its literature, its history, and through personal experience - and Paris, which would become a site for indigence, dissipation, experimentation and utopia. London for Sala is a mystery, a modern urban experience that needs fathoming. Paris is a delicious diversion, a balm for the weary flaneur. Building on his experiences as a visual artist, Sala would endeavour to paint in word-pictures what Charles Baudelaire called 'the vast picture gallery which is London or Paris.'¹² This centrality of the visual aspect of urban experience was claimed by the urban sociologist George Simmel who stated that 'interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear.'¹³ Over the next seven years Sala would strive to visualise and represent the two great metropolises of the nineteenth century with the eye, and delineate them with the pen.

On that night in August 1851 Sala inadvertently locked himself out of his flat and was forced to traverse the streets of London all night with ninepence in his pocket. He only found shelter at seven o'clock the following morning. The resulting article he wrote from this experience is constructed around the author's inability to find a place to sleep and the subsequent social commentary this entails. The article is reminiscent of Dickens's 'The Streets – Night' episode in *Sketches by Boz* (1837), but with less theatricality than Dickens's piece, which ends abruptly at three o'clock in the morning with the phrase 'we make our bow and drop the curtain.'¹⁴ What immediately strikes the reader is Sala's knowledge of the intended readership of *Household Words*. This is coupled with an instinctive knowledge of Dickens's request that his contributors

¹² cited in Grahame Smith, *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) p. 64

¹³ cited in *ibid.* p. 64

¹⁴ Michael Slater, (ed) *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens's Journalism* Vol 1 (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1994) p. 60

speak to their readers in a personal tone. Sala asks these readers to, ‘Come with me, luxuriant tenant of heavy-draped four-poster...Come with me, comfortable civic bolster-presser – snug woollen nightcap wearer. Come with me, even workman, labourer, peasant-sleeper on narrow pallet – though your mattress be hard and your rug coarse.’¹⁵ Sala is able to distinguish the different classes the editor is aiming his readership at, and he makes the point in the article that all of their lots are infinitely preferable to those who must sleep rough. The personal address comforts the reader and artificially constructs a sense of intimacy and trust between him and the writer.

When pondering where he is to sleep the author paradoxically infuses his prose with the high literary style in contrast to the meanness of his surroundings, ‘Cudgel thyself, weary Brain, - exhaust thyself, Invention, - torture thyself, Ingenuity – all, and in vain, for the miserable acquisition of six feet of mattress and a blanket!’(3)¹⁶ Dickens’s only criticism of ‘The Key of The Street’, that it lacked the fancy and imagination he craved, means that he may have inserted passages like these himself. Sala’s realistic account of London has no space for flights of the imagination, but he would soon learn how to incorporate this aspect into his future contributions. In every other respect, Sala’s first article perfectly suited the *Household Words* project. It was more realistic than Dickens’s essay in *Sketches by Boz*. Sala is not afraid to highlight the prostitutes, the ‘flitting shadows that seemed to be of women’ that he meets, and he even relates how he is taken for a tramp as the night progresses and has a penny

¹⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘The Key Of The Street’ *HW* III, Sept. 6 1851 in G.A. Sala, *Gaslight and Daylight* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1859) pp. 1-2 all subsequent citations from this edition

¹⁶ P. D. Edwards, who is highly critical of the article describing it as ‘wearisomely wordy, its rhetoric both insistent and wooden’, cites this quotation as an example of Sala’s ‘hackneyed apostrophes.’ Edwards’s intention, which is to debunk Sala’s ability as a writer as a repost to the admittedly biased appreciation given to it by Ralph Straus, means that he fails to appreciate that the article subscribes to just about everything demanded of it by the editor. Edwards (1997) p. 13

thrown at him. (8) Not only does Sala highlight in graphic detail the plight of the poor and homeless in the nation's capital - he is particularly graphic when describing the proliferation of bugs even in a fourpence a night lodging house - and provide topographic details of the city, he also brings scorn upon the aristocracy who are portrayed as being in a state of debauchery while 'out on the spree'. In a casual aside to the reader Sala describes what will probably happen to these 'gentlemen';

Some day, when their health and their money are gone – when they have sued on all their bills, and by all the tradesmen they have plundered – they will be discharged from their situations, or be discarded by their friends. Then they will subside into Whitecross Street and the Insolvent Debtors' Court – and then, God knows! They will die miserably, I suppose: of delirium tremens, maybe. (11)

The mention of Whitecross Street points to Sala's fascination with the fragility of modern life, and attacking the aristocracy was always to be an intrinsic element in Dickens's magazine. Built in 1813-15 as a prison for debtors Whitecross St. held 500 prisoners before being demolished in 1870. It stood on the site where the Barbican now stands.¹⁷ Like Thomas Carlyle, Dickens believed there could be a limited role in society for the aristocracy, but only if that role was to utilise their wealth and education for the benefit of the rest of the populace. The fruitless debauchery described by Sala reinforces Dickens's distaste of the aristocracy's profligacy and the subsequent lack of moral and spiritual guidance this behaviour provides to the rest of

¹⁷ Christopher Weiner and Christopher Hibbert (eds) *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 1983) p. 985 Ironically it was also the prison that Sala would briefly be incarcerated in for debt in Dec. 1858 For more on this see Ch. 4

the nation. Ironically, it was precisely this kind of dissipated behaviour that Sala would be indulging in later in the decade, to the disgust and detestation of Dickens.

By inverting the class status of the writer from that of comfortable middle-class urban spectator to homeless beggar, Sala becomes one of the first social investigators of the nineteenth century. In terms of fiction, Deborah Nord has noted how Charles Egremont, the 'aristocratic, restless younger son in Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845)' disguised himself as a journalist to discover more about the lower half of the 'Two Nations'.¹⁸ But Sala goes to further extremes and his motives and methods would be repeated later in the century by men like James Greenwood, George Sims, Charles Booth and Jack London, who would all be prepared to disguise themselves in order to 'unmask conditions of poverty.'¹⁹ Sala's night-walking differs from these social investigators, however, because it is intrinsically linked to the culture of bohemia, a culture that Sala would increasingly align himself with as the decade progressed. Nord describes this link with bohemia as being 'the exhilaration of disconnection and anonymity.'²⁰ Walter Benjamin goes further and attributes this feeling to being 'at the margin of the great city as of the bourgeois class'²¹ and Charles Baudelaire described how the 'perfect flaneur' wished to see the world, 'to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world.'²² To feel oneself outside of middle-class morality and outside of society's structures and laws must have been liberating for Sala. His night-walking enabled him for the first time to be free from the constricting forces of bourgeois London society. It also allowed him to shed his vision of the city

¹⁸ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995) p. 239

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 239

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 2

²¹ cited in *ibid.* p. 2

²² Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 2003) p. 9

as a mere spectacle, a technique he had used in his panoramas, and to take part in the growing consciousness of what Deborah Nord describes as ‘the web of social connection that was dominating urban description.’²³ For the writers of the 1850s it was no longer sufficient to represent the city in a theatrical manner, as mere spectacle. The growing awareness of the problems London faced were based on a realisation that these problems would not just affect one particular class, but would affect all strata of society, from the low to the high. Participating in a constantly recurring issue in metropolitan writing, to ascertain to what degree the city can be a knowable community, Sala travels to the margins of the city and encounters places and people that can barely be recognised as being part of the same society. When Sala leaves the employ of Dickens and writes under the editorship of Henry Vizetelly it is interesting to note in his *Twice Round the Clock* articles for *The Welcome Guest* that he stresses the superiority of London to other cities, and concentrates on the public and social spaces, whereas for Dickens he had written from a position of solitude and had avoided sociality.²⁴

Sala’s bohemian inclinations would come to the fore in his Parisian reportage, in the city that Henri Murger suggests can only be the true site of bohemian life. As we shall see in the next chapter, the conditions for the rise of a coterie of bohemians were far riper in Paris than in London. London had no significant student population, no political uprising of the 1848 Paris variety, and less cohesion between the different artistic mediums. Sala’s bohemian alliances in London were mainly literary, writers like Robert Brough and Mortimer Collins, who would also contribute to Dickens’s periodical. Although they were not political animals, unlike their French bohemian

²³ *ibid.* p. 12

²⁴ For more on this see Jeremy Tambling, *Going Astray: Dickens and London* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2009) p. 220-222

counterparts, they were concerned with highlighting the poor both as a means to shock the hated ‘bourgeoisie’ and because they often found themselves living in squalor and poverty. But in his London writing we can sense Sala’s growing natural affinity for those living on the margins of society, and this can be directly attributable to his burgeoning bohemian inclinations.

Sala’s ‘The Key Of The Street’ forced his readership to confront the misery and poverty that surrounded them. At one point in the article Sala becomes visibly nervous and apprehensive at the sound of the police; ‘I don’t know why, but I begin to be afraid of policemen. I never transgressed the law – yet I avoid the ‘force’. The sound of their heavy boot-heels disquiets me. One of them stands at the door of Messrs. Swan and Edgar’s, and to avoid him I actually abandon a resolution I had formed of walking up Regents Street, and turn down the Haymarket instead.’ (10) This is a symbolic retreat from respectability to a more bohemian way of life, as Sala spurns the district symbolising bourgeois materiality and heads instead for the seedy and illicit pleasures of the Haymarket. Sala’s retreat from this respectability is foreshadowed in this particular piece of writing. It is reportage of a very realistic nature, for realism is forged on an urgency to interpret one’s surroundings. The new urban mode of life necessitated such urgency. According to Peter Brooks, ‘realism is nothing if not urban: it is most characteristically about the city in some important way, as the new total context of modern life.’²⁵ For Sala it is only by representing the reality of the streets of London, including its dark and low side, that a writer can really portray a city and understand the complexities of modern urban life. But for Sala the personal writer it is also a powerful moment of personal appreciation for the

²⁵ Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 131

dread that homeless people must feel at the oncoming approach of the law. It is particularly poignant appearing as it does in the pages of a respectable periodical appealing to decent, law-abiding citizens who would have felt an affinity for most of the moral values the police represented.

The title of the article affirms the desire for classification of the mysteries of London, if there is a key to unlock this mystery then it is not to be found in the comfortable middle-class milieu, but in the possession of the night walkers and stalkers and the low life of the metropolis. At this stage in his writing career it is clear that the extensive reading of newspapers and periodicals Sala undertook in the 1840s, allied with his devouring of Dickens's fiction and the already published numbers of *Household Words*, has enabled him to realise exactly what the editor demanded from his contributors. The personal aspect of the article, its detailing of an actual incident experienced by the writer, perfectly suited Dickens's desire in his contributors for an immediacy and innate knowledge of the streets of the capital. Dickens continued the tradition of 'night-walk fiction' nine years later and displayed the influence of Sala's article in 'Night Walks', published in *All The Year Round* on 21 July 1860. In Dickens's article it is insomnia rather than the loss of a latch-key that prompts his night walking, but his realistic perambulations among the houseless and dissipated and his eventual arrival at Covent Garden just as the market is opening are reminiscent of Sala's essay, as is the assumption that the reader is cosseted and warm at home while the author 'assumes the mantle of outsider and wanderer.'²⁶ Dickens inserts the imaginative qualities he desired from Sala in the oft-quoted passage at Westminster Abbey, where he imagines an immense army of the dead coming to life

²⁶ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 102

and surrounding the city. It is also possible to detect hints of Sala in the essay when Dickens describes how the ‘Dry Rot in men’ announce themselves by ‘a smell of strong waters, in the morning’ and ‘a looseness respecting money.’²⁷ As we shall see, it was precisely these bohemian tendencies of Sala’s that would lead to his estrangement from Dickens. But for now, at least, Sala had begun his journalistic education in earnest.

The Delineator of London

Deborah Wynne notes that in Dickens’s letters of 1851 he expresses a concern that the articles for *Household Words* were ‘wanting in elegance of fancy. They lapse into a dreary, arithmetical...dustyness that is powerfully depressing.’²⁸ No proponent of stasis, and generally in favour of progress, Dickens had little sympathy for the mood of self-satisfaction commonly expressed when the world’s first industrial fair (the Great Exhibition) opened in Hyde Park in May. What Dickens required was an injection of fresh, youthful and satirical style into the magazine. He turned to Sala who responded with his second article for *Household Words*, ‘The Foreign Invasion’ (*HW* 11 October 1851). Writing about the Exhibition after the dust had time to settle, Sala adopted a more playful mode, free from the intense nationalism the event had generated. He criticises himself and his fellow Britons for their self-congratulation and condescending attitude towards foreigners, evident even before the Exhibition had begun. Adopting a tone he had already used in his comic panoramas, Sala jokes about the tendency of Englishmen to view others in stereotypical terms. The French come

²⁷ Slater, Michael, (ed.) *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens’ Journalism*. 4 vols. (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1994-2000) Vol. 4 p. 153

²⁸ Deborah Wynne, ‘Responses to the 1851 Exhibition in *Household Words*’ in *The Dickensian* 2001 vol. 97/pt. 3 228-34

under familiar attack as ‘murdering, frog-eating, atheistical foreigners!’, while ‘Atheism, pantheism, polytheism, deism and Mahommedanism’ were seen to flourish, as foreigners take over London with ‘famine and slaughter; Popery, brass money and wooden shoes.’²⁹ His comical and satirical tone was precisely the style of writing Dickens required after the drab financial reporting of previous articles concerning the Great Exhibition. Sala was also repudiating the notion of the city (and the Exhibition) as merely a theatrical spectacle and was paving the way to viewing London as a city of immense problems. Dickens wrote to W.H. Wills detailing his thoughts on ‘The Foreign Invasion’, highly praising the article and suggesting the way forward for their newest contributor;

There is nobody about us whom we can use, in his way, more advantageously than this young man. It will be exceedingly desirable to set him on some subjects. I will endeavour to think of a few suited to him. Suggest to him Saturday night in London, or London Markets –Newport Market, Tottenham Court Rd., Whitechapel Rd...the New Cut, etc. etc. etc. I think he would make a capital paper out of it.³⁰

Dickens’s shrewd eye for literary style and content meant that, on the strength of only two submissions, he realised that he had found a writer who could take over his mantle as the delineator of London. Dickens’s articles on London for *Household*

²⁹ G.A. Sala, ‘The Foreign Invasion’ HW iv Oct. 11 1851 p. 60 For representations of Englishness in *Household Words*, see Clemm, Sabine ‘ “Amidst the Heterogeneous Masses”: Charles Dickens’s *Household Words* and the Great Exhibition of 1851” ’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 27 (2005), 207-30

³⁰ Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, Nina Burgis (eds) *The Letters of Charles Dickens* vol. 6 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) p. 497

Words thus far, articles like ‘Spitalfields’ (HW 5 April 1851), ‘On Duty With Inspector Field’ (HW 14 June 1851) and ‘A Walk In A Workhouse’ (HW 25 May 1850) had, along with Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1849), ushered in a new desire to classify and quantify a metropolis that seemed to be growing out of control to the detriment of a growing underclass. But whereas Mayhew perceived class as static and accepted it as ‘natural or a social given’, Dickens enforced the possibility that ‘the urban world is the site of moral self-making precisely because it brings people together across class and social lines.’³¹ Mayhew’s theatrical presentation of the poor, then, harked back in some ways to the ‘city as spectacle’ of the 1820s, in that he introduced the lower classes and gave them a voice but did not deliberate on what could be done to improve their lot. Dickens, along with Sala, was willing to believe that people could transcend the class they were born into just as they could descend from wealth to poverty, and both men were willing to inform their readers on how they thought this could be achieved. Sala is particularly interested in the fluidity of the classes, coming as we have seen from a background of poverty with occasional glimpses of the not entirely respectable theatrical world his mother operated in. This meant that he was accustomed to low life but had also mingled with members of the upper classes. This would help invest his essays on London with a broader and more realistic view of its concerns than many of his contemporaries.

According to Sala, Dickens’s advice on topics for London essays was immediately acted upon with the help of his brother, Charles Kerrison Sala, the actor. Sala modestly explained that his brother ‘rendered me yeoman’s service by suggesting and

³¹ Murray Baumgarten, ‘London, Dickens and the Theatre of Homelessness’ in Debra N. Mancoff and D.J. Trela, *Victorian Urban Settings* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996) p. 79

getting up themes on which to enlarge in *Household Words*. We used to take long journeys on foot or by cab or omnibus into the remote suburbs of the metropolis; we explored inlying and outlying slums.’³² The first literary fruit of these travels was an article entitled ‘Down Whitechapel Way’. (*HW* Nov. 1 1851) In the article we can detect Sala’s attempts to wed historical association with reality, and his inability at this stage to refrain from mere spectatorship. It begins with a spurious quote from Dr. Johnson, ‘Sir, said Samuel Johnson to the Scotch gentleman – sir, let us take a walk down Fleet Street.’³³ Sala invents the quotation to invoke the memory of the great lexicographer and to inform the reader that he is well read in the history of London. (Sala would use the quote again in 1860 as the header of a new shilling monthly magazine he was editing, *Temple Bar*.) Sala informs us of his new role as an urban stroller; ‘I love to take long walks, not only down Fleet Street, but up and down all other streets, alleys and lanes.’ (256) This urban role is encapsulated with Sala’s claim that he is ‘of the streets, streety’, a phrase borrowed from Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, ‘The first man is of the earth, earthy.’ (1 Corinthians 15:47) Perhaps Dickens appreciated Sala’s ironic appropriation of the biblical phrase and used it in *Little Dorrit* to illustrate how William Dorrit’s son was beginning to gain experience of the Marshalsea and its surrounds: ‘his son began to supersede Mrs. Bangham, and to execute commissions in a knowing manner, and to be of the prisons, prisonous and of the street, streety.’³⁴ It is a phrase we would think of as being quintessentially Dickensian and it is impossible to know whether Dickens inserted it into Sala’s essay or whether Sala first used it. What the use of this phrase does show, however, is how compatible the language and style of these two writers had become. It is also a phrase

³² G.A. Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* Vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Co., 1894) p. 71

³³ G.A. Sala, ‘Down Whitechapel Way’ *HW* iv Nov. 1 1851 in Sala (1859) p. 256 All subsequent references in parenthesis

³⁴ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (London: Caxton & Co. 1925) p. 50

that encapsulates the two men's preoccupations throughout the 1850s, delineating the urban metropolis.

As Sala perambulates across the capital on his way to Whitechapel he conjures up images of Charles I as he passes the Banqueting House and Nell Gwynne and the Earls of Craven when approaching Drury Lane. His approach is reminiscent of Leigh Hunt, who was apt to connect streets and houses with the eminent people who once resided there. In an essay written for the *Weekly True Sun* (Nov. 10 1833) Hunt dismissed the new buildings that had sprung up on the Grosvenor estate but says 'one redeeming thing, however, we know of this quarter; and that is, that Mozart lived there when he was in England.'³⁵ In his memoirs, published as *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known*, Sala recounts how influential Hunt was on his style; 'in journalism he was unconsciously one of my preceptors...but very few, I imagine, have waded, as I have done, through the columns of the first ten volumes of the *Examiner*, commencing in 1808; or have read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested nearly every one of the leading articles on political, literary, and social subjects, contributed by Leigh Hunt to the journal which, in conjunction with his brother John, he founded.'³⁶ (Sala's reading of the *Examiner* would also have influenced his political leanings, as it was one of the most influential Radical papers, and part of 'the long and unfinished battle for English democracy.'³⁷) We have already noted the influence of Pierce Egan and Charles Lamb, both of whom were nostalgic for an older, bygone London, on Sala's style. Lamb, in particular, depicts urban history very much as 'a

³⁵ Lawrence Huston Houtchens (ed.) *Leigh Hunt's Political and Occasional Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962) p. 306

³⁶ G.A. Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Co., 1894) pp. 91-2

³⁷ George Dumas Stout, *The Political History of Leigh Hunt's Examiner* (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1949) p. vii

personal memory', while Hunt 'delights in the public, collective history of the nation...and the great men who have inhabited London's neighbourhoods.'³⁸ Lamb's contemporary and friend, William Hazlitt, describes him as having, 'a distaste to new faces, to new books, to new buildings, to new customs.'³⁹

Deborah Nord has shown that Dickens, under the guise of Boz, was as interested in the present as the past and that, 'he savours the quotidian and the ordinary in ways that Hunt cannot.'⁴⁰ Nord believes that Boz's view of urban history is 'dynamic, more invested in the present than Hunt's, more welcoming of change than Lamb's.'⁴¹ But she recognises the importance of these writers to Dickens and realises that he is not averse to moments of nostalgia and regret for the passing of certain buildings and districts throughout his work. But, like Dickens, Sala realised that knowledge of historical fact does not necessarily detract from progress and modernity but can in fact help to define it. Sala is also aware that historical associations with the present serve to instil the air of fancy and imagination that Dickens desired from his contributors. Sala's view of London is constructed around all of these great metropolitan writers, along with the visual world of Hogarth and Cruikshank. But Sala would invest more of his own personality into his urban writing; he had a greater personal affiliation with poverty and would describe the squalor and dissipation of the poor in greater realism.

As Sala enters Whitechapel he asks his readers a rhetorical question; 'how many thousands of us have lived for years...in London – and have never been down the Whitechapel Road?' (257) Sala knows that his middle-class readership will probably

³⁸ Nord (1995) p. 56

³⁹ Hazlitt, William, *The Spirit Of The Age* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1922) p. 346

⁴⁰ Nord (1995) p. 57

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 57

have avoided Whitechapel because the impressions they have of it ‘refer vaguely to butchers, or, probably, to Jews, or possibly to thieves.’ (257) He then invites his readers in a personal and conspiratorial manner; ‘Those who care to know a little about what their neighbours in the Far East are doing this Saturday night, are very welcome to accompany me...’ (257) Sala is contributing here to the growing conception of the metropolis in a binary fashion, the West as prosperous and cultured and the East as dangerous and impoverished. (Douglas Jerrold had encapsulated this process with his novel of high and low life entitled *The History of St. James and St. Giles* 1845) The East End represented as the ‘Far East’ would become a staple of the language used to describe Whitechapel and its environs by late nineteenth-century urban chroniclers. William Booth’s *In Darkest England* (1890) appropriated the concerns of H.M. Stanley’s *In Darkest Africa* (1890), transposing them to London and asking whether the underclasses of the metropolis were not a more savage and uncivilised race than those living many thousands of miles away. This notion of the East End as being more impenetrable to the average middle-class Londoner than darkest Africa is one that is used repeatedly towards the end of the century as concerns about imperialism and the degeneration of Londoners progressed. Sala describes one of Whitechapel’s less fortunate citizens; ‘...spare a glance at that gaunt old man with the bristly beard and the red eyelids...his history is plain enough to read, and is printed in three letters on his face. G.I.N.’ (261) Sala does not condemn the man because of his alcoholism but leaves the reader to decide, after having described in detail the poverty that surrounds him, whether he is the victim of his own folly or a brutalised victim of his own environment. After describing graphically the gin-shops and penny gaffs that abound, Sala expresses the terrible reality of what he is witnessing and deems it too much for his readership; ‘it is so real. Ugh! Terribly real:

let us come away!’ (265) Sala echoes Dickens’s *Sketches By Boz* because, as Deborah Nord states, ‘the relationship between the middle-class reader and the urban underclass is never fully resolved...and at times Boz is at pains to isolate, to cordon off the disturbing realities of city life.’⁴² At this stage in his writing career Sala is looking back to the 1820s and 1830s, still viewing the metropolis and its citizens as a theatre and a spectacle, and still unable to offer any solutions to the poverty he witnesses.

Beyond Statistics

In an article entitled ‘Curiosities of London’ written for the June 23 1855 issue of *Household Words*, Sala, after a typically digressive preamble, asks whether the phrase *troppa scrittura* (too much writing) can be applied to London. Looking through the pages of a work written by John Timbs called *Curiosities of London* (1855), Sala speculates that too much may have already been written about the metropolis. As he muses on this point he conjectures that;

There is scarcely a writer at the present day, I believe,
connected with the periodical press, but who has written
picturesque, humorous or descriptive sketches upon the sights,
characters, and curiosities, moral and physical, of the Great
Metropolis, the Great Wen, the Modern Babylon, the World of

⁴² *ibid.* p. 50

London, the Giant City, the Monster Metropolis, the Nineveh of the nineteenth century, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I even think that desultory essays upon some London curiosities have from time to time found their way into this journal; and I am afraid I must myself plead guilty spontaneously to having from time to time had something to say in a garrulous, discursive, rambling, digressive, manner about the bricks and mortar, the men and women, the ups and downs, the Lords and Commons, of London.⁴³

Writing four years after 'The Key Of The Street', Sala steps back and reflects on how ubiquitous reportage on the metropolis has become. He details all the different aspects this writing takes before describing the immensity of the city using the standard adjectives of the time. The 'Great Wen' as William Cobbett described it because of its capacity to suck in people from surrounding areas. The 'Modern Babylon' because of London's similarities with the great Assyrian capital as the epicentre of 'a global commerce that was subjugating the rest of the world'.⁴⁴ (This also had unfortunate associations with the 'mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse' with its splendid downfall.) With predictably false modesty Sala admits to having contributed to this tide of literature relating to the capital, his particular concern being the advance of bricks and mortar and the delineation of the high and low classes of men. After praising Timbs's work he delivers his verdict on this supposed surfeit of metropolitan material; 'not half – nay, not one quarter – nay, not one tithe enough has yet been written about London.' (497) This can be viewed as a self-justification for his own

⁴³ G.A. Sala, 'Curiosities of London' *Household Words* XI June 23 1855 p. 497 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁴⁴ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 3

preoccupations at this time, but it is also a plea to uncover the unspoken and hidden realities lying behind London life.

As the article progresses Sala describes an ‘old gentleman who will persist in wearing a pig-tail and hessian boots’ and wonders who this personage of old-fashioned demeanour could be. (500) Sala has seen him ‘sunning himself in Long Acre, that curious stream of the highest commercial respectability, running between vile shores – the horrors of Seven Dials and St. Giles’s on one side, the slums of Covent Garden on the other.’ (500) Long Acre itself is rich in historical and literary association. Once the home of Oliver Cromwell and John Dryden, it became a hub of London coach-building in the middle of the seventeenth century, Samuel Pepys bought a second-hand coach there for £53.⁴⁵

This curious old man becomes a device with which to examine the intricate history that surrounds one amid the streets of London and its relation to modernity. Long Acre itself stands for the close proximity of high and low life to be found in the metropolis. Sala uses the old man as a literary device in which to foreshadow one of his central concerns in his London literature: the lack of sympathy for, or even realisation of, the desperate plight of the poor by the wealthy. Sala asks these imagined wealthy citizens a rhetorical question, knowing their response would be in the negative; ‘O! carriage people, titled and untitled; do you know what sort of men and women have seen your carriages in Long Acre before they were brought to the mews near Belgrave Square?’ (501) He asks them again; ‘Do you know what sort of

⁴⁵ Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, (eds), *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 1989) pp. 494-5. It also coincidentally housed St. Martin’s Hall in which Dickens gave his first series of public readings in 1859 and on 30 September 1929 that ultimate symbol of modernity, the television programme, was first broadcast by John Logie Baird at Nos. 132-135.

humanity it is that paces the Acre after nightfall, up and down in the rain, up and down in bedraggled shawls, long after the great iron shutters of the repositories have been put up?’ His own response to these rhetorical questions recalls King Lear’s epiphany on the blasted heath, ‘Take physic, pomp, in Long Acre.’ (501) The use of literary allusion and device, along with historical association and rhetorical questioning, enables Sala to keep his middle-class audience attentive, while simultaneously cajoling them to radically change the way in which they think about the poor. As befitted a campaigning journal, Sala’s preoccupations in *Household Words* were with highlighting and trying to solve the huge problems that the ever-expanding city faced. But as the magazine was also a miscellany, Sala was able to wed this campaigning element with a sincere appreciation of the history and literature of London as undertaken by the writers he most respected. The story of Sala and London is the story of the struggle between modernity and historicity, and the chasm growing between high and low life.

In his article, ‘Numbers of People’ (*HW* X Oct. 21, 1854), Sala reflects on the modern mania for taxonomy and quantification of the metropolis. He brings to his readers’ attention the growing interest in the classification of the people and condition of London, in particular the popularity of the reading of ‘blue-books’ and Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (first produced for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849 and subsequently revised over the next fifteen years), which had initiated a re-awakened interest in the conditions of poverty in the metropolis. Even that most clubbable of gentlemen, William Thackeray, writing under the persona of ‘Spec’ in his *Sketches of London* series for *Punch* on March 9 1850 had remarked that ‘A clever and earnest-minded writer gets a commission from the *Morning Chronicle*

newspaper, and reports upon the state of our poor in London...and brings back what? A picture of human life so wonderful, so awful, so piteous and pathetic, so exciting and terrible, that readers of romances own they never read anything like it.’⁴⁶ (But in the same series of essays Thackeray showed his own lack of concern with the poor. When he meets a crossing-sweeper who gives him, ‘a leer and a wink and a patronising request for a little trifle’, Thackeray fails to extend his sympathy with Mayhew’s writing into actual philanthropy, instead he reveals that it symbolically ‘made me turn away from him and push rapidly forward.’⁴⁷) Thackeray insists that Mayhew’s reports have injected a sense of excitement into the otherwise dull fare to be found in the blue-books. Sala mirrors this sentiment by humorously describing how, despite their popularity, ‘I can imagine many a nervous reader preferring, in the long run, a month on the treadmill to the thorough perusal of a blue-book.’⁴⁸ From blue-books Sala turns to another mode of classification, the ‘momentous’ day 31 March 1851 on which the first ever Census was taken.

Sala wonders at the statistics it provides for London; he tells us that in 1851 ‘the population of London was two millions three hundred and sixty-two thousand two hundred and thirty-six, against nine hundred and fifty-eight thousand eight hundred and sixty-three in 1801.’(224) The number of ‘houseless persons returned was eighteen thousand two hundred and forty-nine.’(223) This last statistic leads into a discussion on how many people the Census must have missed; ‘Were these enumerated? The poverty stricken rogues forlorn, who clambered into haystacks and coal-barges and empty wagons, and dilapidated post-chaises drawn together in wheelwright’s yards, and in silent places where tall ladders raised their spectral forms

⁴⁶ George Saintsbury (ed.) *Miscellaneous Contributions to Punch* (Oxford: OUP, 1950) p. 256

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 181

⁴⁸ G.A. Sala, ‘Numbers of People’ *HW* x Oct. 21 1854 p. 221

in the moonlight; the masses of wretched rags that should have been children, lying huddled together round, a-top of each other...'(223). What commenced as an analysis of statistical quantification becomes in Sala's hands a plea to remember the poor and those beyond statistical analysis. Sala notes that thieves and prostitutes would not be included in such a Census. He asks whether 'We counted the phantoms in the street, that should have been young and beautiful women?...not Phrynia at the casino, not Timandra in the boudoir, not these, but that phantom-world which we see gibbering in the gaslight; fluttering in the shadows of Westminster Abbey and among the trees of the Queen's Park.'(224) He had referred to prostitutes already in 'The Key Of The Street' as P.D. Edwards has noted⁴⁹, and in *Twice Round The Clock* (1859) at 3am he observes a 'phantom in crinoline' on Waterloo Bridge who requests a halfpenny from him in order to pass over to the other side. Deborah Nord writes that Sala's view of prostitutes is 'sentimental and allusive' but this is unsurprising, given the middle-class family magazine medium he is operating in.⁵⁰ But his sympathy for their plight is unusual. The figure of the prostitute stood as a metaphor for what Nord calls the 'decay, contaminated waste, and insidious filth of the city.'⁵¹ It was precisely this concern with filth and decay and sanitation and contamination that the sanitary reformers were bringing to people's attention with the blue-books. Sala is demanding his readers to think beyond numbers and statistics, and to instead think of the human beings and their lives behind them. Challenging the modern mania for governmental statistics Sala instead focuses on social exclusion and individual existence, and by doing so displays an ambiguity towards the total modernisation of London. For if London is becoming modernised at the expense of the less fortunate sections of the

⁴⁹ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's Young Men* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 13

⁵⁰ Nord, (1995) p. 78

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 83

community, and fostering an atmosphere of exclusivity, Sala seems to be suggesting that he wants no part in such a project.

Aside from bringing the public's attention to those faceless people that have fallen through the cracks of the Census, Sala's project in this and other articles was to illustrate the immensity and the uncontrollable nature of London's growth. In 'The Great Red Book' (HW Dec.9 1854) Sala provides an account of the complexities inherent in compiling the Post Office London Directory, the 'Great Red Book' of the title. He reflects that, like the blue-books, 'it is not light reading by any means' but is 'a monument to nomenclature and topography.'⁵² The growth of London is evidenced in the fact that in 1801 it contained 290 pages while in 1855 there will be over 2,000 pages of material. But it was in his leading article 'The Great Invasion' (HW April 10, 1852), that Sala would warn of the dangers of this apparently limitless desire for growth. Reminding his readers of his article, 'The Foreign Invasion,' in which he had noted the 'threat' to the metropolis from hordes of revolutionary foreigners, Sala now refers to the latest invasion of London's streets by 'the brick-and-mortar warriors who are compassing the city round about.'⁵³ He states that 'It is natural for large cities to grow larger...But London has not grown in any natural, reasonable, understandable way.' (70) He compares this with Paris which, under the transformation of Baron Haussmann and Emperor Napoleon III, Sala would describe as the 'noblest, cleanest and most handsome city in the world.'⁵⁴ Paris was in the process of becoming the 'paradigmatic model of nineteenth-century urban history and of modernity more

⁵² G.A. Sala, 'The Great Red Book' HW x Dec. 9 1854 p. 405

⁵³ G.A. Sala, 'The Great Invasion' HW v Apr. 10, 1854 p. 71 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁵⁴ G.A. Sala 'Streets Of The World' *Temple Bar* 10 (February 1864), quoted in Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 16

generally.’⁵⁵ But we can trace in Sala’s writing on London an ambiguity towards the sweeping and autocratic renovations of the French capital. In *Twice Round the Clock*, while describing the horrors of the New Cut, an area that Sala reckoned was the foulest in all London, he imagines what the ‘despot’ over the water would do with such a place; ‘he would make very short work of the New Cut...in the twinkling of a decree the rotten tenements would be doomed to destruction; houses and shops like palaces would line the thoroughfare...But Britons never will be slaves, and we must submit to thorns (known as ‘vested interests’) in the constitutional rose.’⁵⁶

So although Paris was in the process of becoming a beautiful city, and the diverse ruling bodies of London were failing to produce a cohesive plan of improvement, Sala still preferred the way in which London was evolving, in a more organic and democratic way. In contrast to Paris, London was to grow in a way that was a conjunction of the old and the new, and in what Nead calls a more ‘equivocal and piecemeal’ fashion.⁵⁷ Sala’s articles on London echo this model of urban planning, as he strives to link modern preoccupations with historical references.

In ‘The Foreign Invasion’ Sala goes on to reminisce about a perceived Arcadian past before he was born, when ‘Deptford and Greenwich were separated from London by miles of green fields.’ (71) There are echoes of Leigh Hunt’s thoughts on the recent construction of Regent’s Park in an essay from 1833. Hunt was delighted that the Park ‘has checked, in that quarter at least, the monstrous brick cancer that was extending its arms in every direction.’⁵⁸ But Sala’s ambiguous relationship with modernity results in his imagining a balloon ride at night in 1822 and then a contemporary one in 1852.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 6

⁵⁶ Sala, *Twice Round the Clock, or the Hours of the Day and Night in London* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971) p. 275

⁵⁷ Nead (2000) p. 6

⁵⁸ Houtchens (1962) p. 290

The result would be; ‘In the place of Cimmerian darkness...you would have an elaborate and exquisitely beautiful network of gas spangles...clearly defining the outline of every street, square, and alley of the World City.’ (72) There is a pride in progress here, allied with a delight in the way that gas has brought beauty and enlightenment to the city, not only in terms of visibility but also in terms of the notion of *civitas*, or the city as site of learning, education and knowledge. Sala, who as we have seen had already begun to sign his articles with his initials GAS (although not in *Household Words* as all contributions were anonymous), is again aligning himself with the most modern form of lighting available. In an article entitled ‘The Secrets Of The Gas’ (HW March 4 1854) Sala is not only conscious of the visual sense of gas, he can also hear it; ‘the Gas has its secrets, and I happen to know them. The Gas has a voice, and I can hear it – a voice beyond the rushing whistle in the pipe, and the dull buzzing flare in the burner.’⁵⁹ Gas comes alive for Sala, it even speaks to him and has the ability to be omnipotent; ‘It speaks, actively, to men and women of what is, and of what is done and suffered by night and day.’ (156) Lynda Nead appreciates the importance of these lines, she realises that ‘Sala was the only writer in this period to represent the sound of gaslight...Sala sees and hears the gas as it moves through the streets in pipes and flares in the burners.’⁶⁰ His affinity to gas is representative of his affinity with the modern. Dickens would similarly align himself with the modern through his satirical portrayal of the ‘No Gas’ party of Broadstairs in ‘Our Watering Place’ (HW 2 August 1851), who are depicted as old-fashioned and backward looking. Although London appears to be spiralling out of control there is also a consciousness in Sala’s writing that living here and now, in 1852 in London, is tantamount to living at the epicentre of modern life. What you have in Sala’s essays

⁵⁹ G.A. Sala, ‘The Secrets of the Gas’ HW ix March 4 1854 p. 156 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁶⁰ Nead (2000) p. 108

on London, then, is a sense of its immensity, its excitement and promise, the tension between its past and its future, and the fears that many of its citizens will not be able to participate in this sense of hope.

Reality – The High and Low

In *Victorian Babylon*, Lynda Nead, although conscious of Sala's modernity, believes that his portrayal of London is 'a theatrical version of the metropolis'. Nead believes that Sala failed to represent a realistic view of London and uses a quote from a writer on the *Saturday Review* to prove her point. The writer says, 'they [Sala and other *Household Words* writers] lead us to the top of the Haymarket, tell us it is a 'wretched street'...and lead us home again, discoursing beautifully by the way.'⁶¹ Nead's argument rests on her belief that Sala failed to represent the low life of London, but merely titillated middle-class readers with tiny glimpses into this world. But the *Saturday Review* was infamous for criticising Sala and Dickens for portraying low life *too* frequently and *too* realistically and thereby providing an unbalanced view of the metropolis. According to Nead, Sala 'was not greatly interested in truth', and yet in his preface to *Twice Round The Clock* he berated the *Saturday Review* for their biased hatred of Dickens and asserted that he and his fellow journalists 'have endeavoured to our utmost to describe the London of our day as we have seen it, and as we know it.'⁶² Contrary to the opinions of Nead and the *Saturday Review* I want to argue that Sala was in fact committed to depicting the low life of the metropolis in his *Household Words* work and in his series of essays for the *Welcome Guest* collected as *Twice Round the Clock*. Although Sala, like Dickens in *Sketches By Boz*, sometimes lapses

⁶¹ Nead, (2000) p. 108

⁶² Sala (1971) p. vi

into theatrical metaphors in order to reveal ‘behind the scenes’ of London, and uses rhetorical and figurative language in doing so, we must remember that he is writing within the guidelines and framework of Dickens’s magazine and subject to his editorial whims. Catherine Waters has described how ‘many of the accounts of London street-walking in *Household Words* show a level of social engagement and purpose that link such rambling with the rise of investigative journalism.’⁶³ Sala’s ‘Key of the Street’ had initiated that ‘investigative journalism’ and he maintained this high level of ‘social engagement’ throughout his essays. Waters also compares the Parisian flaneur to its London counterpart and finds that ‘the *Household Words* flaneur is much more of a participant-observer.’⁶⁴ Sala manages to engage in the life of the streets in a more participatory way in London than in Paris, where he is more inclined to stand apart from the crowd. He endeavours to write on London in as realistic a way as possible given the nature of *Household Words* which was to provide ‘entertainment and instruction’. In *Twice Round the Clock*, and under a different editor, Henry Vizetelly, Sala is able to be more explicit and takes us to some of the lowest thoroughfares of the metropolis. He does so because his concern with the poor and the low-life of London was of a personal nature.

In an article for the October 2 1852 edition of *Household Words*, entitled ‘How I Went To Sea’, Sala describes his experience of ‘going on the tramp’ as a boy in order to escape from Mr. Bogryne’s Establishment for Boys at Bolting House, Ealing. As a means of disassociating himself from this childlike endeavour, Sala tells his readers that he had determined to go to sea, but in his infantile delusion had not realised that the London Docks could provide him with this opportunity and so began walking to

⁶³ Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens’s Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) p. 66

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 12

Portsmouth instead. His encounters with frightening looking tramps while sleeping in the casual ward of Kingston Workhouse, his envy when observing the parading middle classes who ‘cared nothing for a worthless, miserable little tramp’, and the hideous groans of a man in the thralls of death he meets along the way, are all experiences that remained with him throughout his life.⁶⁵ These memories, along with the ‘financial difficulties of the acutest kind’ his mother was accustomed to meant that Sala had real, personal experience of the debilitating effect of poverty.⁶⁶

We have observed how Sala’s article ‘Down Whitechapel Way’ engaged the reader with the spectacle of the poor but stopped at providing an analysis or debate of this poverty. This would change, however, in an article entitled ‘Jack Alive In London’ (HW Dec. 6 1851). It is a lively and witty exploration of the Docks and the Pool of London and once again aims to instruct the comfortable middle-class reader on places they in all likelihood have never frequented. When passing the Tower of London Sala cannot help but digress on a historical note, musing on its dubious notoriety as the head-quarters of press-ganging. He compares this historical system of abuse with the modern ‘truck system’, an infamous form of credit whereby labourers and mechanics are forced to obtain their wages in public houses. After observing the sailors and their surroundings we sense a shift in Sala’s view. He reports that, ‘the sailor has a strong religious and moral bias...he is often a profligate, and a drunkard, and a swearer because abominable and vicious customs make him so; because, ill-cared for on board ship, he no sooner lands than he becomes the prey of the infamous harpies who infest

⁶⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘How I Went To Sea’ HW vi Oct. 2 1852 p. 355

⁶⁶ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1942) p.

maritime London.’⁶⁷ The dissolute and riotous behaviour to be found at the Docks is, in Sala’s view, not the natural state of sailors but is instead a product of the environment and the customs that have made them so. Sala believes that these are hard-working men and are under-valued by society, particularly by the middle classes who have no knowledge of the work they do; ‘Ratcliffe and Shadwell, Cable Street and Brick-Lane, may be very curious in their internal economy, and very picturesque in their dirt; but it cannot be a matter of necessity that those who toil so hard, and contribute in so great a degree to our grandeur and prosperity, should be so unprotected and so little cared for.’ (56) It is not the theatricality of these men or the ‘picturesque dirt’ that surrounds them that is of interest to Sala now, instead he wishes to instruct his readers that the poorer locales of the metropolis are not exclusively populated with thieves and cut-throats. Instead there reside in these locales men who work hard and for little reward and who have no other choice but to adapt the customs and mores of their surroundings and the men they work with. The remarks about their ‘internal economy’ and the ‘picturesque dirt’ are rebukes to utilitarians and romantics alike, and Sala appears to be advocating some kind of trades union for these men. If we compare Sala’s description of the Docks with Mayhew’s, who described in vivid descriptive detail those queuing at the gates for work on an October morning in 1849, we can see that Mayhew makes no attempt to analyse these men or their behaviour but simply portrays this lurid spectacle for the benefit of his middle-class readers.⁶⁸ Sala is more concerned with understanding these men and the reasons for their actions.

In *Twice Round the Clock* Sala devotes most of his One P.M section to ‘Dock London’. He chastises the upper classes who display pride in their lack of knowledge

⁶⁷ G.A. Sala, ‘Jack Alive in London’ HW iv Dec. 6 1851 in Sala (1859) p. 50 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁶⁸ cited in Jerry White, *London In The Nineteenth Century* (London: Johnathan Cape, 2007) p. 185

of dock life, ‘in certain aristocratic circles it is reckoned to be rather a breach of etiquette than otherwise to know anything about the manners and customs of the dwellers on the other side of Temple Bar.’⁶⁹ Even his own middle class are held to scorn, ‘in London, in the suburbs, in the West End, in the heart of the city oft-times, what do we know or care about the docks?’(133) What follows is a sympathetic portrait of dock labourers, even the Irish are described as, ‘wonderfully economical, provident, self-denying are those much maligned Hibernians when they are earning money.’ (139) The truck system is again derided by Sala, and he describes it as being the cause of much ruin and dissolution for the dock labourers, who are forced to spend their wages on over-priced alcohol from the nearest public house. Sala believes that, ‘the dock labourers yet eat their bread leavened by a sense of injustice. There are none to help them; for they have no organisation and very few friends.’(140) For the casual toilers who waited at the gates for the dock-foreman’s early call, wages were even more precarious and erratic, often taken on for only half a day and receiving half a crown or thirty pence for their labour. It would take the Great Dock Strike of 1889 before these workers received the ‘docker’s tanner’ or 6d an hour. Sala is also quick to point out that many of these labourers are not from the working class at all; ‘there are very many who have been tenderly bred and nurtured; who have been, save the mark, gentlemen! Who have received University educations and borne the Queen’s commission.’(140) This is an example of Sala’s curiosity concerning the fluidity of the classes, and a warning to his readers not to be prejudiced and preconceive those who work down at the docks.

⁶⁹ G.A. Sala, *Twice Round the Clock* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971) p. 134 All subsequent references in parenthesis

Sala adopts a similar stance, but of a far more extreme subject, in his extraordinary article entitled ‘Gibbet Street’ (*HW* March 15 1856). Sala informs his readers that ‘Holywell St. is for the old clothes vendors, Chancery lane for the lawyers, Fifth Avenue for the upper ten thousand, and GIBBET STREET is for the thieves.’⁷⁰ Using a familiar technique of his, describing how close this thieves’ paradise is to the affluent areas of the metropolis, he informs his readers that ‘it is within an easy walk of the wealthy Strand...the Queen herself comes within bowshot of Gibbet Street many times during the fashionable season.’ (307-8) At the heart of the respectable part of the city, Gibbet Street is described as being close to the *Household Words* offices, the police courts of Bow Street and even Exeter Hall.

Although it could be reasonably expected that the rest of the article would contain lurid descriptions of thieves’ dens, squalor and violence, in fact it becomes a justification for the existence of thieves and a demand for government to open their eyes to the problems this class of people face. Sala even ironically teases his readers when he says that ‘with the slightest veil of the imaginatively picturesque so as to wound nobody’s feelings – it exists.’ (307) He then proceeds to discard this ‘picturesque veil’ by endeavouring to convince his readers’ of the thieves’ humanity and their right to decent housing; ‘it is plain to me that a thief must live somewhere. He is a man like the rest of us...he is a ragged, deboshed, vicious, depraved, forsaken, hopeless vagabond; but he has a heart and a liver and lungs...He requires rest, food, shelter – not that I say he deserves them, but he must have them – as well as the best of citizens and ratepayers.’ (308) As with the dockers Sala believes that ‘ferocity, dishonesty, are not the normal state’ of thieves, and he outlines the reasons for their

⁷⁰ G. A. Sala, ‘Gibbet Street’ *HW* March 15 1856 in Sala (1859) p. 307 All subsequent references in parenthesis

degradation. (308) Sala asks his readers; ‘Which is the greatest scandal – a house infested with vermin, or the carelessness of the servant who has suffered them to accumulate there?’ (309) It is clear that Sala lays the blame for the condition of Gibbet Street at the door of government who have ‘suffered the foul weeds to grow up; who have yawningly constructed succursal forcing-houses for crime and ignorance.’ (309) Instead Sala proposes that they should ‘catch the young thieves from the gutter and the doorsteps’, give them soap instead of ‘whipping him for stealing a cake of brown Windsor’, provide them with employment and let them know they are fit human beings for society and that they have souls that can be saved. (310) In his 3pm section of *Twice Round The Clock*, Sala depicts the ‘feverish industry – the untiring perseverance – the bitter struggle’ of the ‘hundred little trades’ dotted across the metropolis that desperately try each day to find some way of earning money (163). With famine always at the door Sala declares that it is ‘a marvel and a miracle’ that these people don’t steal. Sala’s liberal attitude to crime means that he is sensitive to their plight and instead of adopting an authoritarian tone of dismay he is astounded that the poor don’t resort to theft more often. At the heart of his ‘Gibbet Street’ article is this notion that theft is the refuge of the desperate.

Sala also focuses on the dereliction to be found on Gibbet Street, the broken windows of the houses, the ‘doorless doorways leading to black rotten staircases’, the street itself which is ‘narrow, slimy, ill-paved, ill-smelling.’ (311) Writing a year after the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works, a body that would do much to improve sanitation in London, Sala seems to be pleading for greater improvement to domestic space along with public areas. This focus on improvement is consistent with Lynda Nead’s views on the modernisation of London. She states that ‘modernity was

an accumulation of uneven and unresolved processes of urbanisation; it took the form of the improved street within a district of slums. It was summarised in the image of dereliction, as a sign of the past and of preparation for the future.’⁷¹ In an article entitled ‘Up A Court’ (HW Aug. 14 1852) Sala describes a fictional district in which he is residing, a court in the parish of ‘St. Crapulens.’ As the name suggests the squalor and filth of the area is so bad that even the swallows and the starlings refuse to sun themselves on its eaves. The birds are used as a device in order to discover the culprit for all this degradation. As they fly back to Highgate they rest instead on ‘a little gem of a cottage where there is ivy, and lilac, and geranium.’⁷² This is the landlord of the court’s residence, a ‘fellow fattening on the rents he grinds out of us poor courtiers’, who Sala portrays as casually indifferent to the wants of his neighbours. (510) By fashioning himself as part of this impoverished community Sala is able to ask the comfortable classes, the ‘gentlemen who live among plate-glass windows, ventilated rooms, chimnies (sic) that don’t smoke’, whether if they were to inspect his court they might realise that drinking water was wanted along with soap. (511) He wants these representatives of authority to realise that if they were better housed they would exert themselves to find food and not to starve and rot in their own misery. He tries to appeal to these gentlemen’s selfishness by suggesting that if this were the case they wouldn’t have to expend so much time sitting on ‘fever inquests, starvation inquests, or murder inquests’. (511)

It is clear that Sala’s liberal conscience demands more to be done about the plight of the poor. Like Dickens, he believes that poverty is very much a product of one’s environment. By improving the living conditions of the poor, Sala fervently maintains

⁷¹ Nead (2000) p. 108

⁷² G.A. Sala, ‘Up A Court’ HW v Aug. 14 1852 p. 510 All subsequent references in parenthesis

that crime, disease and starvation will be significantly reduced. Back in Gibbet Street, Sala recounts the many hours he has spent there at a friend's artistic studio. It is this personal experience of the place that has allowed him to observe for himself the humanity and goodness to be found there. As with his 'Up A Court' article, Sala places himself in the lower-class milieu in order to plea for humanitarian common sense and dignity. Both articles display some of Sala's strongest statements for sympathy towards the poor. They both represent his belief in improvement in order to clean up dereliction, but, as with his articles on taxonomy and statistics, he is keen to represent the lives of these individuals and to treat them as human beings, not as mere 'items' to be discarded amid the tide of development.

This project of humanising statistics is carried on in 'Houseless and Hungry' (*HW* Feb. 23 1856), in which Sala visits a Night Refuge in the vicinity of Whitecross Street. The article is constructed around two 'friends' of Sala's, Pragmos and Sharplynx, who provide differing opinions on the reasons for homeless people in London. Pragmos, as his name suggests, 'proves to me by figures, by tables, by reports from perspicacious commissioners, that there is no need of any destitution in London; and that, statistically, tabularly, honourable-boardically-speaking, there is no destitution at all.'⁷³ Sharplynx believes that the homeless are mere impostors, painting their faces red to indicate a flush of fever, feigning the shakes, and hiring feeble children to accentuate their 'poverty'. Sala is quick to take these opinions to task and satirise the powers-that-be when he asserts that, 'in the City paved with gold, there are people who are destitute, and die on door-steps, in the streets, on staircases, under dark arches, in ditches, and under the lees of walls. The police know it. Some day,

⁷³ G.A. Sala, 'Houseless and Hungry' *HW* xiii Feb. 23 1856 in Sala (1859) p. 146 All subsequent references in parenthesis

perhaps, the Government will condescend to know it too, and instruct a gentleman at a thousand a year to see about it.' (147) This is reminiscent of Dickens's grim portrayal of contemporary society in *Bleak House*, particularly the scene of the death of the young crossing-sweeper Jo, when the narrator exclaims; 'Dead, Right reverends and Wrong reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day.'⁷⁴ Sala is adamant that he has seen no impostors in the Night Refuge, all the men and women have poverty and destitution etched across their faces. As the ledger is filled with the names, ages and birthplaces of the new arrivals, Sala reflects that 'In their dismal attire, in their death-like voices, in their awful faces, there was mute eloquence enough to fill five hundred ledgers such as the one on the desk.' (149) For Sala, personal experience is always superior when it comes to discovering the truth, better than any number of commissioners' reports or statistical findings.

At the end of the article, after detailing a number of particularly desperate cases of starvation and poverty he has witnessed, Sala discovers that the total expenditure of the asylum is less than one thousand pounds. This is followed by a series of hyperbolic exclamations as Sala lists how the same amount of money is squandered throughout society; 'we give it every month in the year to right honourable noblemen for doing nothing...we blow it away in gunpowder, we spend it upon diplomatic fools' caps.' (155) In contrast to this profligacy, Sala reckons that the Night Refuge saves over a hundred human lives a year with the same money. The point he is trying to make, the same point he made with his account of the thieves of Gibbet Street, is

⁷⁴ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1896) p. 520

that these lives are worth saving and are not as expendable as utilitarian doctrine would have us believe.

Sala's most powerful descriptions of poverty and the sympathy it necessarily entails are saved for *Twice Round the Clock* when describing the notorious St. Giles district. In his 'One a.m.' sequence Sala is caught up in the mad whirl of a crowd desperate to witness a fire. As they rush to the scene Sala fails to recognise the district as St. Giles because it is full of splendid streets, huge mansions and affluent tradesmen who display their wares through 'glistening plate glass windows.' This is not the St. Giles of notoriety but a simulacrum, a place in which 'cunning contractors and speculative builders have sought to disguise the most infamous district in London.' (350) Sala scorns those topographers who insist that St. Giles no longer exists. The demolitions and slum clearances of the St. Giles Rookery that had taken place in the 1840s had dispersed over five thousand people to make way for improvements like New Oxford St., completed in 1847.⁷⁵ But despite the improvement this made to the circulation of traffic many former residents simply moved back into the area. Sala displays his ambiguity towards the modernisation of such areas, 'The place yet lives – hideous, squalid, decrepit – yet full of unwholesome vitality.' (350) Sala can't help but be attracted to this vitality. Although it was slum areas like St. Giles that Haussmann in Paris and the Metropolitan Commissions in London were so eager to destroy, Sala cannot help feel a bohemian affection for the life-force to be found in the low life of this area. His descriptions of the inhabitants of St. Giles pulls no punches, however, he wants his readers to know the reality of the district. He describes the men as 'Gibbering forms...in filthy rags...with rough holes punched in the nasal cartilage for

⁷⁵ White (2007) p. 32

nostrils...awful deformities, with horrifying malformations of the limbs and running sores ostentatiously displayed.' (351) The women are if anything in an even worse condition but elicit more sympathy because of their sex, 'one cannot bear the women without a shudder, and a feeling of infinite sorrow and humiliation.' (351) The streets and houses are in an appalling condition and Sala again chastises his readers who are indifferent to the poverty that surrounds them while simultaneously painting some of the most horrific images that he has witnessed in London;

see the dens of wretchedness where the people whose existence
you ignore dwell- the sick and infirm, often the dying,
sometimes the dead, lying on the bare floor, or, at best, covered
with some tattered scraps of blanketing or matting; the
shivering age crouching over fireless grates, and drunken
husbands bursting through the rotten doors to seize their gaunt
wives by the hair, and bruise their already swollen faces,
because they have pawned what few rags remain to purchase
gin. (352)

Once again Sala does not pass judgement on these horrific outcasts of society. His purpose is to bring their existence into the consciousness of his apathetic readers. In an extraordinary outburst during his 2 pm section of *Twice Round the Clock*, Sala defends himself against those critics who accuse him of being a bohemian and writing about low life too frequently. It is a summation of his position regarding the poor, and although he places himself firmly of the middle class and liable to as much abuse from the lower classes as his readers, he still insists that to ignore this class is only

inflaming a desperate situation. His ironic use of the word ‘respectable’ stems from Hazlitt’s article ‘On Respectable People’ from *The Plain Speaker* (1826);

Oh, lords and ladies! Oh, brilliant butterflies of society! Oh, respectable people of every degree! Whose ear coarse language wounds, but who would have, believe me, to undergo much coarser deeds from the ragged ones you despise, were it not for the humble efforts of us poor pen-and-ink missionaries; O salt ones of the earth! Think that you are but hundreds among the millions of the tattered and torn, who have never studied the ‘Handbook to Etiquette’, nor heard of Burke and Debrett, and who would eat peas with their knives if they had any peas to eat – Heaven help them! They are around and about you always. I have no greed of gain in advocating their cause, for I am unknown to them, and of your middle class, and am as liable to be stoned by the ragged ones for having a better coat than they any day. But woe be to you, respectables, if you shut your ears to their complaints and your eyes to their condition. For the stones may fly thick and fast some day; there may be none to help you, and it may be too late to cry for help.’ (143-144)

Sala’s ability to fashion himself as firmly of the middle class in one article and as poverty-stricken and from the lower classes in another, reflects his personal status at this time. His ‘respectability’ was growing as he consistently contributed to *Household Words*, but he was still spending whatever money he earned in a reckless,

dissolute and bohemian fashion and was consequently living in cheap accommodation in the poorer districts of the metropolis. A letter to Shirley Brooks from November 1858 outlines the financial position he was in. He tells Brooks that he would be glad to contribute to the *London Gazette*, (Brooks had just been made its editor) but only ‘on the quiet’. Sala explains that ‘I mention tranquillity as the infernal income tax people and other miscreants who believe I am making a thousand a year watch me like a cat a mouse and pounce on me for ‘more.’’⁷⁶

Ghosts of the City

It wasn’t only those born into deprivation and poverty that Sala was interested in, however. We have seen in his first published article for *The Family Herald* how speculation and gambling held a fascination for him, and in his references to debtors’ prisons and the ‘fallen’ dockworkers in *Household Words* it is clear that fluctuations of class identity were of great import to him. In two articles for *Household Words* and in parts of *Twice Round The Clock* we can see how this interest is extended to the broken-down and ruined speculators of the City, once rich men reduced to penury through their greed. Sala speculates on what Garrett Ziegler describes as ‘the Square Mile’s transition from a private space of lived experience to a public space of financial labour.’⁷⁷ David Kynaston has discussed how insurance companies changed the face of the City with the building between 1836 and 1843 of the Globe, the

⁷⁶ Letter from Sala to Shirley Brooks Nov 1858 Box 7 Sala Papers Beinecke Library

⁷⁷ Garrett Ziegler, ‘The City of London, Real and Unreal’ in, *Journal of Victorian Culture* Spring 2007 432-451

Alliance and the Sun. The building of the Royal Exchange in 1844 completed this separation from lived space to work space.⁷⁸ In order to understand the modern form of capitalism – finance capitalism as opposed to industrial capitalism – writers like Sala, along with Thomas Macaulay, John Hollingshead and Dickens, were concerned in the 1850s with portraying the City as no longer a place where people live and work together, but as merely a site for work. The binary conception of London as East and West had left a gnawing hole right at its heart. Sala's ambiguous ideas toward modernity meant that his articles dwell on the ruined financiers that haunt the City, thereby contributing to this discourse while simultaneously questioning it.

In 'City Spectres' (HW Feb. 14 1852) Sala satirically describes a series of shadowy figures who 'live' on the margins of the great banking houses and financial institutions of the City. They are 'gaunt men with haggard countenances and in seedy habiliments' who occupy this new space dedicated to work but have no employment of their own.⁷⁹ Instead they wander listlessly from Garraway's restaurant to Bartholomew Lane to Capel Court. Sala initially portrays these men as ghosts, spectral wanderers from a historical past. He asks whether they haunted 'Change when 'gallants in cut velvet and embroidery came to gamble South Sea shares', or if they lingered 'in Charles's days, when business, intrigue, and devotion were so curiously mingled in Christian temples.' (141) But as the article progresses the reader realises that these figures really exist and that many of them were once men of power and wealth, brought to their knees by the incongruities and infidelities of finance capitalism. We hear of the head clerk of Jebber's bank who 'passed to the world of

⁷⁸ David Kynaston, *The City of London Vol 1: A World of its Own, 1815-1890* (London: Chatto & Windus 1994) p. 139

⁷⁹ G.A. Sala, 'City Spectres' HW iv Feb. 14 1852 in Sala (1859) p. 135. All subsequent references in parenthesis.

spectres' during the panic of 1825. He is liable to break down when drinking and to reminisce of his box at Shooter's Hill, his daughter Emily's boarding-school education and of his 'bygone horse and gig.' (139) There is the prosperous merchant who 'carried a gold snuff-box in his hand, and his gloves and silk handkerchief together with his bank-book, in his hat.' (140) But he has failed and now his only possessions consist of a decayed pocket-book, 'bulging out with prospectuses of dead companies full of sound and flourish but signifying nothing.' (140) The ghosts of Shakespeare's Macbeth are thus transported to the City. These insubstantial men only come to life when the City is in the grip of a 'Mania'. For a few weeks their old life returns and they are able to 'consume rich viands and choice wines in expensive taverns'. But after the mania has subsided panic sets in and ruin falls once again on these city spectres. Although the 1850s was a time of economic success it was also 'marred by a series of commercial scandals, bank failures...and general malfeasance.'⁸⁰ Sala represents this financial uncertainty with his ghosts and by doing so questions the validity and domination of the new finance capitalism.

In 'The Golden Calf' (HW Dec. 23 1854) Sala goes further and invites his readers to witness the depths to which some of these spectres have fallen. On approaching the Stock Exchange he stops and offers his own critique of that institution; 'there is the great Mammon Club...demolishing all those who dare to worship Mammon without a proper introduction and a proper burnt-offering.'⁸¹ Sentiments like these would be used to great effect in his novel *The Seven Sons of Mammon* (1862), a novel that brings the great capitalist Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, the 'richest man on 'Change', to the brink of poverty and despair. In 'The Golden Calf' Sala describes how 'all

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 433

⁸¹ G.A. Sala, 'The Golden Calf' HW x Dec. 23 1854 p. 41. All subsequent references in parenthesis.

Bartholomew Lane smells of money' before leading us down into a public-house under Capel Court where instead the odour is one of 'squalor, misery and captivity.' (41-42) Sala is concerned with describing a side of City life that was only just starting to be written about at this time. In 'City of London Churches' (*The Uncommercial Traveller* 1860) Dickens had found the City to be deserted of 'city personages' on any given Sunday and had observed the dwindling congregations, some as little as four people, to be found in the once great Christopher Wren-designed structures. John Hollingshead's article 'The City of Unlimited Paper' (*Under Bow Bells: A City Book for all Readers* 1860), suggested that 'the entire financial world is fictitious, constructed out of paper all the way down to the participants themselves.' His article renders the City as a necropolis, a 'haunting epitaph for lived space.'⁸² Sala was an early contributor to what would become a tide of journalistic discourse that limned the City as an empty repository only filled by financial workers. But Sala allows his readers to experience the darker side of the financial dream, the marginal figures that remain to haunt the City when the promises of finance capitalism have gone horribly wrong. He describes just such a denizen of this underground public-house; 'Here utter broken-down misery; hunger that was once well-fed...brood quietly in a corner of this Hades, ever remembering that it is a beggar, and that it was once worth a hundred thousand pounds.' (43) These beggars are emblematic of what Charles Lamb described as 'the salutary checks and pauses to the high and rushing tide of greasy citizenry', symbols of the dangers inherent in greed.⁸³

Sala is once again providing his readers with a model of the social connectedness to be found in London. Like Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* (1848), Sala portrays a world held

⁸² Ziegler 92007) p. 449

⁸³ Charles Lamb, 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars' in *The Essays of Elia* (London: Amalgamated Press, 1905) p. 170

together by what Paul Schellinger calls ‘the intangible and fragile bond of credit, both social and financial.’⁸⁴ Where one would expect to encounter affluence, at the heart of the nation’s financial district, there is also penury and misery. But the poor to be found in this district are not born that way; they are not destined from birth to live miserable lives of squalor and disease. They represent the flip-side of the capitalist dream. As such they do not receive the sympathy Sala reserves for those with no choice but to live in squalor. But he is not unsympathetic to their plight. Sala was himself a notorious gambler and in his novel *Make Your Game* (1858-9) he describes a gambling spree in Hamburg with Henry Vizetelly and Augustus Mayhew that was to end in financial disaster for all three men. In his article ‘Gambling’ (HW Apr. 21 1855) he stresses the ubiquity of this occupation. Not only is gambling practised by ‘filthy, ragged boys’ on the muddy shores of the Thames, it also revitalises the spirits of the respectable but listless passengers on board a ship returning from India.⁸⁵ In ‘Play’ (HW Nov. 25, 1854) gambling is portrayed as a timeless pursuit, practised in antiquity and modernity. When it is eradicated from certain districts in London, it reappears in others, ‘drive the devil of the dice-box from Westminster, and you will find him walking up and down, going to and fro in Southwark.’⁸⁶ If gamblers are restricted in their pursuit they will simply find another endeavour along the same lines, and this thought brings Sala back to the City connection; ‘chase him from the hazard table, and he takes refuge in the Stock Exchange.’ (358) Finance capitalism is thus reduced to an act of mere gambling, rather than a respectable force in modern life. Sala sees the irony whereby respectability itself is founded on chance. A good

⁸⁴ Schellinger, Paul (ed.); ‘The City and the Novel’ in *Encyclopedia of the Novel* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.)
http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=R00791793&divLevel=0&queryId=.../session/1277986524_10826&trailId=128F377BE11&area=ref&forward=critref_ft Accessed 1/7/10

⁸⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘Gambling’ HW xi Apr. 21 1855 p. 281

⁸⁶ G.A. Sala, ‘Play’ HW x Nov. 25 1854 p. 358 All subsequent references in parenthesis

investment can lead to a whole new world while a bad one can mean ruin. Sala's fascination with the way that respectability can fluctuate so wildly means that gambling, stock exchanges, and debtors' prisons are all worthy objects of study. When Sala describes the street where historically gambling has most proliferated in London, the aristocratic St. James's Street, we can see how gambling becomes in Sala's hands yet another emblem of the connections to be found between different strands of society, reinforcing Sala's concern with social connection that permeates his writings on London.

Commodity Culture

In 'Old Clothes' (HW Apr. 17 1852), Sala finds another example of social connection, this time between the financial sector of the city and London's second-hand markets. He says of these old clothes markets, 'they do make a great noise certainly; but is there not a little buzz, a trifling hum of business, in the area of the Royal Exchange just before the bell rings? Does not Capel Court resound sometimes to the swell of human voices?'⁸⁷ By facetiously comparing the modern hub of finance capitalism with an older form of labour capitalism Sala seems to be portraying an ambivalence towards modernity. In fact, by concentrating on old clothes Sala is defining an element of historicity *and* modernity. Ever since his work for *The Lady's Newspaper* in the 1840s Sala had been fascinated with clothing and fashion. In his

⁸⁷ G.A. Sala, 'Old Clothes' HW v Apr. 17 1852 p. 203 All subsequent references in parenthesis

description of second-hand clothes and their markets he was able to combine this fascination with a product that symbolised the old and the new, and held important connotations for representing class identity and fluidity. Catherine Waters notes how ‘second hand clothing is thus a kind of palimpsest, an emblem for the multi-layered nature of modernity remarked by Benjamin, where the archaic and the new, past and present, exist side by side.’⁸⁸ The ‘archaic and the new’, the ‘past and present’, as we have seen, are themes that run throughout Sala’s work on London.

As the article progresses the cast-off garments Sala describes begin to possess a life of their own, and become emblematic of the blurring of social divisions and the fluidity of the classes that Sala is concerned with. His depiction of cast-off clothing represents what Waters believes is his ‘exploration of the uncertainties of modern urban experience...’⁸⁹ When detailing the garments piled up in the Clothes Exchange they become an affront to the rigid hierarchies of class and status practised elsewhere;

There, pell-mell, cheek by jowl, in as strange juxtaposition, and as strange equality, as corpses in a plague-pit, are the groom’s gaiters and my Lord Bishop’s splatterdashes; with, save the mark! Poor Pat’s ill-darned, many-holed brogues, his bell crowned felt hat, his unmistakeable blue coat with the brass buttons, high in the collar, short in the waist, long in the tails, and ragged all over. There is no distinction of ranks; no precedence of rank, and rank alone, here.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Catherine Waters, ‘Fashion in Undress’: Clothing and Commodity Culture in *Household Words*, *Journal of Victorian Culture* 12.1 (2007) p. 28

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 29

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 35

Whereas Dickens, in ‘Meditations in Monmouth Street’ for *Sketches By Boz*, had imagined the lives of the former owners of clothes in the Monmouth Street markets, Sala democratises the garments by focusing on their modern existence and the lack of class distinction between them now that they have been cast off. He goes further and describes the most dilapidated of old clothes that are now useless and ground into ‘devil’s dust’ to be re-manufactured as broadcloth. Sala then delights in imagining how the social order is inverted through this re-cycling process,

Who shall say that the Marquis of Camberwell’s footmen –
these cock-hatted, bouquettèd, silk-stockinged Titans – may not
have, in their gorgeous costume, a considerable spice of Patrick
the bog-trotter’s ragged breeches and Luke the labourer’s
fustian jacket? (205)

There was a long tradition in the nineteenth century of belittling footmen and their image as powdered servants of the ruling classes. In Hazlitt’s essay ‘On Footmen’ (*New Monthly Magazine* Sept. 1830) he describes how they are looked upon ‘as a sort of supernumeraries in society’, or symbols of all that was base, fawning and servile about the lower classes and their relationship to the aristocracy.⁹¹ Sala contributes to this tradition and seems to relish the thought that the slaves of the aristocracy were secretly wearing the cast-offs from an Irish labourer.

⁹¹ cited in Gregory Dart (ed.) *William Hazlitt: Metropolitan Writings* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2005) p. 147

As well as inverting the social order, re-cycled clothes can also democratise the crowd and simultaneously render social analysis practically impossible. According to Richard Sennett the 1840s had seen the beginnings of a style of dress in which neutrality – or blending in with the urban crowd – had become the norm.⁹² In an article entitled ‘Where Are They?’ (HW April 1 1854), Sala refers to the homogeneity of modern dress in an ambivalent manner;

A chief cause for our distressing uncertainty as to where the people we are in search of are to be found, lies in the disagreeable uniformity of costume prevalent in the present day...The millionaire may be walking past us in an intense state of shabbiness...May I ask how we are to tell any one man from another...by his dress alone. Really, what with the moustache movement, the detective police, the cheap clothing establishments, the shirt-collar mania...nobody knows who or what anybody else is.⁹³

These uncertainties place the stability of the social order at risk and Sala is unsure as to whether this is ideal or not. His tongue-in-cheek tone here means that although he is all in favour of democratisation, whether in clothes or in politics, his role as an urban flaneur, a ‘botaniser of the asphalt’, means that this blurring of social identity thwarts his own inclinations. These inclinations are towards social classification through the clothing these urban types wear. Sala seems to be stuck between what Murray Baumgarten describes as ‘an older investment in a stable identity and a

⁹² Richard Sennett, *The Fall Of Public Man* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) p. 161

⁹³ G.A. Sala, ‘Where Are They?’ HW ix April 1 1854 in Sala (1859) p. 391

modern embrace of opportunity and dynamic self-making.’⁹⁴ This encapsulates Sala’s ambiguity in his metropolitan essays; he is sometimes passionate about improvement and modern life, but is occasionally nostalgic for what he perceives as the ‘good old days’.

Sala is also concerned with the process of circulation and consumption of commodities. His experiences at the Great Exhibition, that fundamental site of the new commodity culture, mean that he is in tune with the way in which commodities are processed and transported, the culture of movement and dislocation. Speed was one of the fundamental conditions of the new commodity culture and Waters notes how Sala ‘celebrates the restless movement of imperial goods, marvelling at the linkage of incongruous sites and the vast distances commodities can travel.’⁹⁵ This stress on speed and movement is one of the distinctive features of modernity, the way it produces complex and unsettling effects on society and the psyche. In terms of second-hand clothing, Sala is interested to know that much of it will be exported to Australia or to America, where, as he states in ‘Old Clothes’, ‘a considerably brisk trade in left-off wearing apparel is driven with that Great Northern Republic which asserts itself capable of inflicting corporal punishment on the whole of the universe.’ (205) When describing Billingsgate Market at 4 am in *Twice Round the Clock* he notices the vessels moored before the market; ‘here are Dutch boats that bring eels, and boats from the North Sea that bring lobsters, and boats from Hartlepool, Whitstable, Harwich, Great Grimsby, and other English sea-ports.’ (18) At 6 am in Covent Garden Market Sala is overwhelmed by the all-consuming tastes of the metropolis as he lists the railway carriers and the carts and trucks that have

⁹⁴ Baumgarten (1996) p. 78

⁹⁵ *ibid* p. 29

‘journeyed through the dense night, laden with vegetable produce’ and how even ‘the most distant counties have poured the fatness of their lands at the feet of the Queen-city.’ Even, ‘black steamers from Rotterdam and Antwerp belch forth volumes of smoke...and discharge cargoes of peas and potatoes.’ (45) At Debenham and Storr’s Auction Rooms Sala visits the sale of unredeemed pawnbrokers’ pledges and lists in detail the foreign wares for sale; ‘a roll of best Saxony broadcloth, a piece of Genoa velvet...a Turkey carpet...two dozen sheepskin coats from the Crimea...and seven German flutes.’ (170) This detailing of the swirl and rush of modern society, the immense achievement involved in simply providing food to the metropolis, is indicative of Sala’s desire to portray London as chaotically out of control yet strangely organised, all-consuming and forever restless. But he is always drawn back to the origins of commodities, particularly clothes, and how these origins can impact on future lives. This is because of his fascination with the way that class and status can be gained and lost so quickly in this modern age.

In *Twice Round the Clock*, after complaining of the inability for ‘one of his temperament’ to traverse the streets of London because of the distractions afforded by the wealth of historical ‘ghosts’ and ‘memories’, Sala then proceeds to digress while strolling through the Mall on all the historical allusions the place conjures up. After almost four pages of digressions on Henry the Eighth, Queen Bess, Charles I and II and James II, Sala is suddenly brought out of his reverie by modernity, the present catches up with him and he says that ‘henceforth I must deal in realities.’ These realities include, amidst the stately mansions of the aristocratic inhabitants of the Mall at eight o’clock in the morning, the sight of a ‘forlorn parade’ of sempstresses and milliners’ workwomen bound for the dress factories of the West End. Sala

deliberately contrasts the historical grandeur of the place with its grim, modern, reality. There are echoes of Douglas Jerrold's *Story Of A Feather* (1843) when Sala reflects on how these poor women will toil all night and all day just so that 'the Countess or Marchioness may have her ball dress ready.' (67-75) In 'Fashion' (HW 29 Oct. 1853) Sala begins by repudiating the mania for idolising fashion, and questions whether it has any value at all. It seems as though the essay will mimic Hazlitt's 'On Fashion' (*Edinburgh Magazine* Sept. 1818), in which fashion is denounced as 'the abortive issue of vain ostentation and exclusive egotism.'⁹⁶ But we know Sala has more than a passing interest in fashion and clothing. He manages to combine this interest with the revelation that, 'the crumbs that fall from its table feed millions of mouths.'⁹⁷ Sala argues that Fashion actually creates a bounty of work for those that make the luxuries it demands, thereby justifying Fashion's existence and his own personal interest in it. Fashion, argues Sala, can provide basic sustenance for those who;

earn their bread by making and vending Fashion's elegant
trumpery; - gloves, fans, spangles, scents and bon-bons; how
ships, colonies and commerce, are all mixed up in a curious yet
congruous elaboration with fal-lals: how one end of the chain
may be my lady's boudoir and its knick-knacks in Belgravia,
and the other end a sloppy ship-dock on the hot strand of the
Hooghly; how the beginnings of a ball-supper, with its artificial
flowers, its trifles, its barley-sugar temples, its enamelled

⁹⁶ Dart (2005) p. 100

⁹⁷ G.A. Sala, 'Fashion' HW viii Oct. 29 1853 p. 362 All subsequent references in parenthesis

baskets and raffia cakes, were the cheerless garret and the heated cellar.(363)

Sala is interested in the processes of circulation and consumption with regard to commodities, an interest that would aid him in his future career as a Special Correspondent. His curiosity concerning the journeys these goods have made necessarily entails a knowledge of foreign countries and the different modes of production and consumption that take place in different societies. This represents his public interest in commodities. But he is always willing to return to the human element behind the manufacture of these goods. Who has made them? How much did they earn? How many hours did it take them? What were their working conditions like? Waters notes how Sala always finds ‘narrative interest in the life of goods on the streets – and of those who sell or buy them – rather than in the stories of their birth or manufacture.’⁹⁸ Of far greater concern to Sala than the public life of goods was the personal investment that lay behind their manufacture.

Above all, Sala is simply bemused by the preponderance of commodities, and the public’s insatiable desire to consume them. He moves from the touch and rummaging associated with the ‘jumble and disorder’ of the second-hand exchange to the less hands-on approach necessitated by window-shopping. This approach entails what Waters calls the ‘dislocated admiration of the strolling spectator.’⁹⁹ In an article called ‘Shops’ (*HW* June 25 1853) he becomes amazed at everything to do with metropolitan life and in a paean to the uncertainties of modern urban experience he questions those who do not feel this sense of the uncanny every time they step out onto the streets;

⁹⁸ Waters (2008) p. 81

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 155

As for me, I cannot walk a hundred paces into the street without
 seeing something to be wonder-stricken and amazed at...I
 wonder at the day, at the light, at the bridge, at the river; the
 houses standing so bravely upright, and so seldom tumbling
 down; the countless vehicles, so seldom running foul of one
 another; the countless pedestrians, so seldom run over. I
 wonder at Myself – why and what, and who and how I am, and
 why my feet love more to press City stones than verdant fields
 and, turning into a shop to collect and to rest myself a little,
 begin to be astonished harder than ever at Shops.¹⁰⁰

Whereas all of urban life is at times unfathomable to Sala, he is at his most perplexed when confronted with the bizarre appearance of an outlet that devotes itself to selling commodities. Shops for Sala become representative of all that is most baffling and mysterious about City life. But he manages to display throughout the essay a childlike delight and amazement at the uncertainties of modern life that is both consistent with, and alien from, the historical association connected with second-hand clothes. It is this ambiguity that is consistent with Sala's delineation of London.

The Amusements of the People

What then were Sala's solutions to the social problems of London? Like Dickens, Sala believed that the working classes needed their own forms of entertainment and

¹⁰⁰ G.A. Sala, 'Shops' HW vii June 25 1853 p. 405

rest after the rigours of the working week. Dickens's famous essay, 'The Amusements of the People' (HW 30 March 1850) outlined his faith in dramatic entertainment while observing performances specifically for that class at the Victoria Theatre on Waterloo Road, and The Eagle in the City Road. Dickens felt that there could be some small improvements in the moral lessons to be found in these productions but overall felt that 'these people have a right to be amused.'¹⁰¹ He also noted the similarities between the melodramas he witnessed and that of the Italian Opera performed for the higher classes. Sala dealt with this theme of working-class amusement in 'Open Air Entertainments' (HW May 8 1852). The essay is a criticism of the public's obsession for witnessing public hangings, but is aimed at the working classes in particular. Sala joins the public at Brighton railway station who are on their way to witness the execution of Sarah Ann French at Lewes, who had poisoned her husband with a pie. Sala never refers to the 'entertainment' they are travelling towards as an execution but instead teases the reader by alluding to the entertainment as a play. This serves to reinforce the moral worth of the theatre over this dubious form of amusement. He satirically questions the benefit to the public of this spectacle; 'The moral lesson would be invaluable, no doubt, to the little children, who played at hanging for a week afterwards; to the professional gentlemen, who had been picking pockets at the gallows foot – to the boys, who would ask at the Circulating Libraries if the Newgate Calendar was in hand.'¹⁰² Sala is objecting to the lack of an alternative entertainment to public hanging for the working classes and he can find no worth in the event he is witnessing; 'I can conscientiously declare that I did not hear one word, one sentiment expressed, which could lead me to believe that any single object for which this fair had been professedly made public, had been accomplished.' (169) The working

¹⁰¹ David Pascoe (ed.) *Charles Dickens, Selected Journalism 1850-70* (London: Penguin, 1997) p. 505

¹⁰² G.A. Sala, 'Open Air Entertainments' HW v May 8 1852 p. 168 All subsequent references in parenthesis

classes are not blamed for their desire to witness such amusements, Sala makes it clear that without a viable alternative they are merely validating the only choice available. In a series of essays concerning the Sabbath; 'Sunday Morning' (HW Oct. 9 1852), 'Sunday Out' (HW Sep. 9 1854) and 'Sunday Tea-Gardens' (HW Sep. 30 1854), Sala would elaborate on this theme of working-class entertainment.

In 'Sunday Tea-Gardens' Sala uses the metaphor of 'grease', as in the working classes need to 'grease their wheels' or unwind at least once a week, Sala outlines his concern that the Sabbath should be seen as a holiday for this class; 'the few can grease their wheels any day in the week, and all day long if they like. The many have only the one day, Sunday.'¹⁰³ On witnessing a teetotal procession in 'Sunday Out' Sala observes that, 'you can't wave and blow a man into temperance.'¹⁰⁴ Like Dickens, Sala was opposed to the complete abstinence practised by temperance societies, preferring the promotion of moderation as more realistic and palatable to the working classes. He was also liberal in his views on religion, so liberal, in fact, that the subject is barely mentioned in any of his essays. He is averse to treating the Sabbath as a sacred and pious day, and disapproving of those who try and force religion onto others; 'All the acts of parliament in the world will not make one man pious. I claim for myself and every other man a right of private judgement on this subject, and a wrong in being interfered with by any wholesale dealer in other people's consciences.' (73) Sala criticises a government that tries to enforce moral codes on its citizens, preferring a freer and less authoritarian approach. In 'Sunday Morning' he cannot understand those who wish Sundays to be dedicated to gloom and heavy sermonising; 'I cannot, in conclusion, see any reason why, because it is Sunday, a

¹⁰³ G.A. Sala, 'Sunday Tea-Gardens' HW x Sep. 30 1854 p. 145 All subsequent references in parenthesis

¹⁰⁴ G.A. Sala, 'Sunday Out' HW x Sep. 9 1854 p. 73 All subsequent references in parenthesis

man should half throttle himself with a white neckcloth...and put on a look of excruciating wretchedness and anguish when he is naturally inclined to be cheerful. Excuse me if I use strong language, but I feel strongly.’¹⁰⁵ Despite the prospect of alienating some of his readership, Sala cannot help but flag this issue because he believes so firmly that Sundays should be dedicated to fun.

Sala knows the mindset of the working classes well enough to realise that the imposition of behaviour from authority will never be popular. This also applies to high culture. When observing the tea-gardens along the river near Deptford and Greenwich in ‘Sunday Tea-Gardens’, he does not disapprove of the fact that they mainly consist of the working classes drinking beer and smoking pipes. According to Sala; ‘It is my firm belief that if all the palace gardens, parks, picture-galleries, museums, conservatories and aviaries, in all England, were to be opened on Sunday...John Opus the working-man would say to Rebecca his wife, ‘Now Becky, I just feel comfortable for a pipe and a glass of ale, and I am sure you must be thirsty, so come along.’’ (148) Those members of the working class that he observes reading on Sundays, are generally devouring ‘the cheap periodicals sold on the riverboat piers.’ Sala does not approve of all the material in this reading matter, ‘I see a good many humorous woodcuts, and observe sundry grins of the broadest description pervading the countenances of the purchases they read. This is bad.’ (146) But Sala would rather they indulge in this activity than, ‘shouting scurrilities to the passengers by other boats.’ (146) Sala seems to forget that he was employed in producing such ‘low’ woodcuts for penny bloods not all that long ago. Although his attitude to the working classes, as with some of Dickens’s observations, can be condescending and

¹⁰⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘Sunday Morning’ HW vi Oct. 9 1852 pp. 80-81

at times he attempts to distance himself from this class, he is at least concerned with this section of society. In his essays on London it is obvious that the condition of the poor is actually of great importance to him, and their future is deemed to be essential to the future of the city itself. By giving the poor better conditions to live in, better pay and better schooling, and allowing them to relax and unwind on a Sunday, Sala is outlining a very decent and attainable goal for those in positions of authority to achieve. Writing ten years later, on the eve of his trip to Algeria while stationed in Lyons, Sala summed up his position on the poor when he asked;

Why do men revolt? Because they are unhappy. I will go further still – why do they steal? Because they are poor and miserable, and were born hungry, and bred miserable and dirty. And the cure? It is the old story. The architect, and he who directs the architect are the two great reformers. Pull down the filthy hovel and the frowning wall, let sunshine and air into the poor man's dwelling, give him water to wash with and books to read, and you may give the perpetual policeman an all but perpetual holiday.¹⁰⁶

In this chapter we have seen how the city as spectacle had now become unquestionably the city as problem in Sala's London writing. Sala is prepared to tackle these problems while simultaneously trying to decipher the mysteries of the modern metropolis. Sala has enlightened his readers with the history he finds around him but has also described the incongruity and reality of modern life. He has

¹⁰⁶ G.A. Sala, *A Trip to Barbary by a Roundabout Route* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1866) p. 70

realistically portrayed the problems and hardships suffered by the working classes and given reasons for their misery and offered solutions to prevent it. He would find a very different urban milieu when he turned his attentions to the City of Light, and the 'capital of the nineteenth century', Paris.

3. Tales of Two Cities: Part 2 – Paris

In his London articles Sala had attempted to represent the city's incongruities and anomalies and to find the key of the streets. By stressing the growing divide between rich and poor while simultaneously becoming more conscious of the social connections between the classes, he had endeavoured to portray the 'city-as-problem' and not 'city-as-spectacle.' By contrast his Parisian articles of the 1850s do not display such lofty ambitions. Not being as steeped in the history, culture, and personal experience of the streets of Paris, Sala comes at these streets as an outsider. His concern is not with solving the problems of Paris but in portraying the characteristics of the city and its citizens and revelling in the incongruities of modern life. He is essentially observing Paris as London writers like Pierce Egan in the 1820s observed their city, as a spectacle. Sala finds in Paris a society that is less concerned with morals and class boundaries, one that is politically more radical and open to new ideas, more inclined to be gregarious and to be involved in, and enjoy the love of, spectacle. Although there is some sense of nostalgia for a bygone Paris in Sala's writing, it is usually where repression and 'respectability' have ousted the criminal and the dangerous. Sala would eventually come to embrace modernity in this most modern of nineteenth-century cities. The immensity, speed, and manic energy of London is transformed into a more pedestrian Paris, a city where strolling and observing, epitomised by the urban type of the flaneur, contrasts to working and producing. These contrasting images of London and Paris, however, do not seem to

have come into conflict with each other in Sala's imagination. They seem rather to have enabled him to embrace realist and imaginative qualities in his writing that perhaps would not have existed otherwise.

Thrown into the milieu of the Parisian streets, Sala's instinctive mode of survival is to immerse himself in the low-life of the French capital and he does this by donning the fashionable cloak of the flaneur and the bohemian. This chapter will first contextualise the rise of bohemia in Paris and will then through critical analysis of Sala's contributions on the city for *Household Words*, *Punchinello* and the *Illustrated Times*, explain his immersion in that culture and how it affected his style.

Bohemia in London and Paris

Parisian bohemians were undergoing a period of literary and artistic prominence in the 1850s hitherto unheard of. Henri Murger's *Scenes de la vie des Bohemes* (1849) had been dramatised with the help of the playwright Theodore Barriere, and had gone on to become the theatrical 'hit' of the period. Murger depicted the sordid and dissolute lives of a small coterie of artists and writers, and managed to romanticise and idealise the bohemian image for a respectable audience. Centred around the Café Momus, his characters engage in an endless round of misguided attempts to acquire money through artistic endeavour. The action is enforced with a 'comic gaiety' that belied the true horrors and hardships of bohemian existence.¹ Murger himself was no stranger to these horrors and famously stated that 'Every day is not gay in Bohemia.'²

¹¹ Malcolm Easton, *Artists and Writers in Paris: The Bohemian Idea, 1803-67* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964) p. 121

² cited in Jerrold Siegel, *Bohemians in Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (New York: Viking, 1986) p. 48

In the realm of art Gustave Courbet was beginning to experiment with a realism that denounced inherited academic and learned traditions. According to Michael Fried ‘The crucial turning in his art took place during the years 1848-50: in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848.’³ In canvases like *A Burial At Ornans* (1849-50), Courbet notoriously produced unflattering portrayals of ‘local notables’, reinforcing his republican political sympathies and challenging perceived attitudes towards the ‘prevailing canons of taste.’⁴ He focused on outsiders like Jean Journet, the archetypal bohemian eccentric, and became increasingly ‘ragged and *debraille*’ himself.⁵ Charles Baudelaire was also a prominent member of this bohemian family; his *Fleurs de Mal* (1857) would make Paris the subject of lyric poetry for the first time, and become the literary high point of the movement. What all these artists shared were, as Mary Gluck has noted, two central bohemian themes that fascinated contemporary audiences and readers; ‘the artist’s life as an alternative to bourgeois norms of respectability and conformism; and the artist’s calling as a counterpart to modern commercial and professional identities.’⁶

The ‘Bourgeois Monarchy’ of Louis-Phillipe from 1830-1848 had seen the rise to political prominence of the bourgeoisie as a unique event in Europe.⁷ Karl Marx declared that, ‘with the July Revolution, the bourgeoisie had realised the goals of 1789.’⁸ These goals turned out to be supreme control of the city and this engendered intense pressures on artists and young people and led to a marginalisation of the artistic community, who were often forced to survive from hand to mouth in freezing

³ Michael Fried, *Courbet’s Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) p. 1

⁴ *ibid* p. 2

⁵ *ibid.* p. 82

⁶ Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Massachusetts: Harvard Academic Press, 2005) p. 16

⁷ Fried (1990) p. 22

⁸ cited in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) p. 8

garrets. It also provided writers and artists with unrivalled access to the poor and their environment, and this in turn fermented a revolutionary ardour among the bohemian community. The 1848 Parisian uprising had been embraced by the bohemians as an important socialist revolution but the post-revolutionary coup of Louis Napoleon had seen a return to a more bourgeois government. Murger's play became so popular because audiences who were overtly political and those sick to death of revolutionary politics were simultaneously fascinated with bohemia. Jerrold Siegel notes that 'To some, *La Boheme* was attractive as an escape from nearly two years of revolutionary agitation and uncertainty, but to others it represented a reservoir of radical sentiments and energies.'⁹ The tradition of bohemia in Paris, according to Patrick Brantlinger, 'celebrates the ideal of community and the possibility of a 'new order' among artists and writers who have seceded more or less successfully from the bourgeoisie.'¹⁰ It was this idealism, politically and romantically, that set Parisian bohemia apart from its London counterparts, along with a greater sense of co-operation between artists, writers, musicians and philosophers.

London's bohemian community was always more fragmented than its Parisian counterpart, less political, and restricted to literary types. Developing from the Grub Street tradition, which represented 'the capitulation of writers to commerce', London bohemia did not promise a 'new order' but concentrated on the hardships involved in 'opting out' of the mainstream.¹¹ Many so-called bohemians, Thackeray among them, saw this lifestyle as a necessary part of youth and one that was swiftly discarded once commercial success arrived. Brantlinger notes that; 'Instead of being a weapon in the

⁹ Siegel (1986) p. 8

¹⁰ Patrick Brantlinger, 'Bohemia Versus Grub Street: Artists' and Writers' Communities in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London.' *Mosaic* 1983 16:4 25-42

¹¹ *ibid* 26

Bohemian warfare against bourgeois conformity, writing for Arthur Pendennis, David Copperfield and Edwin Reardon is the tool by which they seek to maintain their bourgeois lifestyles and to achieve respectability.’ In other words the protagonists of Dickens’, Thackeray’s and Gissing’s novels ‘do not look upon writing as the key to the door of an alternative lifestyle, the counterculture of Bohemia. That option is apparently not within their ken. As Henri Murger and many others insisted, the one place to find Bohemia was Paris.’¹²

But there were some similarities between London and Parisian bohemia. Sala’s friend and fellow journalist, Edmund Yates, himself a part of London literary bohemia without ever being a fully-fledged bohemian, noted forty years later that; ‘Our British Bohemia...differed in many respects from that fanciful territory inhabited by Schaunard [Murger’s hero] and his comrades. It was less picturesque, it was more practical and commonplace, perhaps a trifle more vulgar; but its denizens had this in common with their French prototypes – that they were young, gifted, and reckless; that they worked by fits and starts, and never except under the pressure of necessity...and that greatest item of resemblance – they had a thorough contempt for the dress, usages and manners of ordinary middle-class civilisation.’¹³ By the end of

¹² *ibid* 40

¹³ Edmund Yates, *His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1885) p. 204 On 10 October 1857 in the *Illustrated Times*, Yates responded to Sala’s inability to produce copy and pay off his debts, and Robert Brough’s description of literary Bohemia in a chapter of his serialised novel, *Marston Lynch*, by exclaiming; ‘the clever, dirty, drunken denizens of that territory [Bohemia], men who bring their profession into such contempt, that all the members of it are compelled to suffer from their recklessness and dishonesty.’ Sala responded angrily to this sneer in a letter to Yates dated six days later and it was to be his most fervent affirmation of Bohemianism and his greatest rebuff to its detractors; ‘Do you want Bohemia to open upon you with its great guns? Do you want to be utterly demolished by the *saeva indignatio* of such men as Brough, as Hannay, as Edwards, or as a dozen others of equal powers. Do you want to be told that you are not a professionally literary man, that you are not a member of the press; that you have no right to impugn the motives or to blacken the character of men who, whatever they may be in private life, do their duty fearlessly, honestly, and ably to the public; - who have served a long and painful apprenticeship to a thankless craft, and who look upon literature, not as a polite *passe-temps*, but as a serious mission. Believe me, my dear Yates, that even ‘respectability’ is evanescent, and that in your own heart...you would rather be a Goldsmith than a

the decade Sala was living in the heart of the ‘literary-journalistic Bohemian’ milieu of London and had become identified as its king.¹³ But it was in Paris, on his numerous expeditions there for Dickens and *Household Words* in the 1850s, that he would first taste this bohemian life.

Parisian bohemia was a wedding of Romanticism and Realism. The Romanticism stemmed from the image of the gypsy (the word *bohème* means gypsy and erroneously posits the first gypsies from the geographical location of Bohemia) living outside of society’s rules, which becomes transformed into the solitary artist free from convention and bourgeois society. The figure of the criminal is also important in this tradition; Karl Marx stated in 1850 that Paris had created a class of ‘professional conspirators whose precarious existence, fostered by bistros and café life, bears the characteristic stamp of the bohemian.’¹⁴ Although Murger tried to disassociate his view of bohemia from that of the criminal underworld, the criminal element was accepted in bohemian circles, often in connection with a ‘fallen woman’ who posed for artists and who had criminal connections. Balzac’s escaped *forçat* (convict) Vautrin, fulfils this role in fiction and reappears throughout the *Comédie Humaine* as the arch-criminal and master of disguise. In ‘Convicts, English and French’ (HW Feb. 24 1855) Sala publicly held the opinion that ‘the curse of French society – the big plague-spots in all the back streets – were the liberated and escaped convicts.’ He describes how Eugene Sue’s *Mysteries of Paris* (1842-1844) was the culmination of this fictional criminal, claiming that ‘every one of the characters either had been, or

Beauclerk, rather a Savage than a Chesterfield. If you have anything to say to or against me or any other Bohemians say it at once, but in its proper place. Don’t make the columns of the IT an arena for the exposure of your personal piques or private wrongs.’ Cited in P.D. Edwards (1997) pp. 45-46

¹³ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens’s Young Men George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 19

¹⁴ cited in Brantlinger (1983) p. 28

were, or ought to have been in the galleys.’ (88) But in his first article on Paris for *Household Words* we shall observe how privately and personally he was attracted to this underworld and yearned to witness it at first-hand.

Realism comes to bohemia from the desire to quantify Paris, and the urge to depict the squalor and depravation of the artistic milieu, which had grown out of the revolutionary politics of 1848. Although not a bohemian and wary of the populace, Balzac is the most important figure in this tradition of realism and one of the biggest influences on Sala’s style. Balzac ‘invented the nineteenth century’, according to Peter Brooks, because he ‘gave form to its emerging urban agglomerations, its nascent capitalist dynamics, its rampant cult of the individual personality.’¹⁵ As we have seen in his work on London, Sala is concerned with delineating the modern urban experience, he is fascinated by speculation and untrammelled desire for financial gain, and he stamps his own personality and strong opinions on each article. Balzac’s absorption in detail has been described as ‘romantic realism’. According to Georg Lukacs; ‘Balzac’s concern for detail is that of a realist, the strength of feeling about it is that of a romantic.’¹⁶ Balzac would thus be appropriated by bohemians whose realistic accounts of the squalor and deprivation they lived in was contrasted by the force of emotion occasioning this state of being. Balzac would also be cited by Marxists as an influence because of his cynical and relentless depiction of Parisians’ obsession with money. The bohemians were aware of their own particular foibles in this respect, they represented a curious paradox in their ‘simultaneous repudiation of, and hunger for, wealth.’¹⁷ Murger himself came in for criticism because it was felt that his affinity with bohemians was not sincere. Jerrold Siegel notes how just after

¹⁵ Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 22

¹⁶ cited in, Richard Sennett, *The Fall Of Public Man* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977) p. 157

¹⁷ Siegel (1986) p. 51

Murger's death in 1861 a commentator described how the bohemian contempt for wealth was like that of the fox for the grapes, 'at bottom they desired nothing so much as riches.'¹⁸ Although Sala would align himself with the bohemian circle of London and Paris during the 1850s, and the idealisation of literature in his career as a novelist in the early 1860s, he would spend much of the late 1860s, 1870s and 1880s earning large sums of money from his foreign correspondence, courting aristocracy, and trying to disassociate himself from his bohemian past as he attempted to assume a more respectable public image.

Balzac would portray bohemia in a number of his novels, most noticeably in *Lost Illusions* (1837-43) where the commercialisation of literature is compared unfavourably to the bohemian '*cenacle*' of intellectuals and artists who strive to uphold high aesthetic ideals. It was a theme that would run throughout the century, this notion of whether art can be treated as a trade, and would culminate in Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891), a biting satire on nineteenth-century journalism. What we can recognise in Sala's endeavour to ally himself with the bohemians is a delicious irony. The man who would come to be regarded as the ultimate 'philistine', the man who of all others in the century sold his soul to commercial journalism at the expense of illustration, artistic production and novel-writing, is in the 1850s endeavouring to fashion himself as the quintessential bohemian; a writer or artist at odds with art for purely commercial gain and prepared to live in a penurious state to uphold this ideal.

Paris itself was undergoing a period of considerable change when Sala first began reporting on the city in 1851. It was a period of counter-revolution that would begin

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 52

the process of the 'Haussmannisation' of Paris. The old, narrow and picturesque streets were being slowly transformed into the grand boulevards of Emperor Napoleon III's new vision for the French capital. With a population roughly half that of London (one million) and with fewer social problems and greater class fluidity than the English capital, Sala's reportage shifts from a desire to solve the city's mysteries and instead delights in the French love of pleasure and spectacle. The original depiction of the artist-flaneur as epitomised by Balzac is a connoisseur of the pleasures of Paris and Sala would willingly indulge in all of the diversions Paris offered, particularly those of consumption and sociability. This early prototype artist-flaneur was a detective and like Sala in London his mission was to 'know' and map the city and its inhabitants. Sala's role in Paris was more like that of Baudelaire's later conception of the flaneur post-1848. Priscilla Parker Ferguson discusses how this new flaneur, or painter of modern life, has a 'higher' aim than that of his predecessor. Ferguson claims that 'the city is no longer reflected in the puzzles resolved by the detective but by the mysteries confronted and savoured and, for that matter, created by the artist.'¹⁹ Fascinated by the mysteries of this city's love of revolution and violence, its monstrous consumption and its joy of spectacle, Sala becomes complicit in the dissolute, lazy and degenerate lifestyle of the flaneur/bohemian. Like Baudelaire's poem 'L'Etranger' (1862) Sala becomes the 'enigmatic man', the 'extraordinary' foreign stranger who loves 'the clouds that pass...the marvellous clouds', the painter of modern life who proposes to 'extract the eternal from the transitory.'²⁰ Walter Benjamin reflected that 'the social basis of flanerie is journalism' and as Mary Gluck notes, he did not mean merely the practice of writing for newspapers, 'but more

¹⁹ Priscilla Parker Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p. 94

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 94

generally, of participating in the world of urban popular culture that was linked to the mass circulation newspaper.²¹

Thackeray had commented on the difference between the dark, foreboding London streets and the light and colourful Parisian ones and the advantages for artists this *mise en scene* inspired. In his *Paris Sketch Book* (1840) he wrote; ‘the street which we enter, that of the Faubourg St. Denis, presents a strange contrast to the dark uniformity of a London street, where everything, in the dingy and smoky atmosphere, looks as though it were painted in India-ink – black houses, black passengers, and black sky. Here, on the contrary, is a thousand times more life and colour.’²² No wonder then that Paris was such a haven for artists. William Holman Hunt believed that young artists ‘naturally wished to study in the gay city.’²³ But Haussmann’s project meant rising rents and an escape for the proletariat and bohemians into the suburbs. Benjamin notes that ‘the *quartiers* of Paris in this way lose their distinctive physiognomy.’²⁴ By the end of the 1850s the heterogeneity that Sala delighted in would be a remnant of the past. In 1867 Mark Twain, in his *The Innocents Abroad*, confirmed the anti-revolutionary nature of the boulevard-building:

But they will build no more barricades; they will break no more soldiers’ heads with paving stones. Louis Napoleon has taken care of all that. He is annihilating the crooked streets and building in their stead noble boulevards as straight as an arrow – avenues which a cannon ball could traverse from end to end without

²¹ Gluck (2005) p. 67

²² W.M. Thackeray, *Paris Sketch Book* (London: Caxton Publishing Co., 1930) p. 183

²³ William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelites and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols (1905) cited in Brantlinger (1983) p. 30

²⁴ Benjamin (1999) p. 23

meeting an obstruction more irresistible than the flesh and bones of men – boulevards whose stately edifices will never afford refugees and plotting places for starving, discontented revolution breeders.²⁵

Sala's first experience of Paris as a journalist was to be thrown into the maelstrom of counter-revolution and warfare, the very beginning of the hegemony of Louis Napoleon and Haussmann. He witnessed the brutality of the regime and the remarkable way in which ordinary Parisians responded to this spectacle.

War and Spectacle

Having fostered a love for the city ever since his schooldays, Sala's return to Paris to write the article 'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality and Musketry' (*HW* Dec. 27 1851) reinvigorated this passion. During the 1850s the city became a second home for Sala and to 'a little colony of Anglo-Parisian Bohemian Cockneys.'²⁶ This coterie of other occasional contributors to *Household Words* included Douglas Jerrold's eldest son Blanchard, along with Robert Barnabas Brough, Henry Sutherland Edwards, William Brough and the brothers of Henry Mayhew, Augustus and Julius.²⁷ These journalists also worked together on publications like the *Illustrated Times*, a twopenny

²⁵ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Signet, 1966) p. 119

²⁶ G.A. Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* Vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Co., 1894) p. 112

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 111

newspaper founded by David Bogue in 1855 and edited initially by Henry Vizetelly. While in Paris they lived a bohemian lifestyle in the Quartier Latin or the Rue de Seine and they possessed in common an experimentalism, a willingness to try anything new. Joel H. Wiener believes that ‘in this experimental, bohemian mood, they made significant breakthroughs that anticipated new journalistic forms and in turn inspired journalists such as Henry Lucy and Henry Labouchere to become central participants in the New Journalism.’²⁸ This bohemian experimentalism would lead many of them to try their hand at writing novels, and in Chapter 5 we shall see how Sala attempted to become a man of letters and novelist. In terms of his journalism, this experimentalism would lead to a growing concern for stories of a ‘human interest’, arising out of his urban wanderings in London and expanded on more imaginatively in Paris. Dickens was also a frequent visitor to Paris in these years and he would meet with his contributors and liberally invite them to dinner from time to time. As we shall see, Dickens did not appear to recognise the growing signs of dissipation in his bohemian contributors’ lives until it was nearly too late. The chief desire of this bohemian circle was, as Sala explains, to distance themselves from the ‘affluent but unsympathetic British Philistines who frequented the fashionable boulevards and the great hotels of the Madeleine and the Rue de la Paix quarter.’²⁹ (It is ironic to think of this growing bohemianism and antipathy towards the ‘philistines’ when in the 1860s Matthew Arnold would accuse Sala of exactly the same epithet.) Sala’s first article on Paris, however, would not refer to bohemians directly, concerned as it was with the turmoil of the events of December 1851.

²⁸ Joel H. Wiener ‘How New Was the New Journalism?’ in Joel H. Wiener (ed) *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 64

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 114

On Tuesday 2nd December 1851 the coup d'état that had been so meticulously planned by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte began on the streets of Paris. The walls of the city were plastered with notices announcing the dissolution of the National Assembly and troops led by Saint-Arnaud occupied strategic points from the Champs-Élysées to the Tuileries. Top opposition leaders were arrested and Louis-Napoleon declared that a new constitution was being framed. Despite the tight control of the army an insurrection led by such eminent Parisians as Victor Hugo and Victor Schoelcher began to erupt. On 3 December the parliamentarian Alphonse Baudin was killed and on 4 December two hundred more rebels fell victim to the forces of law and order. According to Ralph Straus, Sala, who had recently begun a series of what would become frequent sojourns in the French capital, 'constituted himself a Special Correspondent and rushed over for 'copy.'³⁰ Although it is highly unlikely that Sala could have superseded Dickens's authority in this way, in the article Sala eventually wrote he refers rather ironically to the fact that he does not possess the attributes of a Special Correspondent. Indeed he even mocks his own lack of courage in this regard;

Had I been 'our own correspondent', I might have written, in the intervals of fighting, terrific accounts of the combat on cartridge paper, with a pen made from a bayonet, dipped in gunpowder and gore....I will tell you what I did- I withdrew, with seven Englishmen as valorous as myself, to an apartment...and there, in company with sundry carafons of particular cognac, and a large box of cigars, passed the remainder of the day.³¹

³⁰ Straus (1942) p. 102

³¹ G.A. Sala, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Musketry', HW iv Dec. 27 1851 p. 315 All subsequent references in parenthesis

Sala's retreat from the battle raging on the Rue St. Honore in the basement of the Hotel de Lille et d'Albion is symbolic of his future reportage as a Special Correspondent. Unlike the famous pioneering Special Correspondent William Howard Russell, Sala was never famed for his bravery while reporting from the frontline.³² It was rather his ability to report on the ordinary people of a nation and the quotidian workings of that nation that became his own individual slant on foreign reportage. Sala would outline his role in Paris in a statement that would become a blueprint for much of his future travel reportage; 'I do not presume to treat of the details of the combat myself, confining what I have to say to a description of what I really saw of the social aspect of the city.' (315)

The article begins with a personal account of the passengers accompanying Sala on his journey from Boulogne to Paris. Sala adds some descriptive novelistic qualities to the scene outside the train; 'there was a thick white fog, and a trifle of drizzling rain, and enough frost to make the rails slippery, but we were jovial, notwithstanding, as old travellers ought to be.' (313) He is already fashioning himself as an experienced traveller and man of the world, despite his tender years (Sala was only twenty-three at the time) and lack of travel experience. At first the journey passes without any incident but as they approach Paris they begin to witness growing signs of martial activity as more and more soldiers muster at the various train stations along the route. On entering Paris Sala describes the atmosphere of the deserted streets as eerie and uncanny, and when he reaches his hotel he realises how different a city is when under siege;

³² Sala always admired and respected W.H. Russell's style of foreign reportage, however, and would dedicate his collection of writings from the American Civil War for the *Daily Telegraph* to him with the simple inscription 'Crimea', 'India', 'America' underneath his name.

All these things were changed...one of the dreadful proclamations of the government...which conveyed the ominous intimation that everyone found with arms in their hands...would be instantly shot. The newspapers were in a state of siege; for the government had suspended all but its own immediate organs. The provisions were in a state of siege; the milk was out, and no one would volunteer to go to the *cremiers* for more. (313)

The sudden shift from the serious threat of imminent death to the consequences of running out of milk is typical of Sala's understated and ironic humour, but it also serves to display how deeply uncivilised and un-English is this French obsession for revolutions and bloodshed. The inability to have milk in one's tea denotes the cultural difference between a so-called 'peace-loving nation' like Britain, and the war-like and revolutionary tendencies of the French.

In his autobiography Sala attributes the 'and Musketry' part of the article's title to Dickens. He tells us that 'Dickens cordially detested the French President, and held, as Victor Hugo did, that Louis Napoleon, in December 1852, proved himself a perjurer and an assassin, and had all the making in him of a despot as unscrupulous and as merciless as his uncle Napoleon the Great was.'³³ (Louis Napoleon had declared himself Emperor in December 1852 and Dickens thought he was little more than a dictator for having done so.) Sala also makes the claim that either Dickens or W.H. Wills inserted into the article a substantial extract taken from a statement by the Duke

³³ G.A. Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Co.: 1895) pp. 304-5

of Wellington attesting to the savagery and brutality of the French soldiery. This is a good example of the way in which Dickens as editor could manipulate the political message in one of his contributor's articles. If Sala did not witness the brutality he describes then he is already showing signs of being an effective novelist because of the forcefulness and reality of the writing. He describes the French Lancers as being 'in stained white cloaks, with their murderous weapons couched...The bloody swords, the dirt, the hoarse voices, unkempt beards', (315) before then ironically proclaiming; 'Glorious war! I think the sight of those troopers would do more to cure its admirers than all the orators of the Peace Society could do in a twelve-month!' (315) The irony here helps underline the message Dickens wants his readers to receive, that this counter-revolution is being conducted against the desires of the ordinary populace.

Back in the turmoil of December 1851, on walking into a chemist's shop in the ironically named Rue de la Paix, Sala informs us that, 'The chemist was lying dead upstairs, shot...Scores of similar incidents took place on that dreadful Thursday afternoon.' (316) Sala describes the 'horrible ferocity and brutality of this ruthless soldiery...they were daily shooting their prisoners in cold blood...I know that in the Champ des Mars one hundred and fifty-six men were executed...I know – and my informant was a clerk in the office of the Ministry of War – that the official return of insurgents killed, was 2007, and of soldiers fifteen. Rather long odds.' (317) The reader is left in no doubt that Sala sympathises with these 'insurgents'.

Sala then visits a grocer who informs him that he had not been able to open his door in the morning because of the dead bodies piled on the step in front of it. The juxtaposition of the ordinary tradesmen with the brutal savagery of war is made

particularly incongruous here. Sala goes into a tobacconist's shop and is shown the 'trace of the passage of a cannon ball.' (317) Almost fatally, and in an incident of high dramatic quality, Sala is once again witness to the savagery of the Lancers, this time at the corner of the Rue Richelieu; 'A gigantic Lancer...who seeing me stand still for a moment, stooped from his horse, and putting his pistol to my head (right between the eyes) told me to *'traverser'*. As I believed he would infallibly have blown my brains out in another minute, I turned and fled.' (317) Sala's very personal account of his terror in the face of death is described in a language well-suited to the dramatic message his editor wants him to portray and is an early indication of his ability to provide sensational reporting.

But throughout the article there is a contrast in the sight of the people of Paris, not hiding or appearing concerned, but instead 'lounging about, looking at these things with pleased yet languid curiosity...It was as good as a play to them.' (316) For Parisians their worship of the theatre is readily transposed to reality and life for them is always a spectacle and a drama. In a recent article by Dickens for *Household Words* entitled 'French Horse-Racing' (HW 15 Nov. 1851) the editor had detailed the difference between the English and the French in their reaction to that sport. Whereas the English enjoyed horse-racing for the contest Dickens reported that for the French 'they are simply amused by the spectacle.'³⁴ In an essay entitled 'On a Sun-Dial' William Hazlitt described the French love for the transitory, the ephemeral; 'The French attach no importance to anything, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in*

³⁴ Charles Dickens, 'French Horse-Racing' HW iv 15 Nov 1851 p. 216

transitu.³⁵ Sala extends this and finds the Parisians' behaviour both shocking and intriguing. He describes the mass graves and the queue of 2000 people outside the Morgue who were 'laughing, talking, smoking, eating apples, as though it were some pleasant spectacle they were going to, instead of that frightful exhibition.' (318) With this description Sala manages to sum up the essence of Parisian life; not by descriptions of the fighting or the bloodshed, but in the *joie de vivre* of the inhabitants of the city. There is also the contrast here between the Great Exhibition, that spectacle of civilisation and progress, and this 'frightful exhibition' on the streets of Paris that is at once savage and regressive. This serves to reinforce the civilised and peaceable aspects of the English in contrast to the perceived violent bloodlust of the French soldiery.

With the blood not yet dry on the Boulevards Sala describes how 'this extraordinary people was, the next night, dancing and flirting at the Salle Valentino, or the Prado, or lounging in the foyers of the Italian Opera.' (318) For Sala, accustomed only to the streets of London, the streets that are in Dickens's words, 'sombre, heavy, large', and whose occupants resemble a pantomime because 'no countenance laughs; the lips are mute; not a cry, not a voice; everyone remains isolated in the crowd,' the sight of Parisians living life to the full in the face of such adversity is both intriguing and shocking.³⁶ Many years later, in his autobiography, Sala gives us an insight into what he was really doing in Paris at this time. He describes how, accompanied by a 'young English stockbroker', and due to the perceived shabbiness of the Rue aux Feves, he and his friend 'carefully disguised ourselves in shabby blouses and grimed our hands and faces.' They wanted to see the cabaret at the 'Lapin Blanc' and to immerse

³⁵ Gregory Dart (ed) William Hazlitt, *Metropolitan Writings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005) p. 156

³⁶ Charles Dickens, 'Paris Improved' xii *Household Words* 17 Nov. 1855 p. 343

themselves in the sordid, bohemian environment. But Sala is disappointed and informs us that ‘the romance of felony seemed to have altogether disappeared from the Rue aux Feves and its surroundings.’³⁷ The absence of bandits and criminals from the *mise en scene* means there is a marked lack of the bohemian element Sala wants to witness. Of course this seamier side of Sala’s Parisian trip was not included in the eventual essay that appeared in *Household Words*. It would have been too provocative for Dickens’s supposedly genteel readers to learn that one of the contributors was frequenting a den of vice and iniquity. Sala’s personal interest in bohemia is contrasted with his realisation of the public limits of affection for bohemians back home in England.

By focusing on Parisians’ ability to return to normality even after what should have been such a seismic shock to their lives, Sala is commenting on how ubiquitous revolution has become in the French capital. But while this is supposed to be a rebuke to the French for the consumption of middle-class English readers of *Household Words*, it becomes in Sala’s hands a more ambiguous reflection on the events and yet one more contribution to the literature of Paris, rather than an attempt to make sense of the city. Sala the journalist becomes Sala the spectator, and the object of his scrutiny are the spectacle-loving Parisians, themselves happy to both be a part of the spectacle and to observe it. In *Twice Round the Clock* Sala humorously summed up this need, ‘even oysters are kept in the windows of Paris for weeks for the spectacle and the show.’³⁸

³⁷ Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Co., 1895) p. 306

³⁸ G.A. Sala, *Twice Round the Clock* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971) p. 326

Sala would reiterate this ironic portrayal of war while writing for a penny comic weekly called *Punchinello*.³⁹ Sala's contribution began in the third number, dated March 18 1854, and was the first in a run of nine short chapters of an unfinished fictional story entitled 'Charley In The Guards; A Story of Military Life by Captain De Boots. H.P. Unattached.' Sala cobbles together a loose narrative concerning the aristocratic hero who is dismayed at the boredom and ill discipline of camp-life while in Paris. Charley, or the Honourable Charles Lilion, yearns for the glory and excitement to be found in combat. We witness him drinking heavily and losing large sums of money at gambling, vices which he denies enjoying but indulges in simply because everyone else in his regiment does so. Sala uses his narrative of a military life in order to denunciate war in strong language, even at a time of rampant nationalism and support of the war effort; 'If war could be divested of blood and havoc and destruction,- if in its train there came not the worst of human passions, the direst of human afflictions,- if fears of griping poverty and fierce discontent, and unutterable misery and intolerable oppression, did not follow upon every 'famous victory' and 'glorious engagement', why, go to the war at once, say I, and for ever.'⁴⁰ This time the irony reinforces Sala's vehemently anti-war position, and not that of Dickens. Sala once again revels in the spectacle of Parisians in 'Charley In The Guards' and reflects on their sociability as they parade on foot or on horseback along the Grand Avenue of the Champs Elysees. He sums this aspect of Parisian life up; 'Man is a gregarious animal, but the Parisian is one to a superlative degree.'⁴¹

This synthesis of the gregariousness of the Parisian, combined with war and spectacle is brought to fruition in an article by Sala that Dickens was highly critical

³⁹ The magazine ran from 4 March 1854 to 17 February 1855 Edwards (1997) p. 18

⁴⁰ G.A. Sala, 'Charley in the Guards', *Punchinello* Chapter 8 6 May 1854 p. 82

⁴¹ G.A. Sala, 'Charley in the Guards' *Punchinello* Chapter 1 March 18 1854 p. 17

of, 'Mars a la Mode' (HW 14 Oct. 1854). Written at the time of the Crimean War, which had naturally induced a greater sense of Anglo-French co-operation and understanding, Dickens was concerned with its irreverent depiction of the fashionable uniforms worn by Napoleon's army compared to the drab contemporary British uniforms. Dickens had already written to W.H. Wills on 14 Oct. 1854 to complain about an article by Miss Lynn. Dickens felt that, 'the article characterised the French in general as suspicious'. Dickens then quotes the sentence that causes the most offence, 'Profound ineradicable scepticism is the plague spot of the festering sore of the modern French mind.'⁴² Dickens demonstrates his knowledge of Balzac's intentions in his novels and declares that this is not the time for such social inquiry; 'Somehow this Balzac-imitation in poking with a little knife into the social peculiarities of France seems ungraceful, ungracious, and inopportune just now. We can't afford to make mistakes which people feel to be mistakes almost without knowing why.'⁴³ Balzac's desire to reveal the negative aspects of Parisian life is noted and ironically deemed unpatriotic at a time of war. In 'Mars a la Mode' Sala imaginatively brings back the armies of Napoleon from the dead merely to admire the gorgeous array of their uniforms; 'how much of awful grandeur, yet how much of fantastic eccentricity it would present!'⁴⁴ Sala then demonstrates his passion for fashion by comparing army uniform throughout different nations and eras before criticising the utilitarian tendencies of the current English army uniform; 'I tremble for the day when the British grenadiers, attired by whole-hogger in the severest style of utilitarianism, would be nothing but a slovenly, slouching, tasteless, hideous guy.' (195) Dickens felt that the light-heartedness of the article was unseemly, coming as it

⁴² Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson (eds) *Letters Of Charles Dickens Vol. VII 1853-55* (1995) p. 438

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 438

⁴⁴ G.A. Sala, 'Mars a la Mode', HW x Oct. 14 1854 p. 193 All subsequent references in parenthesis

did on the back of W.H. Russell's graphic and disturbing accounts in the *Times* from the Battle of Alma (Sept. 19-20).⁴⁵ The difference between Russell's accounts and Sala's article once again highlights the marked difference in style between the two journalists. We have already seen how Sala was not willing to throw himself into the midst of war with his article on the December *coup d'état* of 1851. Three years later Sala is content to digress on a personal and favourite subject, fashion, while Russell is courting death in the middle of the battlefield. But Sala's article, despite its humour and its concentration on the drab, mundane attire of the British soldier, was also a means of criticising the state bureaucracy undermining the war effort. The lack of imagination and flair Sala believes is required at the top of the military and administrative departments is symbolised by the uniform. The efficiency and ruthlessness of the Napoleonic army is not diminished by their gorgeous attire but in fact enhanced by it. The French love of fashion is transplanted even to the battlefield and Sala believes the English army could learn from their example. It is an example of how Sala's use of humour and irony could convey a serious message and be made more palatable and accessible to his readership.

Balzac and boarding houses

In 'Cities In Plain Clothes' written for the July 17 1852 edition, Sala presents an ultra-realistic view of large and famous cities; 'I don't exactly envy, but I sigh for the lot of those who possess imagination, for I have none' he begins, and goes on to wish that he had the faculty of a poet or a painter to limn the cities 'that rapturous tourists

⁴⁵ Storey, Tillotson, Easson (1995) p. 438

describe' but instead insists that he is too realistic and cynical for this.⁴⁶ He describes himself as being 'essentially of a Bohemian and desultory nature' and this is Sala's first mention of the word 'Bohemia' in his essays. (418) Sala is building up his credentials as a realist and a bohemian, someone attuned to low-life and willing to describe people and cities as they are, without needless embellishment. He mentions Pera in Egypt, and the cities of Venice and Naples as being portrayed in the imagination by artists and writers as beautiful but in reality have their grim and ugly side. At the end of the article Sala apologises to his more sentimental readers but offers his experience of the world as an excuse for his realism; 'Be not angry with me, sentimental tourists and writers of stanzas, and imaginative painter. You have your Venices and Stambouls. But I have seen so many plays, and taken so many bad half-crowns in my life, that I grow sceptical, and look twice at cities and at men, before I take them for granted.' (422) This is Sala the cynic at the age of twenty-four years old foretelling his future role as Special Correspondent, which will be to portray cities not for their aesthetic beauty or for tourist guides but to uncover the sordid personal and realistic truths behind the respectability and the grandiose public architecture. It is also a taste of the realism that he would try to bring into his novels in the 1860s, a realism that would be attached to sensation. His growing association with bohemia means that he is personally experiencing poverty and feels a brotherhood with this community who live with and feel sympathy for, the poor. The first products of this garret lifestyle came in an article entitled 'Four Stories' (HW June 26 1852).

The title 'Four Stories' puns on the expectation that it will contain four separate pieces of fiction but is in fact a reference to the boarding-house Sala was then

⁴⁶ G.A. Sala, 'Cities in Plain Clothes' HW v July 17 1852 p. 419 All subsequent references in parenthesis

occupying; 'the house I live in is four stories high and a perfect citadel of separate little fortalices.'⁴⁷ The purpose of the article is to compare the 'separate little fortalices' of a Parisian boarding-house with the more open and public English lodging-house. Sala lets his readers know that his abode is situated in the Rue Coquelet, in the historical Faubourg St. Germain. Situated in the Quartier Latin which was in the 1850s, as it still is today, a vibrant intellectual neighbourhood and home of Bohemia, Sala describes it pre-Haussmanisation; 'Silent streets, little shrunken shops, gloomy gates, shabby little carriages, street-porters sleeping in the sun, devout old ladies trotting to early mass, stealthy priests gliding along in the shadow of the walls.' (337) The 'devout old ladies' and the 'stealthy priests' hint at a critique of Catholicism à la Sala's *No Popery* panorama, but Sala seems more concerned with painting a word picture of Paris and its otherness for the posterity of his readers. Over the next four years these quaint little streets would become transformed into the grand boulevards.

The way in which Sala personally addresses his readers indicates a change in the way he sees himself. He is no longer the young, naïve man locked out of his rooms for the night or traversing through the East End for the first time. He now describes himself in the first person as; 'I, the indigent philosopher, whose vocation is to observe, and from the kennel of social peculiarities, fish, with the crook of reflection, queer fragments of life and manners...' (337) Sala is in the process of reinterpreting himself as the quintessential man about town, the urban spectator or flaneur.

⁴⁷ G.A. Sala, 'Four Stories' HW v June 26 1852 p. 336 All subsequent references in parenthesis

Sala begins the article by bemoaning the lack of freedom in an English lodging-house and the tenants' obsession with the lives of their fellow residents; 'a tenant could not reside three weeks without his avocations, his friends, and general social position being more or less known, or certainly assumed.' (337) His criticism mirrors Dickens's assertion in his 'Insularities' article (HW 19 Jan. 1856) that the English are far too obsessed with their own status and gentility and this is manifested by their overt curiosity into other people's lives.⁴⁸ But in France, there is less desire to know the business of one's neighbours. Although this leads to less social interaction it negates the potentially constricting forces of envy and jealousy. Sala describes how, in a Parisian boarding-house, 'the first floor might be occupied by a wild beast tamer...the second by a secret society of Illuminati, and the third by a private lunatic asylum, for aught the fourth floor knew.' (337) In an article entitled 'The Great Hotel Question' (HW Feb. 16 1856), Sala described his delight at this social mix, 'in France, the high and the low, the gorgeous and the ragged...are all mixed in a marvellous and incongruous salad.'⁴⁹ There is an inherent paradox in the Haussmann project that Sala is flagging well before it has had time to come to fruition. This social model of heterogeneity declined during the Haussmanisation of Paris. Although its outward intention was to bind the populace together in a unified ideological concept of an imperial and modern Paris, the project was actually designed to inhibit the revolutionary forces that threatened to subsume the city. As we have seen the widening of the streets was designed to eradicate the erection of barriers and new streets were to 'furnish the shortest route between the barracks and the workers' districts.'⁵⁰ By displacing the classes into separate areas or *arrondissements*, the heterogeneity that Sala is describing here would become a thing of the past.

⁴⁸ Charles Dickens, 'Insularities', HW xiii Jan. 19 1856

⁴⁹ G.A. Sala, 'The Great Hotel Question' HW xiii Feb. 16 1856 p. 100

⁵⁰ Benjamin (1999) p. 12

Christopher Prendergast sums this up; ‘physically, the city came to seem more coherent, but socially it remained disturbingly opaque and unpredictable.’⁵¹ By displacing the working classes and the ‘undesirables’ of Paris and forcing them to live in separate districts, Haussmann and Napoleon III thought they were controlling the seditious elements and limiting the passing on of their revolutionary ideas to the middle classes. In fact, by separating them from the rest of society, the working classes were able to band together without fear of reprisals; the Commune of 1871 being a result of this social experimentation. Sala’s article becomes then, not only a literary piece of writing, influenced by Honore de Balzac who was just coming to the end of his reign as the chronicler of the city, but also a piece of social history.

The influence of Balzac becomes apparent in ‘Four Stories’ when Sala describes the wife of the Colonel de la Gamelle, who resides on the first floor. She is ‘of a meek and lachrymose temperament’, and ‘reclines all day on a sofa, reading the novels of the admired M. de Balzac.’ (339) The class of the reader, along with her mild disposition and her indigence suggests that Balzac’s novels are too sensational and too refined for English tastes. It is possible that Dickens sanctioned these negative suggestions about the writer who, ironically, would become, along with Dickens, known as the definitive delineator of the nineteenth century. Sala describes Dickens’s knowledge of French literature as ‘practically destitute...nor have I heard him ask any questions about the personalities or idiosyncrasies of any of the historic men and women who have been the glory of French literature.’⁵² For Sala this is unfathomable, personality is always of the utmost importance to him. Balzac believed that, ‘personality has become the fundamental social category of the city’, because it gave

⁵¹ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris In The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) p. 9

⁵² Sala (1894) p. 108

clues to the way society worked. In Balzac's fiction each personality is 'a statement about the social order of the city as a whole.'⁵³ Dickens was wary of Balzac because of his reputation in England as the immoral portrayer of the licentiousness and turbulence of French society.⁵⁴ In fact only four of Balzac's novels had been translated into English by 1860, due to what P. D. Edwards describes as 'a fear that revolutionary doctrines would gain ground in England if Balzac's seductively invigorating vision...of French society became too freely available.'⁵⁵ Sala, however, was eagerly devouring Balzac's fiction in its native language throughout the decade. Forty years later in the first of his memoirs, Sala depicts himself as an inveterate loafer, 'I idled over and over again in Paris', who somehow manages, like Mme. de la Gammelle, to immerse himself in Parisian life by 'devoting my study hours to reading through the whole of Balzac.'⁵⁶ Sala is keen to envelop himself in the literature of Paris and is not concerned with the perceived lack of morality that his fellow countrymen are convinced of. Reading Balzac would have given Sala a feeling of freedom compared to the domestic realism of English fiction, and would have radicalised his political thinking too.

It is clear from this that Sala's article, 'Four Stories', is directly influenced by Balzac's novel *Le Pere Goriot* (1834), especially the vivid descriptions in the novel of Mme. Vauquer's boarding house. The rest of Sala's article is devoted, as Balzac had exhaustively done in *Le Pere Goriot*, to describing in minute detail the various tenants that inhabit the boarding-house. We are introduced to Monsieur Stidman the porter and unsuccessful tailor, who is described with Balzacian relish as being 'of an

⁵³ Prendergast (1992) pp. 156-7

⁵⁴ P.D. Edwards (1997) p. 77

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 77

⁵⁶ Sala (1894) p. 97

indefinite age, and has a face so seamed with the small-pox that it is all holes and knots like a cane-bottomed chair.' (338) His wife has 'a rabid reverence for the memory of the emperor; and I am certain, must have belonged to the grand army, for she has the voice of a grenadier...and swears like a trooper.' (339) Her reverence for Napoleon reminds the reader that Paris is referred to by all English writers as *the* site of revolution in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ On the first floor there is M. Ulysse de Saint-Flamm. Epitomising the capitalistic tendencies of what Peter Brooks describes as 'convulsive egotism and the exaltation of ungoverned individualism'; M. Ulysse's profession is difficult to pin down.⁵⁸ 'Were a census paper to be sent to him', says Sala, 'I doubt whether he would not be puzzled as to what to describe himself.' (339) The nineteenth century obsession with taxonomy breaks down when confronted with a man of no fixed profession. In fact M. Ulysse is that archetype of modern, urban life, and subject of fascination to Sala, 'he is a speculator.' Here he describes the fragility and uncertainty of this type, 'and though perhaps he may be worth a million francs today, he may sleep in the debtor's prison of Clichy tomorrow.' (339) In his article 'The Golden Calf' (HW Dec. 23 1854), Sala sits in a Parisian café close to the Café de l'Opera sipping absinthe and reminiscing about a subterranean inn by Capel Court in London. The inn is exclusively inhabited by ruined men who had once been stockbrokers but were now hopelessly optimistic speculators. The café he sits in reminds him of these broken men because 'from five to seven every evening the adorers of the Golden Calf go through their orisons.'⁵⁹ The French speculators, despite some external differences, are as obsessed with Mammon as the English; 'It is the old under Capel-Court Inferno with a few moustaches, some plate-glass, and a

⁵⁷ for more on Paris and Revolution see, Priscilla Parker Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

⁵⁸ Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 22

⁵⁹ G.A. Sala, 'The Golden Calf' HW x Dec. 23 1854 p. 51 All subsequent references in parenthesis

ribbon or two of the Legion of Honour.’ (51) They may appear more respectable than their English counterparts but their ultimate goal is the same, the accumulation of finance. Sala’s obsession with speculation, gambling and respectability is a purely modern preoccupation. He knew that Louis Napoleon was promoting investment capital and that the Bourse in Paris had experienced a ‘rash of speculation’, just like its counterpart the Stock Exchange in London. Walter Benjamin wrote that, ‘trading on the stock exchange displaces the forms of gambling handed down from feudal society.’⁶⁰ Sala was alert to this shift from gambling to speculation as we have seen in his London essays. Marx’s son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, affirms this and links gambling with the incongruities of the market. He describes gambling as ‘an imitation in miniature of the mysteries of economic fluctuation.’⁶¹ Balzac had based *Le Pere Goriot* on King Lear and one of the major themes of the novel is the notion of chance. Richard Sennet notes how by transposing the story of Lear to the modern city, Balzac ‘dethroned the idea of the wheel of fortune from its Renaissance nobility and majesty and thrust it into the dirt of scandal, vulgar compromises, and false expectations.’⁶² Chance or speculation has become absolute and ignoble; like Lear one day you could be parading amongst royalty, the next begging on the dirty and grimy streets of the metropolis. As Sennett says ‘We find in Balzac a passion for examining the city in every revolting particular, a pleasure in showing just how terrible it is.’⁶³ It was this uncompromising aspect of Balzac’s art that attracted Sala to his vision of Paris.

Back in the boarding house in ‘Four Stories’, Sala ascends the final flight of stairs to the fourth floor, and the reader is introduced to ‘the lazy artist’ Timoleon Cassemajou,

⁶⁰ Benjamin (1999) p. 12

⁶¹ cited in *ibid.* p. 12

⁶² Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993) p. 154

⁶³ *ibid* p. 156

who 'might make 10,000 francs a year by portraiture, but he won't.' (342)

Cassemajou represents the bohemian, indigent, starving artist in his garret. Sala's portrayal of the boarding house as a repository of all human life stems from Balzac's preoccupation with ascribing human qualities to the physical material found in the city. In his novella *Ferragus*, Balzac describes how 'there are streets that are noble, others that are simply honest...streets always dirty...that's to say: the streets of Paris have human qualities.'⁶⁴ Balzac extends this metaphor and describes how a boarding house can actually represent human matter; 'Its attics, a kind of head full of knowledge and genius; its second storeys, replete stomachs; its ground floor shops veritable feet: from there set out all the runners and the commercial travellers.'⁶⁵ The boarding house is also symbolic of Parisian society. Prendergast notes that 'the more intense and minute Balzac's descriptions of individuals become, the more they are meant to be expanded and to represent the bigger picture of Paris.'⁶⁶ The whole panoply of Parisian life is represented in Sala's boarding-house, the starving artists and intellectuals in their garrets through to the well-fed Colonels on the second floor. This microcosm of Parisian society is meant as a favourable contrast to the separateness of the classes in London and their lack of social interaction. In George Gissing's novel *New Grub Street* the failed novelist Edward Reardon echoes Sala's description with a riddle. 'Why is a London lodging-house like the human body?' he asks. The answer is 'Because the brains are always at the top.'⁶⁷ Sala would have been pleased with the quip living, as he did, in the garrets of many Parisian boarding houses and identifying himself with the intellectual and bohemian portion of the household.

⁶⁴ quoted in Benjamin (1999) p. 133

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 133

⁶⁶ Prendergast (1992) p. 159

⁶⁷ quoted in Brooks (2005) p. 141

Lost Illusions

In his *Paris Sketchbook* Thackeray provides the reader with a detailed explanation of why the quality of art to be found in Paris is superior to that in London. According to Thackeray ‘the streets are filled with picture-shops, the people themselves are pictures walking about; the churches, theatres, eating-houses, concert rooms, are covered with pictures; nature itself is inclined more kindly to him, for the sky is a thousand times more bright and beautiful, and the sun shines for the greater part of the year... The life of the young artist here is the easiest, merriest, dirtiest existence possible.’⁶⁸ Thackeray was discussing his own experiences as an art student in Paris from 1833-35, before penury and hardship would become the norm for artists. Reliving the 1840s, Henri Murger believed that, ‘Any man who enters the path of Art, with his art as his sole means of support, is bound to pass by way of Bohemia.’⁶⁹ It was in the streets of Paris, the streets so conducive to artistic endeavour, that Sala must have felt the full force of his retreat from art to commercial journalism. He must have empathised with the young provincial poet Lucien Chardon who comes to seek his fortune in Paris in Balzac’s *Lost Illusions* (1837-43).

Balzac’s novel begins with a hyper-real description of the old wooden printing presses still being used in provincial Angouleme. Peter Brooks notes how Balzac’s nostalgia for these presses is swiftly contrasted with the new-fangled Stanhope press and inking rollers which devour the old-fashioned printing method. Brooks persuasively argues that the rest of the novel hinges on this concept of the devouring

⁶⁸ Thackeray (1930) p. 206

⁶⁹ cited in Brantlinger (1983) 35

of older forms of higher literature, poetry and essays for that of commercial journalism. The two protagonists, Lucien and David Sechard are similarly consumed as ‘the devouring mechanical presses eats up an older and better form of literature.’⁷⁰ Sala wrote in a similarly nostalgic vein about the invention of lithography in ‘Stone Pictures’ (HW May 8 1852). The article recounts the trials and tribulations of Aloys Senefelder from Bohemia who realised that the soft and calacareous stones by the river Isere were perfectly suited to the biting in of ink and aquafortis. The article goes into great detail concerning the different processes involved in the lithographical art, the first productions of which were pieces of written music in 1796. We are told that in 1819 Rudolph Ackermann, the printer and bookseller, took up lithography and published a translation of Senefelder’s work. Sala also delights in informing his readers that Ackermann’s Art Library was the first shop in London to be lit solely by gas. There is a sense of modernity and nostalgia running through the article. Sala seems to be pining for his early days as an apprentice engraver, illustrator and artist, before his introduction to the world of mercenary commercial journalism.

In *Lost Illusions* Lucien’s first stroll in the Tuileries exposes his provinciality and he is consumed with a desire to ape the appearance of the Parisians and to possess their elegance and costumed finery. This desire ends in his denunciation of poetry and his entrance into the journalistic milieu. Forced to criticise his friend Nathan’s novel by Lousteau in order to take revenge on the publisher Dauriat who has refused to sell Lucien’s sonnets, Lucien quickly becomes mired in a war of circulation and the acquisition of money. Lousteau tells him to ‘Learn your trade. A journalist is an

⁷⁰ Brooks (2005) p. 24

acrobat.’⁷¹ Reading the novel, Sala must have identified himself with this notion of ‘selling one’s soul’ or denouncing artistic aspiration for the profitability of journalism. Andrew McCann notes how ‘The power of the press and the seeming monotony of writing for it emerge in nineteenth-century fiction as powerful tropes in accounts of literary endeavour beholden to the marketplace.’⁷² In the novel, Lucien, driven by poverty and ambition, finds himself inhabiting a bohemian world of idealistic writers and thinkers, but at the same time sinks into the hack-work of literary journalism which finally dooms him to betray his own ideas. Sala’s own self-fashioning as a bohemian was at odds with his new-found profession; perhaps Sala was able to reconcile the two differing stances through his reading of Balzac.

Historical frissons

Walter Benjamin wrote that ‘The great reminiscences, the historical frissons – these are all so much junk to the flaneur, who is happy to leave them to the tourist.’⁷³ In his Parisian articles Sala would fashion himself as the painter of modern life, the flaneur at odds with the ‘philistinism’ of his fellow bourgeois countrymen, all of whom he regarded as mere tourists unable to appreciate the reality of the Parisian streets. But his passion for history and his ability to immerse himself in the identity of a particular place meant that historical association would never be discarded. Priscilla Parker Ferguson represents the flaneur slightly differently. She says that, ‘more than any other urban type, the flaneur suggests the contradictions of the modern city, caught

⁷¹ cited in *ibid.* p. 32

⁷² Andrew McCann, *Marcus Clarke’s Bohemia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing 2004) p. 12

⁷³ cited in Edmund White, *The Flaneur* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 47

between the insistent mobility of the present and the visible weight of the past.’⁷⁴ This seems to sum up Sala’s ambiguity towards modernity and historicity. He is at once preoccupied with the modern, the present, the now, when in a particular city but simultaneously conscious of all that has been before. These aspects are described in an article entitled ‘Doctor Veron’s Time’ (HW Apr. 19 1856). Sala revisits his obsession for gambling and historical perspective in a portrayal of the Palais Royal in the time of Napoleon. The ‘Dr. Veron’ of the title published six volumes of his *Memoires d’un Bourgeois de Paris* and was roundly ‘ridiculed for his pompous fanfarronades, his egotism, and his elaborated gossip.’⁷⁵ Sala uses these memoirs to paint a picture of the Palais Royal at the turn of the nineteenth century. But he cannot resist representing the realities of it in the present day; ‘a delicious garden-quadrangle...in wet weather it supplies one with an unequalled promenade, sheltered from the pattering rain, in the shape of four magnificent arcades, where he may lounge, loaf and flaneur at his leisure, among a well-dressed throng, apparently as idle as himself.’ (334) Once again Sala reveals himself in his new persona as the idle, lounging, urban spectator. By contrast to this modern day ordered and respectable site in Paris, the Palais Royal he wants to discuss was, ‘the haunt of all that was beautiful and wicked, gay and depraved, criminal and frivolous, in Paris.’ (335) This bohemian and criminal side of the historic Palais Royal is sadly missing from the modern version. The ‘clearing up’ of the undesirables by Haussmann has sanitised the site and rendered it free of excitement and danger. What most interests Sala in this historical Palais Royal is its preponderance of gaming houses. Sala gives us a statistical account of the sheer scale of gambling that occurred, ‘the gross sum lost at play in the public gaming-houses of Paris in the ten years from 1819-29 amounted to 137,313,403

⁷⁴ Priscilla Parker Ferguson, *Paris As Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994) p. 80

⁷⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘Dr. Veron’s Time’ HW xiii Apr. 19 1856 p. 334 All subsequent references in parenthesis

francs.’ (335) Sala informs us that a large proportion of this sum was used ‘to serve the meritorious spy system’ and so public gaming continued to be authorised right up until, ‘they were finally closed, by a vote of the Chamber of Deputies, in 1837.’ (335) There is a sense of nostalgia for this era of state-sponsored gaming, a far cry from the English disdain for, and suppression of, gambling.

In ‘A Handful Of Foreign Money’ (Sept. 4 1852), Sala perfectly conforms to Dickens’s desire for amusement, instruction and imagination in his contributors’ articles. Sala immediately places himself in the milieu of Paris and provides topographical details to authenticate his account, ‘I cross the Place de la Concorde...The Grand Avenue of the Champs Elysees is crowded with fashionable equipages, chequered here and there by omnibuses, waggons, and washerwomen’s carts. Fleet Street commingles here with Rotten Row.’⁷⁶ Sala makes the comparison with the English capital to demonstrate the democratic tendencies of Paris sadly missing in the rigid, structured class system displayed in London. The article then becomes a protracted history lesson for his English readers using the medium of the French coins Sala finds on the pavement; ‘As it is a handful of small French change is a course of lectures, in miniature, on the history of France.’ (577) The first coin he comes across is a two-franc piece ‘bearing the effigy of Louis Philippe, Roi des Francais 1835.’ (574) Using his imagination Sala can almost ‘discern a wink in the royal eye.’ (574) The wink denotes Louis Philippe’s belief that he is in control after having curtailed the freedom of the newspapers, ‘for Thiers is minister’. The next coin is a franc ‘different from the smug garishness of the Philippine coins.’ (574) The legend on it reads, ‘Napoleon Empereur’ and on the obverse, ‘Republique Francaise

⁷⁶ G.A. Sala, ‘A Handful of Foreign Money’ HW v Sept. 4 1852 p. 573 All subsequent references in parenthesis

1806'. Sala contrasts this coin with a half-franc he finds. 'Ah!' he exclaims, 'the poor 'Republique' is nowhere by this time, for here I read, 'Napoleon: Empereur et Roi, 1812.' (574)

Finding a copper, we are told that it bears the likeness of Louis the Sixteenth in 1779 who at this time is 'trembling on his throne, pricked by encyclopaedical pens sharpened with regicidal penknives', as the Enlightenment and Revolutionary forces begin to conspire against him. (576) Sala then addresses his readers; 'Stay! One little silver piece yet remains; worth fully twenty centimes, it is also democratic...dated 1848, and bears the head of a female in a semi-Grecian costume...It bears for legend the redoubtable words 'liberte, egalite, fraternite.' (576) Sala then adds this aside showing how fragile this concept has proved in French history, 'similar inscriptions on the walls and public edifices were unfortunately grazed therefrom by stray cannon-balls last December.' (576) Sala displays some sympathy for the 1848 revolution here. The article ends on a modern note and in a personal tone;

As I muse, a gentleman...accidentally lets fall a five-franc piece close to me. As he stoops to pick it up, I observe that it is new and bright; and the light from a gas jet falling on it, I can discern a head as yet unknown to me, on gold, or silver, or on copper, but which is soon to be, they say, on all; - an aquiline nose, a pendant jaw, a thick moustache and imperial, and LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, 1852. So runs the world. (576-77)

Sala again plays on the word 'gas' and links the most modern source of light available with the man who will be Emperor, the man who will recreate Paris as the City of Light due to his ostentatious use of this light source. The provision of more lighting in public places was at the heart of Haussmann's project. The ambition was to transform a dark and dangerous Paris into an enlightened one, both physically and metaphorically. The newness of the coin serves to heighten this feeling of modernity and so Sala eventually embraces Louis Napoleon, symbol of the modern.

In his letters to W.H. Wills Dickens would praise the article, 'That was very good of Sala's', and also Sala's own personal attributes; 'I find him a very conscientious fellow. When he gets money ahead, he is not like the imbecile youth who so often do the like in Wellington St. and walk off, but only works more industriously. I think he improves with everything he does. He looks sharply at the alterations in his articles, I observe: and takes the hint next time.'⁷⁷ By referring to Wellington Street Dickens means to highlight the numerous brothels situated at its northern end. By comparing the frequenters of such places with the 'respectability' of Sala, it is clear that Dickens has not yet realised the extent of Sala's bohemianism. Sala likened this period of his life to that of a 'Bad Dream', languishing as he was in 'a lotus-land of Bohemian idleness and dissipation.'⁷⁸ In his article 'Second Hand Sovereigns' (HW Jan. 13 1855), Sala wanders around the Musée des Souverains in the Louvre and is surprised to find that Napoleon's writing desk is physically identical to the one he uses in the Latin Quarter. However, there the similarity ends, 'but it is only in form that the two articles of furniture resemble one another. For the Emperor's writing table bears, oh!

⁷⁷ Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis (eds.) *The Letters of Charles Dickens* Vol. 6 1850-52 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) p. 767

⁷⁸ Edwards (1997) p. 16

Such unmistakeable signs of hard work, indomitable perseverance, and iron will!’⁷⁹

Sala is stressing his idleness and dissipation and yet it seems as though Dickens didn’t at this stage suspect that his young contributor was ‘wrecked in bohemia.’ Looking back from the distance of forty years Sala suggested that his dissipation was at its height in the years of his *Household Words* contributions; ‘Would you know the principal reason for our indigence? That reason was, that most of us were about the idlest dogs that squandered away their time on the pavements of Paris or London. We would not work. I declare in all candour and honesty, that, from the year 1852 to the year 1856, both inclusive, the average number of hours per week which I devoted to literary production did not exceed four.’⁸⁰

Gastronomy, entertainment and comparison

Instead of working hard and learning his craft, Sala was immersing himself in the bohemian life of the Parisian. That meant imitating Murger’s bohemians whose life was centred around the Café Momus. Sala and his friends imitated this lifestyle at an establishment called ‘Madame Busque’s.’ Madame Busque’s was the name of a ‘little *cremerie*, half dairy, half cookshop, in the Rue de la Michodiere.’⁸¹ It became so important to Sala that he wrote an article entitled ‘Madame Busque’s’ for *Household*

⁷⁹ G.A. Sala, ‘Second Hand Sovereigns’ HW x Jan. 13 1855 p. 514 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁸⁰ G.A. Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* vol. I (London: Cassell & Co., 1894) p. 115

⁸¹ G.A. Sala, ‘Strangers In Paris’ *Belgravia* 9 (July 1869) 90-101

Words. (HW Dec.9 1854) In the article Sala describes himself reclining there in quintessentially Bohemian fashion, ‘We were sitting there...imbibing two *petits verres* of absinthe, which is a delicious cordial of wormwood...which, mixed with a little aniseed and diluted with iced water, will give a man a famous appetite for dinner.’⁸² The ‘green fairy’ was becoming a popular bohemian tippie at this time and would be immortalised in Degas’ *The Absinthe Drinker* (1876). In an article entitled ‘Strangers In Paris’ written for Mary Braddon’s *Belgravia* magazine nearly fourteen years later, it is clear that this establishment still held a fascination for Sala. He describes how, ‘we might have claimed clanship with poor Henri Murger...and styled ourselves Bohemians...we all had theories, and standpoints, and shibboleths, and high aspirations, and fancies that we believed in something...Our society became almost a club...we brought English or American friends with us, sometimes, to share our frugal meal.’⁸³ It seems that Sala had found an ideal refuge from the bourgeois English society he had become to feel so constricted by. But more importantly Sala is responding to Balzac’s notion of ‘orgies of food that are also orgies of words.’⁸⁴ The restaurant is the site of gastronomic pleasure and conversational delight. It comes, as Christopher Prendergast has noted, to ‘act as a metaphor for the experience of Paris; Paris is above all there to be tasted.’⁸⁵ To ‘taste’ Paris is to drink in everything one sees and feels, Balzac described this as a ‘gastronomy of the eye.’⁸⁶ Sala responds to the invitation to experience and taste Paris with gusto and a bohemian appetite for life. Ever since meeting Alexis Soyer, Sala had inculcated a love for French cuisine. The famous French cook had imparted enough of his knowledge to Sala so that in later years he would be known as an excellent cook and dinner party host. Sala even

⁸² G.A. Sala, ‘Madame Busque’s’ HW x Dec. 9 1854 p. 385 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁸³ Sala (1869) p. 90

⁸⁴ Prendergast (1992) p. 20

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 20

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 160

published his own cookery book towards the end of his life entitled, *The Thorough Good Cook. A Series of Chats On The Culinary Art And Nine Hundred Recipes* (1895). It was this art of ‘chatting’ and cooking that was developed in his Parisian years, along with a bohemian love for pure pleasure and company. Mary Gluck writes that the life of the bohemian artist according to Murger ‘stood for enjoyment and spontaneity in opposition to puritanical self-restraint and a rigid work ethic. It exemplified a novel code of personal conduct that was frankly playful, sensual, and intimately linked to a public world of urban sociability.’⁸⁷

Although they were often poor, when money was somehow obtained bohemians knew how to spend it. Henry James declared that, ‘the prime requisite of an expert flaneur is the simple, sensuous, confident relish of pleasure.’⁸⁸ Prendergast notes that, ‘pleasure is very far from being a repressed category in nineteenth-century representations of the city.’⁸⁹ Pleasure was important for Sala. Pleasure meant good food, good company, good conversation (especially with women) and good alcohol, the quintessential necessities of a bohemian. Discussing London clubs in *Twice Round the Clock* Sala notes that Parisians cannot cope with gentlemanly club life; ‘the proper club for a Frenchman is his café; for without a woman to admire him, or to admire, your Monsieur cannot exist.’⁹⁰ The Parisian must at all times observe and be observed and Sala participated in this sociability with unabashed relish.

At the end of his article ‘Madame Busque’s’, Sala speaks directly to his readers, with the *caveat* that only those deemed worthy (i.e. bohemian enough) will be allowed

⁸⁷ Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Massachusetts: Harvard Academic Press, 2005) p. 16

⁸⁸ cited in Prendergast (1992) p.4

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 20

⁹⁰ Sala (1971) p. 202

access to the café; ‘I am not going to tell you how cheap her dinners are, or where they are to be had, till I know more of you; but if you will send to me certificates of your good temper and citizenship of the world, I don’t mind communicating Madame Busque’s address to you, in strict confidence.’ (388) Sala is tempting his middle-class readers to throw off their respectability and to come and join him and other like-minded souls in a free and easy Paris a world away from the repressive bourgeois mentality of London. Endeavouring to share the Parisian love of food and conversation with a select band of readers, Sala deems these Parisian delights to be far superior to anything to be found in London.

Parisian Nights

Sala would also find the entertainments of Paris superior to anything London had to offer, and would detail the contrasts between the two in a fictional account for Edmund Yates’s seriocomic shilling monthly magazine entitled *Train*.⁹¹ Sala’s piece was entitled ‘The Parisian Nights’ Entertainments’ and appeared in the first edition dated 1 Jan. 1856. Sala’s premise is to compare the nocturnal delights of first London, and then Paris. The vehicle for these abstractions is in the form of an imaginary nephew and his uncle. The nephew tries to decide which of the London attractions his uncle would enjoy. After providing a long list of such entertainments, evidently ones that Sala has personally tried such as the Opera, the panoramas, and the theatre, the nephew realises that none are suitable for his hop-merchant of an uncle. He wonders whether a ‘cultural tour’ of the low and the high would please his uncle. This is another excuse for Sala to show the divide between the classes and could be taken

⁹¹ For more on *Train* see my entry in Laurel Brake and Maysa Demoor (eds) *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism* (London: British Library/Academia Press 2008)

from any number of his articles for Dickens; ‘to see how the boys are thieves at eight, and the girls lost at twelve, and all of them ragged and starved at any age; and then, *presto*, to hie away to new springs and pastures, to broad, open squares and spacious streets, clean, well-paved, and fresh smelling, there to see the coroneted carriages roll and the proud horses champing at great men’s doors.’⁹² But the uncle does not seem taken with this tour of East and West and Sala displays his own ennui with London’s sights; ‘I have run the gauntlet of and become tired of them all.’ (43)

Leaving London behind, the article then moves to Paris where the narrator believes there are many more opportunities for pleasure and distraction, even for an elderly uncle. Sala tells us that the first inclination for Parisians is, ‘naturally...to visit the spectacle, the play’, but just as much, if not more, amusement is to be found ‘taking a walk on the Boulevards.’ (43) Sala describes in accurate detail the whereabouts of the Boulevards before declaring that, ‘they can be matched, equalled, rivalled, nowhere.’ (43-44) More importantly, for those of a frugal or bohemian tendency, ‘if you be smitten with the plague of impecuniosity, you may take your fill of the Parisian Nights without the expenditure of a sous.’ (44) Sala also extols the virtues of the Parisian arcades and in his article, ‘Arcadia’ (*HW* June 18 1853) Sala compared the Parisian version with the Burlington Arcade in London. Citing the latter as ‘intensely aristocratic’ he comes down in favour of the Parisian arcades for their diversity of humanity and describes them as; ‘a special measure of relief for their legionary flaneurs or street-pacers – driven, in wet weather, from the much sauntered over Boulevards –...the unrivalled galleries and passages which are the delights of Paris.’⁹³

⁹² G.A. Sala, ‘Parisian Nights’ Entertainments’ *Train* 1 Jan 1856 p. 42. All subsequent references in parenthesis.

⁹³ G.A. Sala, ‘Arcadia’ *HW* vii June 18 1853 in Sala (1859) p. 193

No doubt influenced by Sala's article, seven years later Dickens wrote 'Arcadian London' for *All The Year Round* (29 September 1860). In it he ironically describes London in the deserted summer months as an arcadian idyll and is pleasantly surprised that the 'ultra civilisation' of Burlington Arcade has given way to 'a primitive state of manners.' In 'Parisian Nights Entertainments' the reader is informed that the rest of the article will describe the entertainment to be found there in all seasons, beginning with New Year's Eve. This gives Sala the opportunity to compare how the French love to transform the Boulevards into fairs, with 'a myriad swarm of petty merchants...who rush on to the Boulevards laden with planks, merchandise, and carpenters' tools.' (44) Sala then quotes a London ballad that commences, 'Hark to the clinking of hammers/Hark to the driving of nails,/They're building a gibbet and scaffold/In one of Her Majesty's gaols.' (44) The comparison is made to the English and their destructive need to observe executions for public amusement, as Sala had already outlined in his *Household Words* article 'Open Air Entertainments.' But these platforms and scaffolds will only hang sweetmeats, toy-watches, embroidered braces and gold-chains. Sala is interested in the fact that it is French women who are helping to build these scaffolds. Olga Stuchebrukhov has noted how Dickens celebrated French women's participation in the public sphere. In 'The Rights Of French Women' (HW, 22 May 1852) and 'More Work for the Ladies' (HW, 18 Sept. 1852), Dickens noted 'French women's employments as daguerrotypists, railway station clerks, theatre attendants, luggage carriers, and milk-women.'⁹⁴ Dickens compared this with the 'fine-ladyism' of the English woman whose 'vicious idleness is imposed...by the nation's worship of aristocratic habits.'⁹⁵ After observing the hundreds of Parisian women helping to build the structures that will support the

⁹⁴ Olga Stuchebrukhov, 'The "Nation-less" State of Great Britain and the Nation-State of France in *Household Words*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Volume 38, Number 4, Winter 2005 p. 402.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 402

Boulevard fairs, Sala asks ‘What labour will not French women undertake?’ (45)

After providing an exhaustive list of the manual work he has observed women perform in Paris, Sala explains that ‘It is my firm impression that Frenchwomen are capable of, and willing to undertake every imaginable kind of labour.’ (45) Like Dickens, Sala suggests that this enthusiasm for manual labour on the part of the female population of France is to be encouraged in their English counterparts.

As he moves into the throng perambulating around the Boulevards and the arcades Sala engages in an exhaustive description of the different commodities for sale, all lit up for the customers’ benefit by gas lighting. The whirl of the people and the immensity of the goods for sale is emblematic of the modern. Prendergast notes that ‘The arcade is posed as the site and perfect emblem of the emergence of the culture of the commodity, a culture of movement and dislocation.’⁹⁶ We have already observed Sala’s interest in commodities, particularly the way in which commodities come into existence and the way they are transported consumed to far flung places to be consumed. In Paris, the centre of commodity culture, this interest is transferred to the goods themselves and their effect on everyday Parisians’ lives. They serve as a gateway to a ‘better’ life, providing Parisians with the dream of luxury and comfort. According to Prendergast, ‘Paris as illuminated “spectacle” is Paris offered for consumption, and nowhere, of course, did gas and electric lighting more directly contribute to the function of the city as dream-machine than in the glitter it conferred on the commodity.’⁹⁷ Sala is alive to this city as ‘dream-machine’ and he is caught up in the swirl of people and commodities.

⁹⁶ Prendergast (1992) p. 5

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 34

Personality

Sala would offer one more example of French superiority over the English. This time it was by contrasting the different heads of state. On August 2 1855 Sala was in Paris writing for the *Illustrated Times*, a 2d weekly newspaper under the editorship of Henry Vizetelly. Sala was ideal as a Parisian reporter, due to his work for *Household Words* his knowledge of the city was by now excellent, and he was able to describe the various sites and palaces visited by Queen Victoria and her entourage with his usual floridity combined with realistic attention to detail. His touch can also be observed in his descriptions of the royal party's fashions and in the descriptions of the various uniforms worn by the French soldiery. In fact this attention to royal costume and fashion has become a staple of royal reportage, as we can witness today with the obsession to detail of the Queen's garments whenever she makes public appearances. But of more importance in terms of Sala's style is his attention to the personal aspects of the royal party. Ralph Straus notes how Sala 'described the Paris Exhibition of 1855 in an amusingly personal way which at the time must have startled readers accustomed to more rounded periods...it enhanced his growing reputation.'⁹⁸ It would also pave the way for the more personal accounts of celebrities, the intrusion of the private in the public realm, and the onset of the interview in newspapers and periodicals that would become such a controversial staple of the 'New Journalism' later in the century.

⁹⁸ Straus (1942) p. 110

An editorial leader printed in the *Illustrated Times* on August 25 1855 prepares the ground for this personalised account of the royal party; ‘The personal effect of such a ceremony on the individuals concerned, may be thought somewhat too lofty a matter for our comment... Yet with all this, personal kindness is surely a probable result of personal courtesies.’⁹⁹ The intention is to highlight that personal relations between the Emperor and Queen Victoria are vital to the continuing alliance between England and France and therefore their reporter – Sala – is justified in his decision to portray to the English public the outcome of this meeting. It was also necessary to prepare the reading public for a rare invasion into the privacy of a respected monarch. The first instance of this personal portraiture is when Queen Victoria meets the Emperor at St. Cloud’s Palace; ‘As her Majesty turned the corner... she slightly started, and looking up into the Emperor’s face expressed her surprise. The cold passive features of the Emperor relaxed for the moment, and he evidently could not conceal his gratification.’¹⁰⁰ It is a novelistic passage with a hint of romance. Sala then portrays the Emperor in a more relaxed moment; ‘during the ceremony, the Emperor, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, took a walk in the gardens of the palace, evidently for enjoying the purpose of a cigarette, for no sooner was he in the grounds, than out came the little paper roll, and in a second he was enjoying the odour of the white smoke that curled from his mouth with the gusto of a man who has for a long time been forced to abstain from his favourite habit.’¹⁰¹ The Emperor becomes almost bohemian in his love for simple pleasures whereas Sala presents the Queen as a fragile and emotional figure. At the fountain of the *Bassin de Neptune* in the gardens of Versailles, ‘she appeared to lose all consciousness of the immense crowds around

⁹⁹ *Illustrated Times* Aug. 25 1855 p. 186

¹⁰⁰ *Illustrated Times* Sep. 1 1855 p. 198

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 198

her...and with one of her hands she clung to the side of the carriage, as though the tremendous roar of the fountain half frightened her.’¹⁰² The robust, manliness of the French’s head of state is compared favourably to England’s own fragile monarch. At the Opera the myriad opera-glasses are turned on the Queen; ‘it must be a terrible sensation to feel that a thousand eyes are watching you, and we fancied we perceived a slight blush cross the Queen’s face, as though she was aware of and suffering from that feeling.’¹⁰³ The comparison is made between the Parisians’ love of spectacle and being the object of spectacle, and the shy, nervous queen who is embarrassed to be gazed upon. For Sala the bohemian café life of Paris, along with its lively nightly entertainments, all add up to a city that knows how to enjoy itself, a city free from bourgeois restraint. This confidence in pleasure and oneself is manifested in the Emperor whereas the more reserved national characteristics of the English are manifested in their Queen’s shy demeanour and reluctance to become the object of speculation. But Sala’s own constant desire for sensation, pleasure and entertainment would be to his own detriment as the decade wore on.

O Bohemian where art thou?

The first signs of Sala’s growing bohemianism were recognised by Dickens in a letter he wrote to Wills on 9 July 1854. Dickens wrote, ‘I was sorry yesterday, on the arrival of yesterday’s number to see ‘Bohemia’ in it. I had carefully altered the proof here. There are several things in the paper that ought not to be there and the title – used up at every minor theatre in England – is in the highest degree objectionable.’¹⁰⁴ Dickens was referring to Sala’s article, ‘A Tour In Bohemia’ (*HW* 8 July 1854), in

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 199

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p. 199

¹⁰⁴ Storey, Tillotson, Easson (1995) p. 365

which Sala issued a proud proclamation of his own citizenship of Bohemia. Sala deliberately aligns himself with this set, to the annoyance of Dickens, ‘I have travelled in Bohemia, and have been of it: a Bohemian. I know its ways and means, its larger iniquities and lesser foibles...’¹⁰⁵ Sala’s article discusses a Bohemian ‘interest’ that is as identifiable as the ‘manufacturing interest, the shipping interest, the landed interest and the religious interest.’ (495) His intention is to portray bohemianism as an all-pervading force in modern society and the remainder of the article deals with the aristocratic denizens of bohemia. He probably justifiably believed that Dickens would approve of the article, given his objections to the aristocracy. Dickens was dismayed because he intrinsically disliked bohemia and the proliferation of the word ‘Bohemian’ in literary titles, ever since Michael Balfe’s *Bohemian Girl* (1843) and Henri Murger’s *Scenes of Bohemian Life* (1849). Dickens had married young and avoided the freedom and pitfalls of the bohemian life and he had seen at first hand the dissolution bohemia could cause with the examples of his own brothers, Fred and Alfred. To have one of his best young writers identifying with this set was a step too far for Dickens, who deemed the article too unsavoury for family reading, although it was eventually published as the very last number of the July 8 edition.

Edmund Yates was also beginning to realise the extent of Sala’s dissolution. After becoming editor of *Train* magazine during November 1855, Yates had commissioned a serialised novel by Sala entitled *Fripanelli’s Daughter* to run in the first number, dated 1 Jan 1856. When weeks passed by without any contact from Sala, Yates began to become worried. In his autobiography he explains that, ‘There were certain haunts at which, at certain hours, he could generally be found; but lately he had deserted

¹⁰⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘A Tour in Bohemia’ HW ix July 9 1854 p. 495 All subsequent references in parenthesis

them. My colleagues were as anxious as myself. We held a conclave; we drew up an advertisement couched in mysterious terms, intelligible only to the initiated, and inserted it in the *Times*. It commenced, I recollect, ‘O Bohemian, where art thou?’¹⁰⁶ Sala did not emerge and his friend Robert Brough stepped into the breach with his autobiographical novel, *Marston Lynch*. Sala was actually in Paris at this time and in a bad way. Sala had requested a meeting with Dickens in Paris on 4 January and on Tuesday 8 January the two men met at Dickens’s apartment on the Champs Elysees. In a letter to Wills dated 10 January Dickens wrote that,

He sat here two hours telling me about his reputable friends at Erith and so forth. I had no suspicion that he was postponing a request for money and couldn’t make up his mind to make it, until at last he stammered out a petition for £5. I gave it him. Please place that sum to his debit and my credit...I derived the idea that he was living very poorly here, and not doing himself much good. He knew nothing, I observed, about the pieces at the theatres: and suggested a strong flavour of the wine shop and the billiard table.¹⁰⁷

Although Dickens had occasionally wiped the slate clean on previous occasions when Sala had owed money, this time he stood firm and demanded that Sala should repay the debt, a sign of the lack of trust Dickens now held towards him. Dickens was perceptive in his realisation of Sala’s descent into a state of ‘Dry Rot.’ Sala himself had wrote to his friend and fellow journalist, Edmund Yates, on 10 January saying, ‘I

¹⁰⁶ Yates (1885) p. 224

¹⁰⁷ Storey, Tillotson, Easson (1995) p. 8

have been, for now nearly a fortnight, in a most pitiable condition of body and mind – utterly incapable of work and mooning about more like a reptile than a man.’¹⁰⁸ Four days later Dickens was dismayed that Sala had still not sent to him the two essays he had promised some weeks before, ‘If Sala has really not sent those papers it is a very bad business.’¹⁰⁹ Dickens was starting to lose patience with his former star contributor and on 19 January he sent to Sala a copy of Albert Smith’s pamphlet ‘The English Hotel Nuisance’ in which Smith painted a derogatory picture of the state of English hotels, along with a letter asking Sala to write a contrary article on the subject.

Dickens added in a letter to Wills, ‘I have begged him to send it to me, here; thinking that may expedite him.’¹¹⁰ When Dickens eventually received Sala’s three papers on hotels, entitled ‘The Great Hotel Question’ (HW 8 March 1856 and the two following numbers), he was disappointed with them and wrote, ‘I have taken some things out of Sala where he is wrong. He has not been in Italy, I feel sure.’¹¹¹ Sala’s series had endeavoured to compare hotels from around the world, but in all but a few of the cases Sala had never actually visited those countries, never mind actually staying in their hotels. (Dickens need only have looked back at an article by Sala called ‘The Metamorphosed Pagoda’ (HW Dec. 8 1855) to know that he was correct. Sala wrote that, ‘Not that I ever saw Capri, or Naples either. My Italian travels have been made hitherto with my feet on the fender and my eyes on a book.’¹¹²) It was evidence of a certain laxity and flippancy towards the truth that Dickens was picking up on here, along with his growing disillusionment towards Sala’s ability to provide copy on time. There were further signs of his inability to write coherently in an article called

¹⁰⁸ Judy McKenzie (ed.) *Letters of George Augustus Sala to Edmund Yates* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1993) p. 24

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 24

¹¹⁰ Storey and Tillotson (1995) p. 32

¹¹¹ McKenzie (1993) p. 59

¹¹² G.A. Sala, ‘The Metamorphosed Pagoda’ HW xii Dec. 8 1855 p. 145

‘All Up With Everything’ (*HW* April 26 1856). Sala satirises Eugene Huzar’s *La Fin du Monde par la Science* (1855) which predicted (presciently) that one day man’s insatiable urge to control nature would lead to catastrophic results. Dickens wrote to Wills on 13 April 1856 denouncing it as ‘loose, scrambling, and careless.’¹¹³

It must have been with some relief, given Sala’s poor journalistic output that year, when Dickens received a request from Sala to travel to Russia and report back from there for a series of *Household Words* articles. In February 1856 an armistice had been agreed between the Allied Powers and Russia and by the end of March the Treaty of Peace was signed and the new Czar had invited his former enemies to visit his country.¹¹⁴ Sala sensed an opportunity to make his name and escape his creditors, and on 5 April 1856 Dickens accepted his proposal, no doubt relieved that the troublesome young writer should be out of sight and mind. Sala had assured Wills that he would be economical and stay clear from ‘distractions’, a reference to the excessive drinking and gambling undertaken during his Parisian days. There were signs of Dickens’s distrust about Sala’s ability to fulfill the Russian project, however. Dickens wrote to Wills on 15 April 1856 warning him that he did not wish to send Sala any letters of introduction because, ‘I would rather not present him personally, except to people to whom I could unreservedly explain myself.’¹¹⁵ Dickens was clearly worried about the bohemian behaviour he had witnessed in Paris resurfacing while in Russia.

In many ways Sala’s desire to ‘escape’ to Russia is indicative of his own realisation that he could not carry on the dissipated life he was leading. Just as with Murger’s

¹¹³ Storey and Tillotson (1995) p. 88

¹¹⁴ Ralph Straus, *Sala; The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable & Co., 1942) p. 115

¹¹⁵ Storey and Tillotson (1995) p. 90

bohemians, deep down he craved respectability and to be taken seriously as a writer. Russia would provide the opportunity for both these longings (as well as an opportunity to escape his debtors). His training on *Household Words* as the delineator of London and his self-fashioning as a painter of modern life in Parisian would be continued and expanded to the delineation of some of the greatest cities and countries of the world. Whereas London had grounded him in the inequitable divisions of a modern city and the necessity of hard work, Paris had inculcated in him the sheer delight and pleasure to be found in indolence and indulgence of the imagination and of the body. Sala believed that he was ‘continually, although unconsciously, learning’ the bases of his journalistic craft, through ‘the great object-lessons of life which the streets of Paris were replete.’¹¹⁶ Paris initiated his experience as a Special Correspondent and its hold on his imagination is evidenced in its use as a recurring setting in his novels. The next part of Sala’s life would be concerned with becoming a master of his craft, after Russia he would endeavour to reconcile his bohemian tendencies with a desire for respectability and approval first as a novelist, and then as a fully-fledged Special Correspondent.

¹¹⁶ cited in Philip Collins, introduction to Sala (1971) p. 10

4. Interlude - A Russian Digression

Nearly forty years after his Russian excursion, Sala reminisced in his autobiography about his first extended assignment as a foreign correspondent;

I remained in St. Petersburg and its vicinity from mid-April until mid-September; and I can, without exaggeration, say that I have rarely in the whole course of my life passed five such months of unmingled happiness as I did in the metropolis of Tsarish Majesty Alexander Nicolaivitch II. I was still young; I was in first-rate health; I had a sufficiency of cash, and had bidden that which I hoped was to be a lasting farewell to Bohemia and its nightmares.¹

Sala reflects on a time of unmitigated pleasure free from all sordid, bohemian indulgences. But his contemporary letters of 1856 and his actual account, *A Journey Due North*, belie most of his later claims. He didn't actually arrive in Russia until 22 May and the resulting row with Dickens over the rights to the letters was founded on Sala's belief that he had anything but a 'sufficiency of cash' and he cited Dickens's lack of experience at employing foreign correspondents as a reason for this.² The fare

¹¹ G.A. Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* (London: Cassell & Company, 1895) p. 343-4

² for more on Sala and Dickens's disagreement see Peter Blake, 'George Augustus Sala, Charles Dickens and *Household Words*' in *Dickens Quarterly* 26 (March 2009)

to St. Petersburg had eaten away at his first week's salary and in a letter to W.H. Wills he was forced to ask for £5 before he had even arrived in St. Petersburg. Due to justifiably paranoid suspicions of covert letter-opening, Sala only wrote five letters back to England during his stay in Russia. A letter to W.H. Wills on 7 May berates the expense of foreign travel, Sala complains that he has found it impossible to live on less than four dollars or twelve shillings a day. Although he has not yet arrived in Russia at this point he proposes several possible titles for the work; 'Due North in 30 chapters or so', 'a pocket book in Russian leather', or 'chez Russians at home.'³

There is an irony in the final title chosen, 'A Journey Due North', because, as Catherine Waters has noted, 'the linear directness, exactitude and end-focus implied by a journey "due" north are continually subverted by Sala's typically excursive mode of travelling and of writing.'⁴ Rejecting W.H. Wills's advice to travel by sea from Hull to the Russian port of Cronstadt, Sala chose instead to travel in an 'excursive' mode to Berlin and proceed to St. Petersburg from there. While in Berlin he received news on 27 April that ice had blocked the passage north through the Gulf of Finland and the 'Prussian Eagle' would not leave Stettin until 17 May.⁵ With three weeks at his disposal, Sala set about imagining the lives of his fellow travellers and painting a portrait of them that may have inadvertently contributed to rumours that he had never visited Russia at all. There was the waspish Puritanical lady Miss Wapps who was convinced that Sala was a foreigner due to his ability to speak some Russian and his naturally dark pigmentation.⁶ There was the French lady, an actress, who is all 'lithe movements, and silver laughter' and who could well be an early prototype of

³ Letter from Sala to W.H. Wills 7 May 1856 Beinecke Library Box 1

⁴ Catherine Waters, "Much of Sala, and but Little of Russia": "A Journey Due North," *Household Words*, and the Birth of a Special Correspondent' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42:4 Winter 2009 p. 307

⁵ *ibid.* p. 307

⁶ G.A. Sala, *A Journey Due North* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858) p. 38 All subsequent references from this edition

one of the diabolic French women from his novels. (40) There was even a bohemian Frenchman who was paid for his jests in ‘wine, spirits and cigars.’ (41) Indeed the *Saturday Review*, picking up on this novelistic aspect of Sala’s writing stated that ‘We don’t believe that these comic descriptions in any way represent the originals. We don’t believe there were any such originals to be described.’⁷ Convinced that Sala had never actually visited Russia, and had merely imagined these characters, the *Saturday Review* was highlighting an important aspect of Sala’s journalism, its ability to blur ‘the distinction between fact and fiction.’⁸

Travel accounts of Russia before the Crimean War had ‘conveyed negative, occasionally hostile impressions of many aspects of Russian life.’⁹ In 1810 E.D. Clarke’s *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa* was a ‘particularly striking and famous popular example,’ while Robert Lyall’s *The Character of the Russians* (1823) characterised this type of reportage, being a ‘damning catalogue of Russian moral turpitude.’¹⁰ The Russian suppression of the Polish in the 1830s caused British writers to sharpen their pens and the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell, who had written his poem ‘The Pleasure of Hope’ in praise of the Poles, wrote his damning *Lines on Poland* and *The Power of Russia* after the capture of Warsaw by Russian forces in 1831. While still an undergraduate at Cambridge, Alfred Tennyson had asked, ‘Lord, how long shall these things be?/How long this icy-hearted Muscovite/Oppress the region?’¹¹

⁷ cited in, Catherine Waters, “Much of Sala, and but Little of Russia”: “A Journey Due North,” *Household Words*, and the Birth of a Special Correspondent’ *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42:4 Winter 2009 p. 318

⁸ *ibid.* p. 318

⁹ Anthony G. Cross, *The Russian Theme in English Literature* (Oxford: William A. Meeuws, 1985) p. 25

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 25

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 26

The build up to the Crimean War had seen a burst of translations of Russian novels; Lermontov's *Hero Of Our Times* (1853) was published in England as *Sketches of Russian Life in the Caucasus by a Russe, Many Years Resident Amongst the Various Mountain Tribes*, and during the war in 1855 the first translation of Turgenev's *Sportsman Sketches* was entitled *Russian Life in the Interior*. As their translated titles suggests these novels were seen as authentic accounts of the everyday lives of Russians, a facet of Russian life of increasing interest to English readers. The kind of heroic war reportage recently made popular by William Howard Russell, whose description of the Battle of Balaclava and the Charge of the Light Brigade published in *The Times* on 14 November 1854, had caused a stir of passionate sympathy from its readership along with a determination to learn more about this wild and unknown country.¹² There were three other anonymous reports of Russian life between 1855 and 1859. In 1855 there was *The Englishwoman in Russia; Impressions of the Society and Manners of the Russians at Home, by a Lady Ten Years Resident in that Country*, in 1856 *Russian Chit-Chat; or Sketches of a Residence in Russia by a Lady* (later acknowledged as Charlotte Bourne) and in 1859, *Six Years Travel in Russia by an English Lady* (Mary Smith). Bourne and Smith's works are light and undemanding and attempt to heal the rift between England and Russia by providing positive portrayals of Russian life. But in the January 20 1855 edition of *Household Words* an article entitled 'At Home With the Russians' reviewed the anonymous *The Englishwoman in Russia*.

¹² for full article see John Carey (ed.) *The Faber Book of Reportage* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) pp. 333-344

The article stressed the author's depiction of the despotism of the regime, the God-like aspirations of the Czar, the martial aspect of all portions of society, the terrible condition of the roads, the natives' lack of information regarding the outside world and the beatings suffered by all strata of society. This negativity was contrasted with the author's contradictory belief that the upper classes treat their serfs 'humanely' but any hardships they did endure were bound to 'surpass those of the negro slaves.'¹³ It was also a strikingly similar report to the one on Russia that Sala would provide for his readers, Sala even names one of his chapters 'Russians At Home', and it may have been another contributing factor to those rumours that he never visited Russia. In the August 2 1856 edition of *Household Words* the author of 'A Campaign With the French' wrote that, 'Of military mismanagement in the Crimea we have all heard enough.'² Meanwhile, as Sala was travelling through Russia, Dickens was serialising and satirising the Circumlocution Office and military mismanagement in the Crimea in the pages of his novel *Little Dorrit* (1855-57). Unlike Dickens, Sala refrained from mentioning the Crimean War but he would disparage many aspects of Russian life. Sala's letters were to be of a more personal nature and the 'intimacy and immediacy' of his correspondence would provide 'a more lively and engaging account of Russian life and manners' than these other more objective and impersonal reports.¹⁴

The letters Sala wrote from Russia were eventually published in book form in 1858, and had been serialised in Dickens's *Household Words* from 4 October 1856 to 14 March 1857. It was to be his sole travel book not previously appearing in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph* and the only one written under the aegis of Dickens. It differs from Sala's later travel-writing because of this; it is more digressive, imaginative and

¹³ 'At Home With the Russians' *Household Words* (X Jan 20 1855) p. 535

¹⁴ Waters (2009) p. 308

novelistic, but we can still detect elements of the themes that would preoccupy him in his future career as a Special Correspondent. Most noticeably, in an extension of the articles he had already written for *Household Words*, his continuing fascination with the lives and manners of everyday people and the connection between the classes, and linked to this preoccupation his fluctuating thoughts on slavery, slave societies and the treatment of indigenous people. In his review of Sala's account, printed in the *Book Collector's Quarterly* for July-September 1933, Ralph Straus commented that 'In my opinion it is a brilliant piece of writing, and unquestionably set the standard for the scores of travel books of the more intimate kind which subsequently appeared.'¹⁵

Sala's contemporary reviewers were not quite so generous. The *Saturday Review* typically gave the book a back-handed compliment. It focused on the novelistic and digressive aspects and declared that 'Mr. Dickens is out-Dickensed by this imitator of his overwrought style of word-painting.' In the *Times* John Oxenford, a future contributor for Sala's *Temple Bar* project, slated the book but in doing so helped its sales no end.¹⁶ Straus was correct in ascribing an intimacy to Sala's Russian account. Sala's use of the personal, the way he placed himself into every situation he found himself in, was part of an ongoing process of engagement with previous narratives that had broken the mould of traditional travel reportage, which shall be the subject of greater discussion in chapter 6. Sala's contemporaries' most frequent criticism of his travel work was that it was too focused on the modern, unromantic elements of life, too personal, and was written with a verbosity and historical allusiveness that contradicted this modernity. These elements are all present in his Russian travel account but it was to be a more imaginative and fictional piece of work than his later

¹⁵ Ralph Straus, 'A Man With A Nose and Other Papers', *Booksellers Quarterly* 1933-4 p. 7

¹⁶ Phillip Collins (ed) introduction to G.A. Sala *Twice Round The Clock* (Leicester: Leicester University Press) p. 19

travel pieces, and may well have influenced his decision to become a novelist and a man of letters and to leave the world of journalism behind.

While on board the *Prussian Eagle* Sala has time to remember the dreams of childhood, imitating the kind of imaginative qualities Dickens wanted from his contributors;

Russia (on the map) was one vast and delightful region of mysteries, and adventures, and perilous expeditions; a glorious wonder-land of czars who lived in wooden-houses disguised as shipwrights; of Cossacks continually careering on long-maned ponies, and with lances like Maypoles; of grisly bears, sweet-smelling leather, ducks, wolves, palaces of ice, forests, steppes, frozen lakes, caftans, long beards, Kremlins and Ivan the Terribles.

(30)

The prosaic reality of this poetic dream of a fabled land had been brutally shattered for most Britons during the Crimean War and Sala was to witness for himself a country coming to terms with defeat, a peasant population enduring horrific conditions of slavery and poverty, and a brutal and powerful regime supporting this system. His first taste of the brutality of Russian life came on board the *Prussian Eagle* where he witnessed, on the deck of an adjacent lighter, the foreman of a gang brutally kicking the sleeping workers. Sala wrote, ‘I received my first lesson that I was in a country where flesh and blood are cheaper – much cheaper- than gentle Thomas Hood ever wotted of.’ (57) Hood’s ‘Song of the Shirt’ was a well-known

poetical protest at the oppression of female sempstresses. Sala's account was an attempt to fuse this abstract idealistic impression of Russia with the far harsher reality of modern existence.

On finally arriving in Russia Sala despondently writes that 'I could not resist an odd feeling that I had come in the van from the house of detention...and that I was down for three months with hard labour.' (64) As his journey progresses Sala cannot shake off this feeling of melancholia, 'I could never divest myself of that county-gaol feeling till I got my discharge...three months afterwards.' (64) These despondent sentiments reach their zenith when Sala finds himself in the provinces, in the village of Volnoi Voloschtchok. He tells us that there is no sign of life in these Russian hamlets, all the houses and barns are identical and that, 'a village peopled by primitive Puritans, who had espoused the deceased wives' sisters' husbands' wives of Mormon elders, and had afterwards been converted to the Shaker way of thinking, must be a community of roaring prodigals compared to the inhabitants of Volnoi.' (180) Out of his depth away from the urban environment, Sala's travel reportage would be suffused with rural images of blandness and sterility.

At times in the narrative Sala's pictorial writing ability seems to flounder, particularly when attempting to describe the peasant women of the village of Volnoi because 'when I come to tackle them, my ambition to possess pictorial talent sensibly diminishes – so little rosiness, so little beauty, so few smiles have claims upon my palette among the youngest women and girls.' (193) It was not only the women Sala found homogenous, the whole country and its inhabitants were practically indistinguishable; 'At the end of a week's journey, you will find the same villages, the

same priests, the same policemen, the same Moujiks and Ischvostchiks, in appearance, dress, language, and habits, as at the commencement of your voyage.’ (82) It would be a constant theme in Sala’s travel-writing, this view of other countries’ landscapes as indiscernible and would be replicated when describing America and Australia away from their urban centres.

But summoning up his finest imaginative sensibilities, Sala managed on occasion to produce romantic, picturesque examples of novelistic description that portrayed the harsh realities of working life;

the sun is manifest enough and bright enough in all conscience, and the smiling morn is busily employed in tipping the gaudy domes with a brighter lustre than their gold leaf gives them... The water-carts go heavily lumbering past; then I hear a clanking as of many tin-pots, or of marrowbone and cleaver music, in which the metal unduly preponderates; and see advancing towards me a gaunt, bony, ill-favoured woman in a striped petticoat held up by the usual braces, the usual full-sleeved innermost garments, a crimson handkerchief tied over her freckled face, and streaming behind, like a bedouin’s burnouse when the capuchin is thrown back suddenly from the head. Over each shoulder she carries a heavy arc of wood, like a fully bent bow, but hollowed out in the centre so as to fit her shoulder, and serve as a yoke; to either end of which are suspended fasciculi of the before-mentioned tin-pots, much battered, and with brazen lids and spouts. This is a milk-woman. She does not deliver the caseous

beverage from house to house, as with us, but takes her stand at some patented spot – generally at the ‘Auge’ or feeding-trough of a droschky stand. (298)

The style is reminiscent of the ‘Dutch Pictures’ Sala would paint in his novels, with its blending of the romantic and the realistic. The metaphors are suited to the subject and there is evidence of the real promise of a budding novelist. The beauty of the landscape is contrasted with the backbreaking work of the Russian labourer, a technique Sala would use in similar passages from his novel *The Seven Sons of Mammon*.

Sala was obviously more at home promenading down the main street of St. Petersburg, the Nevsky Prospect, and providing his readers with the kind of metropolitan sketches he had honed while in London and Paris. He summed this aspect of his reportage up and underlined his realistic as opposed to picturesque style of travel-writing when he stated that;

I am incorrigible. If you want a man to explore the interior of Australia, or to discover the North-West Passage, or the sources of the Niger, don't send me. I should come back with a sketch of Victoria Street, Sydney, or the journal of a residence in Cape Coast Castle, or notes of the peculiarities of the skipper of a Hull whaler. If ever I write a biography it will be the life of John Smith...Lo! I have spent a summer in Russia; and I have nothing to tell you of the Altai

mountains, the Kirghese tribes, Chinese Tartary, the Steppes, Kamschatka, or even the Czar's coronation. (73)

Although initially sceptical about the lavish praise heaped on the Nevsky Prospect it is not long before Sala declares that 'the Nevskoi is immensely wide and stupendously long, and magnificently paved' and 'is the handsomest and the most remarkable street in the world.' (74) Catherine Waters notes that Dickens's friend Percy Fitzgerald criticised the amount of attention Sala gives to the street and he certainly lingers over the urban milieu in comparison to his all-too-brief rural sketches.¹⁷

Another reason for Sala's disquietude on arrival in Russia were the inadequacies and insecurities he felt at being a journalist for a weekly miscellany like Dickens's *Household Words* rather than a famous reporter for one of the big English daily newspapers. A third of the way into his dispatches from Russia Sala outlines the kind of reporting he presumes his readers would be willing to devour and explains why he will not be able to provide them with this style of travel writing. Sala reflects that unlike his colleague and friend William Howard Russell his role would not be to delineate the grand, sumptuous, state occasions of pomp and splendour:

You, who are not yet fresh from the graphic and glowing description of the coronation illuminations at Moscow, by the Man who fought the Battle of England in the Crimea, better and more bravely than the whole brilliant staff who have been decorated with the order of the bath, and who would have gone there, for head-shaving purposes, long ago, if people had their due – doubtless,

¹⁷ Waters (2009) p. 310

expect a very splendid account from me of illuminations at St. Petersburg. But it was my fortune to see Russia, not in its gala uniform, with its face washed, and all its orders on: but Russia in its shirt-sleeves...Russia at-home, and not expecting visitors till September – Russia just recovering its breath, raw, bruised, exhausted, torn, begrimed from a long and bloody conflict. (107)

This is Sala's earliest statement of intent regarding his travel writing and the way in which he would strive to describe the truth and reality of cities and their inhabitants. (In fact it was Sala's bohemian colleague from his Parisian days, Henry Sutherland Edwards, and not W.H. Russell, who had reported on the coronation of Tsar Alexander II for the *Illustrated Times*.)

Although difficult to ascertain whether Sala completely shrugged off the coat of bohemianism while in Russia, the descriptions in his autobiography of the numerous balls he attended as a guest of Mrs Ward and her soon-to-be famous daughter, the beautiful actress Genevieve Ward, do not seem to be the pursuits of a martyr to the cause of temperance and sobriety. Tellingly, in a chapter entitled 'I Begin To See Life', Sala describes how at the Heyde's Hotel in St. Petersburg he meets the dandified 'Hamburgers', German business men from Hamburg, who 'drink and smoke and dance and play dominoes and billiards, and otherwise dissipate themselves, all night. What lives!' (229) Sala's final comment indicates a grudging admiration for their irregular way of life. While describing the wonderfully thirst-quenching properties of Russian tea, Sala paraphrases Sir Toby Belch in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and in so doing outlines his own bohemian propensities, 'But it is not to be imagined that, because this tumbler of tea is exquisite, I have forsworn cakes – or ale.' (219) What we do know for

certain is that on arrival back in England Sala's dissipation had increased to the point where he was ironically imprisoned for debt on December 8 1858 in Queen's Bench prison, Whitecross Street (ironic because this was the prison Sala had cited as the final resort for the aristocrats 'on the spree' in 'The Key of the Street'). On his release three weeks later he was soon again in trouble, this time in a bohemian 'night house' in Panton Street where on 8 January 1859 his complaints at the price of the champagne led the landlord to punch him to the floor, splitting his nose 'throughout its entire length' with the diamond rings he sported on his fingers.¹⁸

If Sala did manage to quell his bohemian spirit in Russia it soon resurfaced back in England. Sala was also highly conscious that the real reason for his visit, to describe the people and manners of the country, must remain a secret from everyone he would meet because of the real threat posed by the omniscient security forces. Sala declared in his autobiography that 'I had no status as a member of the Press. Honestly speaking, I scarcely considered myself to be a journalist at all.'¹⁹ It was, then, a perfect opportunity for Sala to write in a more fictional style, knowing he was reporting on a side of Russian life few had any knowledge of, the ordinary people going about their quotidian business. But while the majority of the book delineates the poorer classes of Russian peasantry, in reality Sala would find himself rarely leaving the metropolitan environments of St. Petersburg and Moscow and mixing for the first time since his childhood with the patrician classes, something he would increasingly aspire to over the next decades. In Sala's account the middle classes were defined as a 'mysterious and impalpable body' made up from police and government employees who, 'utterly

¹⁸ Edwards (1997) p. 54

¹⁹ Sala, (1895) p. 365

fail...in filling up that yawning gulph that separates the Russian noble from the Russian serf.' (252) Sala duly neglects them throughout his journey.

Serfs and Slaves

Reading his Russian account today what strikes us is his personal fascination with the class system prevalent in Russia, and the abuses each class metes out to those directly below it. In particular, Sala's interest in the serf or slave system became tantamount to an obsession, and this fascination with un-free labour would permeate throughout his travel writings and provides an ideal opportunity to compare his views of slave societies and indigenous peoples from across the world. Largely ignored by his biographers, it is his fascination with, and descriptions of, slavery that are one of the most important aspects of his travel writing and his shifting and personal stance on slavery colours all of these travel narratives. Whereas in his London articles for *Household Words* he had felt a personal attachment and interest in highlighting and solving the problems of the poor, in Russia the same class were more of a homogenous and faceless mass of misery, there to be exploited by all and sundry. Although he attended patrician balls and social events his writing is always drawn back to the poor and, as this is Russia, the enslaved.

Sala introduces us to the different classes he encounters. 'Ischvostchiks' were the common appellation given to cab-drivers, while 'Moujiks' designated the peasant-class. Sala portrayed the 'Ischvostchiks' as 'ignorant, beastly, drunken, idolatrous, savage, able to drive a horse, and to rob, and no more.' (84) Sala warns his readers not

to attempt to call the police if they were to try and overcharge you for your journey because they will ‘beat the driver and whip him like a slave as he is.’ (87) Percy Fitzgerald complained that Sala ‘devoted column after column to the subject of the Russian cab-drivers, which then led him on to the cabdrivers of other countries.’²⁰ This method of digression can be traced back to his work on *The Book of the Symposium* in which he had first given a list of the ‘mutabilities of mansions’ around the world before describing Gore House. Not surprisingly, given the blurring of fact and fiction in the narrative, Sala would write one of his finest short pieces of fiction around the character of a murderous Russian cab-driver, or ‘Ischvostchik’. One night while picking up a wealthy-looking customer the cab-driver is about to murder him and steal his possessions when the customer puts on the mask he has worn to a ball and resembles Lucifer. He turns out to be none other than Tsar Nicholas and the shock to the driver is enough to make him suffer a chronic heart-attack. The story was entitled, ‘The Murderous Ischvostchik’, and was published in *The Welcome Guest* on 24 Dec. 1858.

In his biography of Sala, Ralph Straus sums up *A Journey Due North* with the phrase ‘bugs, boots and beatings.’²¹ Undoubtedly Sala does digress too often on these subjects; in terms of boots he adopts a Teufelsdröckish mode when explaining how Kasan boots could boast Turkish, Byzantine, Venetian and Bohemian influences. But he uses these boots as a metaphor for Russia itself, which due to its size is a truly multicultural society. As for bugs they are personal *betes noire* of his and we can trace his disgust at lice all the way back to his ‘Key Of The Street’ article for *Household Words*. Self-referentially referring back to that article Sala was also keen to point out

²⁰ cited in Waters (2009) p. 310

²¹ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable & Co., 1942) p.122

that the Russians all possess the 'key of the street' in that they enjoy sleeping al fresco. He was also quick to point out the inadequacies of the newspapers; 'in an intolerable quantity of waste-paper, there is about a copeck's worth of news' (78), and the roads, 'the Czar's highway, which is literally his...is the worst highway that was ever seen.' (104) Again these would be personal gripes that would come to infiltrate most of his travel reportage.

He also notes the tolerance of prostitution in an area of St. Petersburg behind the Kasan church, despite the fact that the 'neighbourhood enjoys an extended reputation as being the most infamous with respect to morality in St. Petersburg.' (112) This leads him to muse on one of his favourite subjects, gas, for a French company had constructed a gasometer behind the church. Sala informs us that although the sight of it is for him 'a beacon of hope and cheerfulness', for Russians it signifies the onset of their dreaded winter. Whereas in 'The Secrets of the Gas' for *Household Words* Sala had given a voice to this most modern of energy sources and had achieved an affinity with it because it symbolised metropolitan improvement, the Russians' distrust of gas and its representation as a precursor of doom becomes a symbol of their lack of modernity, their lack of progress and civilization. In fact, says Sala, 'the Russians have about the same liking for their winter as their government.' Sala explains that 'both are very splendid; but it is uncommonly hard lines to bear either; and distance lends wonderful enchantment to the view both of the frozen Neva and the frozen despotism.' (111) There is a sharpness of wit here that Dickens and his readers must have appreciated and the despotism of the government and the aristocracy lead Sala time and time again to return to the issue of beatings, and particularly the enslavement of the Russian people. Sala would describe in graphic detail the way policemen

ritually humiliate the cab-drivers; 'I have seen a gigantic police-soldier walk coolly down the Nevskoi...beating, cuffing across the face, pulling by the hair, and kicking every single one of the file of Ischvostchiks who, with their vehicles, line the kerb...and I know that they took their hats off, and meekly wiped the blood from their mouths and noses.' (87-88) Sala's style changes when confronted with this violence, and the drab, mundane aspects of Russia are left behind and we can feel the frisson of excitement and danger he feels at witnessing the beatings. P.D. Edwards explains how Sala's 'descriptive powers come to life when he is able to pursue another of his special interests, corporal punishment.'²² Although Sala denigrates the class of Ischvostchiks he is still at pains to protect them from violent and overbearing overseers, he is certainly representing their interests here against the authoritarian police force.

In 1850, in his comic panoramas, we have seen how Sala had satirised slavery and slave-owners, particularly those from the American South. Sala knew that, on the eve of the largest demonstration of England's economic superiority, the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, by satirising the slave trade he would be appealing to middle-class Englishmen's pride in their perceived moral superiority. But as the 1850s progressed, attitudes towards race and slavery hardened and this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. For now it is enough to say that Sala was not immune to these cultural influences, and in his comments on Russian serfdom in *A Journey Due North* we can observe how his anti-slavery satires of 1850 are by 1856 beginning to be transformed into what we might term a hierarchy of slavery. Whereas white slavery in Russia is scorned and held up as morally wrong and indefensible, there are moments in the

²² Edwards (1997) p. 52

narrative where Sala deliberately baits Harriet Beecher Stowe and condemns her for highlighting the injustice of black slavery while white slavery is openly practised in Russia. There is also evidence of Sala's hardened position towards African-Americans, becoming openly racist at various points in the text. By the time Sala visited America seven years later in 1863, he had adopted a firm pro-slavery and pro-Southern position.

The year before Sala's Russian journey, John Harwood wrote a novel entitled *The Serf-Sisters* (1855) which threw light on the slave system in Russia. Anthony Cross reveals that the novel's aim is to show a dark picture of the Russian aristocracy and that 'the gangrene of slavery is perhaps of all the social institutions of Russia the most mischievous.'²³ The two sisters, in attempting to escape from the abuses that serfdom brings to their family, both tragically perish in the south of Russia; Anielka dies from malaria and Katinka drowns in the Black Sea when she and her lover, the noble Englishman Mark Foster, are in sight of the English lines. Sala would adopt Harwood's notion of slavery as an anachronism throughout his Russian travels.

Peter Kolchin states that 'By the middle of the nineteenth century American slavery and Russian serfdom were labour systems in crisis.'²⁴ Although they had been just two of many equivalent systems of labour in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century by the 1850s they had become 'noteworthy as the most important remnants of an archaic social order, beleaguered outposts of servitude in an era that celebrated liberty and equality.'²⁵ In particular, Russian serfdom, without the forcefulness of arguments in its

²³ Cross (1985) p. 38

²⁴ Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) p. 359

²⁵ *ibid* p. 359

defence that characterised the peculiar institution in the American South, was ‘widely recognised as an institution on its last legs.’²⁶ Sala’s first description of slavery on his Russian journey is a fictional and hypothetical one involving the coachman of an imaginary Princess, the coachman is the brother of a ‘ragged, dirty Ischvotschik,’ while the Princess Schiliapoff has twenty-five hundred serfs, of which the coachman is one. Sala creates these brothers to demonstrate that the coachman, although seemingly of higher rank than the drotschky driver, is to all intents and purposes far worse off because he is a slave while the drotschky driver is a free man. Although he is far more elegantly dressed than his brother, and will occasionally have some meat to eat, the coachman, says Sala with emphasis, ‘is a SLAVE, body and bones.’ (99) What this means is that the Princess can sell him whenever she wants. She may ‘send him to the police, and have him beaten like a sack if he take a wrong turning or pull up at the wrong milliner’s shop’ (100), or she can send him in exile to Siberia or into the army. Sala ends with an exhortation to the authoress of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ‘And these good people are WHITE, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, White, ma’am!’ (100)

Sala is flagging here the misconception of many visitors to Russia that because these slaves are not tied to a plantation or an overseer then they cannot really be in bondage. The difference between Russian and American slavery was that while American slaves worked round the clock for their masters and were provided with food and shelter in exchange, Russian serfs only worked part of the time and had to provide their own food. American slave-owners lived nearly all year round on their farms or plantations, while Russian slave-owners often felt like visitors and ‘longed for the ‘society’ of

²⁶ *ibid* p. 362

Moscow, St. Petersburg, or a provincial capital.’²⁷ Russian slaves shared the same culture, religion and race as their masters, while American slaves had been initially uprooted from their homelands in Africa and were thus from vastly different cultural backgrounds. The ubiquity of Russian slaves and their impersonal relationships with their masters led Western visitors to conclude that Russian slavery wasn’t as demeaning and that they weren’t as badly treated as their American counterparts. Sala’s visit came only five years before the emancipation of Russian slaves in 1861, and by the 1850s there was an air of inevitability about this event. Unlike the violent and disruptive act that led to the emancipation of American slaves, informed Russian noblemen realised that slavery’s demise was only a matter of time.

When Sala delineates slavery in its actual form he traces the real relationship between a M. de Katorichassoff, aristocratic owner of a rural village, the afore-mentioned Volnoi-Voloshtok. The village has fallen into decrepitude; the watch-tower has broken windows, the balcony is empty and missing some of its walls and all of its windows, and the fire-engine department building is falling apart. What is the cause of this ruin? The aristocratic owner has a penchant for visiting Hamburg or for gambling, especially at roulette. His serfs are paying for his nocturnal pleasures by having their yearly rent, or *obrok*, increased. Sala makes the point that, reminiscent of Gogol in his novel *Dead Souls*, the master’s ‘natural interest in the Souls he possesses is having means sufficient to keep their bodies alive withal.’ (154) The serfs of aristocrats are then housed and fed and having worked for their master for three days are allowed to raise enough corn to make their black bread with. Sala then claims that these slaves are better off compared

²⁷ *ibid* p. 98

to crown slaves as black slaves in the American South are to the poor in some of London's parishes. He says;

As regards their rigid necessity – the bare elements of food, covering, and shelter, - the nobility's serfs have decidedly the same advantage over the twenty millions or so, of crown slaves (facetiously termed free peasants) as Mr. Legree's negroes have over the free-born British paupers of Buckinghamshire or Gloucestershire, or – out with it – St. James's, Westminster, and St. George's, Hanover Square. (155)

Sala is suggesting, in line with radical sentiment back in England, that black slaves in the American South actually have more advantages than the 'free' labour of the English working class. This was not an entirely original position; the anonymous author of *An Englishwoman in Russia* suggested a similar opinion. As far back as 1823, in his 'Open Challenge to William Wilberforce', William Cobbett, a writer Sala much admired for his forceful and personal style, raged against Wilberforce's obsession with the rights of black slaves over what Cobbett perceived to be the more valid rights of English labourers; 'what an insult to call upon people under the name of free British labourers; to appeal to them in behalf of Black slaves, when these free British labourers, these poor, mocked, degraded, wretches would be happy to lick the dishes and bowls out of which the Black slaves have breakfasted, dined or supped.'²⁸

²⁸ John Derry (ed) *Cobbett's England* (London: The Folio Society, 1992) p. 98

Sala compared the status of the serfs of the nobility to that of the black slaves of the South and suggested that the crown or court slaves are far worse off, and painted a withering and ironic picture of the famines they endure where ‘the people turn black, like negroes.’ (155) Although there were ‘state peasants’ in Russia who had escaped enserfment and occupied a position reminiscent of free blacks in America, peasants owned by the Tsar held ‘an intermediate position between serfs and state peasants, although they were often grouped with the latter.’²⁹ Sala is raising the same point Peter Kolchin makes in *Unfree Labour* when he states that ‘American slaveowners were largely resident, both physically and mentally, and expressed an increasingly paternalistic concern for the lives of their people. Russian serfowners usually approached their serfs as absentee lords, even when physically present, ignoring them except to extract income from them.’³⁰ The point of both the hypothetical, fictional case of the coachman and the droschky driver, and this factual example is to demonstrate how black slaves have been held up as victims and have demanded the attentions of the English abolitionists and philanthropists while closer to home, in reality in Russia and all but in name in England, there are white slaves who deserve more sympathy and philanthropic attention than their black trans-Atlantic counterparts. Sala’s personal feelings on slavery were first manifested on his visit to Russia and we can begin to appreciate how these comments would lead to him becoming a pro-Southern and pro-slavery supporter during the American Civil War.

This hierarchy of race is flagged again in a chapter called ‘Russians At Home’. Sala compares negro slaves to their Russian counterparts and finds that ‘The negro slave will laugh, and jest, and show all his white teeth, before half the wounds from his last

²⁹ Kolchin (1987) p. 26

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 156

cutting-up are healed; but the Russian peasant, male or female, is – when sober – always mournful, dejected, doleful.’ (194) Having never witnessed American slavery Sala is in no position to comment in such a manner but this does not stop him from comparing the behaviour of black slaves to the Russian serf. Sala defends the latter; ‘You find among the poor slave Russians – I can scarcely say the poorest, lowest, most degraded, when all are degraded, and low, and poor...the kindest faces, the most willing, obliging, grateful dispositions in the world.’ (213) Rather naively Sala instructs his readers that the Russian slave ‘is kind; he is grateful; he is affectionate; not quarrelsome when drunk; untiringly industrious...ordinarily frugal; and as astonishingly self-denying as an Irish peasant when he has a purpose to serve.’ (213) What Sala would fail to observe in black slaves when in America - the brutalisation of their lives and temperaments - he sees quite clearly in their Russian counterparts; ‘it is impossible to avoid becoming to a certain degree hardened and brutalised by the constant spectacle of unrestrained tyranny on the one hand, and by the impossibility of resistance on the other.’ (214) Sala believes that the power the masters have over their serfs stems from their mastery of language as well as their physical mastery. Slavery has so infiltrated all areas of Russian society that its very patterns of speech are governed by it.

[Russian] Slavery is so well organised, and so saturates the social system, that the very dictionary is impregnated with slavish words. A people philologically servile, and whose proverbs exhale a spirit of dog-like obedience and hopeless resignation, and sometimes abject glorification of despotism is indeed a rarity...among the Russian peasants, these are a few of the proverbs current and

common: "A man who has been well beaten is worth two men who haven't been beaten." "Five hundred blows with a stick will make a good grenadier; a thousand a dragoon; and none at all a captain." "Tis only the lazy ones who don't beat us." Can anything be more horrible than this tacit, shoulder-shrugging, almost smirking acceptance of the stick as an accomplished fact, - of the Valley of the Shadow of the Stick as a state of life into which it has pleased God to call them! (167)

Sala's musings on slavery in Russia and America lead him to ironically title one of his final chapters 'Tchnorni Narod (The Black People).' Attempting to delineate a crowd of 'black people', or the working-class population, Sala struggles because he cannot find them in any large numbers. He states that 'A Russian crowd is as rare a thing to be met with, as Johannisberg (sic) at a second-rate hotel, or a fine day in Fleet Street.' (285) As a flaneur, a writer who loves to depict characteristic types, this must have been especially frustrating for Sala. His solution was to devote large portions of his narrative to sketching the residents of the Heyde's Hotel. Aside from those 'Hamburgers' or German business men, Sala describes a curious civilian by the name of Cato the Censor. Sala describes his civilian garments in some detail, his size 'this fat Russian' and his profession which is to 'read through every...foreign newspaper that now lies on Heyde's table, and to blot out every subversive article, every democratic paragraph, every liberal word, every comma or semicolon displeasing to the autocratic regime of the Czar...' (231) Although Sala participates in the portrayal of Russia as despotic and unfree, he contradicts this approach by relating how after finishing his 'work' Cato the Censor becomes the epitome of conviviality and how he

keeps up this sociability 'till the small hours, as gaily and persistently as the most jovial of the Heydians.' (231) It was character sketching like this that forced the *Saturday Review* to declare that 'we reject as mere fictions his far-fetched account of the humours and excesses of the guests at Heyde's hotel.'³¹ It was these constant assertions of unreality that forced Sala to add a final chapter to the book of his Russian travels in order to dispute these claims. But rather than pointedly deny that his work was some kind of a forgery Sala ambiguously states that 'Curiously, now, sitting at home among English scenes and English faces, I am not altogether without grave doubts of my own as to whether I ever visited Russia in the flesh.' (310) Perhaps Sala was teasing his readers here, questioning the veracity of his own account in order to prepare them for his next role as a novelist, a role in which he could combine fiction with realism without subjecting himself to the jibes of his fellow journalists.

Catherine Waters notes that Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs have argued that forgery has an 'especially close, even parasitic relationship to travel writing, since the lone traveller bearing far-fetched facts from remote clime offers the perfect alibi' for fabricating such adventures.'³² Hulme and Youngs claim that the relationship between fiction and travel-writing is 'close and often troubling.'³³ Readers expect and desire a more literal truthfulness from the genre of travel writing than from fiction and they cite Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) as being an 'often cited example' of a 'difficult-to-categorise' work.³⁴ As we shall see in the next chapter, Sala would cite Sterne's work as an influence on a novel of his that blended a true-life

³¹ "Sala's Journey Due North," *Saturday Review*, 11 September 1858, 263 cited in Waters (2009) p. 318

³² Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 5 cited in Waters (2009) p. 318

³³ cited in, *ibid.* p. 318

³⁴ Hulme and Youngs (2006) p. 5

travel adventure with a fictional element, *Make Your Game*. Sala was thus constantly engaged in blurring the boundaries between realism and fiction, just as he had blurred the visual and the verbal.

On 14 March 1857 'A Journey Due North', after twenty-two numbers, was brought by Dickens to an abrupt and terminal end. The following week Sala began the first chapters of his novel, *The Baddington Peerage*, for Henry Vizetelly's *Illustrated Times* (1855-72). Justifiably angry at Sala's dilatoriness and his misplaced enthusiasm for another project, Dickens felt that he could in no way grant permission for the reproduction of any of Sala's essays for *Household Words*. It was a great blow for Sala whose increasing dissipation was causing him to owe large amounts of money, and he later asserted that George Routledge & Sons had been prepared to offer him the substantial sum of £250 for the rights to his Russian essays. Some consolation was found in the freer rein Vizetelly granted him in terms of style both in the novel he produced for the *Illustrated Times*, and in his series of sketches of London later published as *Twice Round the Clock* (1859), initially serialised in Vizetelly's *Welcome Guest* magazine. Sala was able to declare more openly his passion for bohemia without the perpetual worry of Dickens or Wills swinging the proverbial editorial axe. The use of gallicisms and verbosity that Dickens had managed to expunge from Sala's style now came back to the fore and with some degree of success; *Twice Round the Clock* became Sala's most respected work and was to lead to his contributions for William Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine* and Sala's eventual editorial position on its rival, the monthly *Temple Bar*.³⁵

³⁵ for more on Sala's work for Thackeray and *Temple Bar* see Peter Blake, 'The Paradox of a Periodical: *Temple Bar* Magazine under the Editorship of George Augustus Sala (1860-1863)' *The London Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 2 July 2010, 185-209

The disagreement between Sala and Dickens lasted for another eighteen months. Routledge lost interest in the Russian book, Sala's dissipation grew but he managed to fulfill his journalistic obligations for Vizetelly and began working for the *Daily Telegraph*. When Dickens issued a statement announcing that he had decided to live apart from his wife, there was a leader in the *Telegraph* that seemed sincere in its backing of Dickens (but could well have been a classic case of 'sucking up' to a mentor) and railed against the air of hypocrisy surrounding the scandal. Dickens read it and enquired who the writer was. On discovering it was Sala he decided to renew their friendship and on 30 December 1858 he wrote to Sala saying, "The 'Journey Due North' is henceforth at your own disposal. I hereby declare you to be the owner of the copyright of that work, collected and republished as a separate book; and I hope it may be a pleasant and profitable possession."³⁶ Seeing his first book in print must have given Sala the impetus to move into the world of 'literature' rather than to be solely considered as a journalist. The next chapter will consider Sala's move into fictional territory, a process that had begun with his work for Dickens and *Household Words* with the editor's desire for imagination, and had culminated in his account of Russia. In Russia he had blended realism – with descriptions of the barren landscape and the plight of the poor and the serfs - with fiction-like accounts of passengers and hotel residents, and idealised descriptions of Russian peasants.

³⁶ Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. Ed. Madeline House et al. Vol. 8 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-2002) p.592

5. Novelist and Man of Letters

Sala's first real sustained attempt at novel-writing came just after the repeal of the Stamp Duty in 1855 that led to a flourishing of penny daily newspapers and cheap periodicals. The *Daily Telegraph* became the first penny daily newspaper in British history in this year, and Sala began his thirty-year association with the *Telegraph* two years later in 1857, the same year as his first novel, *The Baddington Peerage*, was published in the weekly newspaper, the *Illustrated Times*. The *Telegraph* in particular attracted readers through its scandalous reports detailing famous cases such as that of the murderess Madeline Smith who poisoned her lover's cocoa with arsenic in 1857, and the Yelverton's divorce trial in 1861. It has long been acknowledged that sensation fiction emerged during this period of increased scandalous reportage and newspaper readership.¹ Sala's novels abound with sensational murders, bigamous marriages and disguised identities, a direct acknowledgement of his own involvement with newspaper reporting. In a letter to Edmund Yates dated 16 May 1861 Sala describes the next chapter of his serialised novel, *The Seven Sons of Mammon*. Entitled 'The Sexagenarians', Sala explains that 'it is a screamer I believe, a sort of boarding house where Dr. Smethurst might have met Miss Banker.'² Smethurst and Banker were protagonists in a sensational murder trial in 1859; Smethurst was accused of murdering his wife after bigamously marrying Miss Banker. But these

¹ John Sutherland, 'Wilkie Collins and the Origins of the Sensation Novel' in *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront: Some Reassessments*, ed. Nelson Smith and R.C. Terry (New York: AMS Press, 1995) p. 78

² Judy McKenzie, (ed.) *Letters of George Augustus Sala to Edmund Yates* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1993) Letter 54 p. 93

sensational stories are also inserted to validate the narrative, to self-consciously assert the realism of the text. Novelists like Sala need only point out to his readers that they were reading similar stories in their daily newspapers, and that because these events were an everyday occurrence they were equally valid in fictional narratives. Judy McKenzie believes that ‘Sala frequently embroiders on the facts to enliven “reality”’, and claims that, ‘the term news “story” is particularly applicable to his style, which foreshadows modern popular journalism. His aim was a personal view, more impressionistic than factual, more colour than substance.’³ Given his role as reporter for the *Daily Telegraph*, Sala would have at his command a veritable cornucopia of news stories all ripe for inclusion in his next novel or next ‘leader.’ Matthew Rubery qualifies this; ‘Journalists sound suspiciously like fiction writers when using the word ‘story’ to describe their own craft of assembling *factua bruta* into intelligible narrative.’⁴ Working in both camps simultaneously, in newspaper reporting and in fiction, gave Sala a unique edge over his contemporaries. Although many of his peers were writing novels and articles for periodicals, few were in the employ of national newspapers while also producing fiction. In his novels Sala shows his immersion in the newspaper world with plot-lines that turn on the report of a death or a marriage, and by the insertion of graphic depictions of his fellow journalist colleagues.

In this chapter I want to work through Sala’s engagement with realism and sensationalism and his journalistic style to better understand the themes he was addressing in his novels and their theoretical underpinning. I want to show how the influence of French realists like Balzac and French romanticists like Gautier, along with theories of Dutch Painting and the different aspects of realism Sala was working

³ *ibid.* Letter 12 p. 37

⁴ Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction after the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 12

in, all contributed to Sala's novelistic style. In terms of realism I want to show how by stepping outside of the narrative and inserting his own personal feelings into the text, by constantly reinforcing his commitment to the realism of his characters, by engaging in long descriptions of everyday minutiae, and by deliberately shocking and upsetting his readership with sensational detail, Sala was engaged in a mission to disrupt the niceties of domestic fiction and to throw off the shackles of bourgeois conformity he felt and saw all around him.

Although all five of Sala's novels were written in very different styles - *The Baddington Peerage* (1857), *The Seven Sons of Mammon* (1861), and *Quite Alone* (1864) were bohemian novels concerned with representing the extremes of society – *Make Your Game* (1859) was an extended travelogue, and *Captain Dangerous* (1862) was a historical novel, they all shared different elements of realism and sensationalism. In a leader in the *Daily Telegraph* written on May 20 1875, Sala looked back at the realism of the Pre-Raphaelite painters: 'The influence of the art-insurrection which a quarter of a century since seemed to wear so weird, so grotesque, and so 'uncanny' an aspect, has been harmless in its every relation to art, since to serve an apprenticeship to the most painful kind of realism cannot do harm to any painter.'⁵ While suggesting that a devotion to realism did not harm these painters or their style, Sala also seems to be reflecting that it did not harm his own writing style to 'serve an apprenticeship' to realism. Indeed the realism of his novels helped evolve his particular realistic style as a Special Correspondent in which he would celebrate the anti-prosaic and mundane elements of foreign cities. But by referring to the Pre-Raphaelites Sala is indexing a key element in Mary Braddon's most famous sensation

⁵ *Daily Telegraph* May 20 1875 p. 3

novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). In the novel Lady Audley's appearance is painted in Pre-Raphaelite style complete with a 'hard, cruel, almost demonic expression' that foreshadows the litany of evil Lady Audley will unleash on her unsuspecting family and friends.⁶ The Pre-Raphaelites were, then, operating in a naturalistic and realistic field but with elements of sensation never far from the surface. In the same manner both Braddon and Sala would incorporate sensation and realism into their literary output.

Sala certainly did not find writing novels an easy task. They were all serialised pieces of fiction, which may have contributed to Sala's difficulty with plot construction and digression. *The Baddington Peerage* and *Make Your Game* were serialised in the weekly *Illustrated Times*, *The Seven Sons of Mammon* and *Captain Dangerous* in Sala's own monthly, *Temple Bar*, and *Quite Alone* in Dickens's weekly successor to *Household Words*, *All The Year Round*. Sala struggled to complete *The Baddington Peerage* while simultaneously working in Russia for *Household Words* in 1856. Instalments of *Make Your Game* were disrupted when Sala's nose was broken in a midnight brawl with the landlord of a drinking club in Panton Street on January 8 1859. Although Sala rallied four weeks later and provided the next three instalments – 19 and 26 February, 5 March - on time, it was not for a further six months, on 3 September that Sala continued serialisation. The resultant feud between Sala and Vizetelly over serialisation ruined their friendship and must have greatly inconvenienced readers who relied on the constant and steady serialisation of a novel as an intrinsic component of their periodical. In his exasperation and disgust at the difficulty in creating a coherent plot-line for *The Strange Adventures of Captain*

⁶ Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 102

Dangerous, Sala seriously contemplated in 1862 employing James Hain Friswell to complete the last three chapters.⁷ While writing *Quite Alone* Sala was simultaneously reporting on the Civil War in America for the *Daily Telegraph*, and he became so confused with the plot and his characters that Dickens had no alternative but to hand over the novel for completion to Andrew Halliday. These were severe and serious lapses in professionalism on Sala's part and once again threw suspicions over the veracity of his work, just as the *Saturday Review* had questioned whether Sala had ever been to Russia when writing *A Journey Due North*.

Digressions and Influences

In a sentence from his first 10,000 word 'novel', *Gerald Moreland*, written in 1842 when only fourteen years of age, Sala demonstrated his literary precocity: 'A mind like Major Moreland, urged to a condition of gloom and moroseness soured moreover by adversity, was one well fitted to join an out-breaking of sedition and discontent against the existing government.'⁸ Writing like this would surely have marked Sala out as a rising star in the literary firmament, but as we have already seen it was originally the visual field that would attract him in his early professional life. Having then served nearly seven years apprenticeship to Dickens as a writer for *Household Words*, Sala finally dipped his toe into the sea of novel-writing. But on 26 February 1857, just a few short weeks before seeing his first novel in print, Sala wrote a letter to his fellow journalist and friend Edmund Yates that revealed his anxieties and insecurities at crossing over from the world of 'journalism' into the world of

⁷ P.D Edwards, *Dickens's Young Men* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 129
Ironically Sala would take Friswell to court in 1870 for his personal attack on Sala in his book *Modern Men of Letters Honestly Criticised* (1870).

⁸ Typed transcript of G.A. Sala, *Gerald Moreland* (1842) Box 15 Sala Papers Beinecke Library

‘literature.’ He wrote: ‘I am nervous about the *Baddington Peerage* lest it should be found too full of my d---d descriptions and digressions – tolerable in essay but intolerable in narrative. There will be much rejoicing in the camps of the Hittites and the Amorites and the Jebusites if I break down, though it will be perhaps salutary for this too often turned up nose to be brought to the grindstone of criticism.’⁹ His anxious letter also displayed his knowledge of the deficiencies in his style. As we have seen he had been roundly castigated for his digressions in *A Journey Due North*, and this must have engendered the sensitivity and chagrin he displays at the thought of the thunderous criticism that would likely follow from his ‘enemies’ in the press. The ‘Hittites’, ‘Amorites’, and ‘Jebusites’ refer to the writers for the scholarly and serious weekly the *Saturday Review*, set up in 1855 and edited by the Cambridge-educated A.J.B. Beresford Hope. Hope employed on his staff like-minded serious young men from Oxford and Cambridge University.

Sala’s lack of a university education, coupled with his apprenticeship on Dickens’s *Household Words*, had, as we have seen in the criticism of *A Journey Due North*, singled him out for censure by the high-brow *Saturday Review*. Sala was not wrong about the expected criticism from the magazine, and the *Saturday Review* would never fail to attack him in whatever medium he chose to write. Nigel Cross describes how the *Saturday Review* was ‘the most virulent and consistent enemy of the Bohemians’ and how it ‘reserved its most splenetic abuse for Sala and all his works.’¹⁰ Sala was not averse to inserting unsubtle sallies towards the *Saturday Review* himself. In his novel depicting a garrulous and well-travelled adventurer from the eighteenth century entitled *The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous*,

⁹ McKenzie, (1993) Letter 9 p. 33

¹⁰ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 97-99

contemporary readers could have been forgiven for mistaking John Dangerous for Sala, particularly when in the novel the hero rails against ‘you fine Scholars and Scribblers, who, because they can turn verse and make Te-to-tum into Greek, must needs sneer at me at the Coffee House, and make a butt of an honest man who has been from one end of the world to the other...’¹¹ In his most personal novel, *Make Your Game*, in which he inserts himself and two of his friends as the main characters in the story and details their real life gambling jaunt to Hamburg, the Man in the Iron Chest (Sala) compares the Homburg Gardens to the Vauxhall Gardens and then expostulates on the pedantry of ‘The *Saturday Review* (whose contributors, on the principle of chastening whom they love, are very fond of the present writer)’. In an obvious attack on Sala and his bohemian, metropolitan circle, the reviewers cry out ‘No embodiment of fancies; no cockney reminiscences!’¹² In his famous defence of the sensation novel, ‘On the “Sensational” in Literature and Art’, for Mary Braddon’s *Belgravia* in 1868 Sala bemoaned the fact that ‘We have always been a yelping generation, and we must have our Cry’, a direct and personal reference to the criticisms he was suffering at the hands of the *Saturday Reviewers*.¹³ These outbursts not only demonstrate Sala’s inability to keep his personal feelings out of his novel-writing, and his at times deliberate shifting of the boundaries of what typically constituted realism, they also serve to undermine his argument and reinforce the *Saturday Review*’s criticisms about his endless digressions.

¹¹ G.A. Sala, *The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous* (London: C.H. Clarke, 1875) p. 98 All subsequent references from this edition

¹² G.A. Sala, *Make Your Game* (London: Ward & Lock, 1860) p. 169 All subsequent references from this edition

¹³ G.A. Sala, ‘On the “Sensational” in Literature and Art’, *Belgravia* 4 (1868: Feb) p. 449 (While travelling in Algeria Sala met a gentleman who recommended that he read the *Saturday Review* to while away the hours in a foreign clime. Sala’s reply was that ‘I called on him no more’ *A Trip to Barbary* p. 10)

Sala felt strongly that the lack of formal qualifications for journalists were at once a major obstacle in the attempt to claim distinction for the profession. There were no entry requirements, administering body or specialised knowledge, something those journalists who had been to university were quick to pick up on in those members of the profession who had not studied in academia. But this lack of formal training was also part of the appeal to non-university middle-class writers like Sala, or those from the self-taught working classes. Ironically, it would be Sala's role as a journalist and *his* writing style that would pave the way for an improvement in attitudes to, and working conditions for, its practitioners, and not that of the contributors to the *Saturday Review*.

Matthew Rubery suggests that 'The very distinction between 'journalist' and 'novelist' would have made little sense to a generation of writers who had always moved seamlessly between these different categories.'¹⁴ But for Sala there *was* a definite and important distinction between the role of 'journalist' and that of 'novelist' or 'man of letters.' Rubery is discussing writers like Dickens and Thackeray, writers who had already achieved success and acclaim in both mediums. Indeed, as John Drew states, the entire oeuvre of Dickens might be classified as journalism, and Rubery cites *Hard Times* and its serialisation in *Household Words* as being particularly illustrative of the way in which fiction could complement and supplement non-fiction.¹⁵ But Sala was conscious that Dickens and Thackeray did not attain their level of fame and success through their work as journalists. In order to rise above the daily grind of non-fictional journalism Sala knew he would have to make a name for himself as a 'serious' writer. In Sala's novels this manifests itself, albeit it with some

¹⁴ Rubery (2009) p. 12

¹⁵ John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

affection and sympathy, when he portrays a procession of ‘hack’ and penny-a-line journalists subsisting on paltry incomes and grubbing around for stories of murder, divorce or suicide. In terms of style, Sala was consistently unable to separate his role as a newspaper writer and journalist from that of a novelist.

Sala was also aware, through his admiration for the hectic working lives of Thackeray and Balzac in particular, and through reading their novels, that there was an enormous pressure on novelists to subsidise their paltry income with ‘hack’ journalism. As we have already seen, Balzac influenced many of Sala’s French-flavoured articles for *Household Words*. He was, not surprisingly, a major influence on Sala’s novels, but not only in terms of an obsession with Balzacian realism through the minutiae of descriptions of interiors and of characters’ appearances, but also in Balzac’s critique of personal economics, his fascination with Bohemianism and low-life, and in the appearance and re-appearance of characters with altering identities and evil, scheming intentions. Balzac even makes an appearance as a character in *Quite Alone*. Balzac is introduced as an ardent admirer of feminine beauty when at the Porte St. Martin theatre in Paris. Reflecting on Valerie, the heroine’s mother, and her first appearance on stage, Balzac describes her as ‘a Cossack in petticoats and will occupy Paris.’¹⁶ Sala reinforces the realism of the narrative by including a historical and literary character from real life, something he would expand on in *The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous*. As P.D. Edwards has observed, throughout *The Baddington Peerage* ‘oblique homage’ is paid to Balzac as the leading male character, Captain Pollyblank, is eventually revealed through a series of aliases and disguises and pseudonyms such as Professor Jachimo and Dr. Ionides, to be none other than

¹⁶ G.A.Sala, ‘Quite Alone’ *All The Year Round* Mar. 19 1864 p. 126 References are to *All The Year Round* editions and page numbers. All subsequent references to this source are in parenthesis.

Balzac's Vautrin.¹⁷ In *The Seven Sons of Mammon* Sala blatantly displays the influence of Balzac by referring to his novel as 'his comedie humane.'¹⁸ Responding to criticism that he had actually only written about one of the seven sons of Mammon, Sala replied by suggesting that if he had written about all of the sons of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe his novel would have been in six volumes instead of one. He informs us that 'I have designed my little Human Comedy on the model of an American table d'hôte, and the guests may drop in as they choose, eat their fill, go away, or come back again as the humour takes them. How many incarnations, if you please, had Balzac's Vautrin?' (vii-ix) Sala suggests that his novel could run into many different versions, and if the reading public requested a sequel he would be obliged to write one. Needless to say, the sequel never appeared which could suggest the lack of public interest in the novel or the lack of interest from Sala, who as we will see, turned his back on novel-writing shortly after. Unlike the best-selling sensation novelist Mary Braddon, who became a contributor to Sala's *Temple Bar* magazine project in 1861 and who greatly admired Balzac but couldn't bring herself to advocate reading French novels to her readership, Sala openly displayed his affection for a novelist still considered highly risqué to an English audience. In Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) the main protagonist, Robert Audley, puts away the reading of French novels when he becomes an upstanding and law-abiding citizen.

Sala was also influenced by a far more Romantic French novelist, one that issued in May 1834 a rallying cry to artists and bohemians of the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' long before Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde would issue a similar clarion call to late nineteenth-century England. In his preface to his novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*,

¹⁷ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's Young Men* p. 79

¹⁸ G.A. Sala, *The Seven Sons of Mammon* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1864) p. viii All subsequent references to this edition

(1834) Théophile Gautier criticised the moral journalists and utilitarian critics who expected art to 'be spiritually uplifting and morally improving.'¹⁹ Novels, claimed Gautier, had two uses, one material and one spiritual. The material usefulness meant money in the pocket of the author, while Gautier ironically suggests that the spiritual aspect meant that 'while reading novels you are asleep and not reading useful moral and progressive journals, or other such indigestible and stupefying drugs.'²⁰ In her introduction to the novel Patricia Dunker claims that in his preface Gautier is engaged in 'clearing the undergrowth of literary prejudice and laying down defences against potential attacks upon the sexual morality of his forthcoming novel.'²¹ But he was also influencing a generation of bohemian writers in England; Sala in particular. We know that Sala admired Gautier's preface because in 1862, in his role as editor of *Temple Bar*, Sala invited Gautier to write a three-part critique of the English art on display at that year's International Exhibition. In Sala's introduction to Gautier's articles, which were entitled 'The British School in our International Exhibition: English Art from a French Point of View', and which Sala also translated, he stated that 'it has been a labour of love to translate [Gautier]. I may say that his poem of the Reine Candaule placed him, years ago, on the steps of that throne whose summit is occupied by Victor Hugo...I won't even say anything about the introduction to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, declared to be 'the magnificent preface to a magnificent book' by Honoré de Balzac.'²²

Sala obviously held Gautier in high esteem, he was also clever and cautious enough to realise that Gautier's preface was considered too morally dangerous to be openly

¹⁹ Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* ed. Helen Constantine (London: Penguin, 2005) p. xv

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 21

²¹ *ibid.* p. xv

²² *Temple Bar* June 1862 p. 320

praised by him in a family journal. In his defence of the sensation novel, ‘On the “Sensational” in Literature and Art’, written in 1868 for Mary Braddon’s monthly magazine *Belgravia*, Sala cites Gautier as one of the French Bohemians and Romanticists the Classicists were so afraid of. Sala recounts how it was the Classicists who ‘died the death’ and likens this to the contemporary cry against sensationalism. Gautier thus becomes for Sala a prototype figure in the development of the modern novel and provided Sala with the impetus to transcend the world of hack journalism and to become transformed into a novelist. These French novelists, and their far more overt use of sexuality, vice and crime in their fiction, would instil in Sala the desire to write the kind of novels he felt were non-existent in the current English domestic fictional market. What Sala gleaned from Gautier was a more romantic and imaginative aspect to his fiction which manifested itself in the more sensational elements to his narratives, and a realisation of the low esteem with which literary critics and journalists were held by novelists.

The influence of Balzac and Gautier is immediate in the celebrated opening passage of Sala’s *Quite Alone*. The heroine of the novel, Lily, is portrayed riding around the Ladies Mile in Hyde Park and while romantically observing her several lounging clubmen at the scene ask, ‘Is she demi-monde?’ As P.D. Edwards has stated this initial question, along with the location and the French title of the opening chapter, ‘*Seule au Monde*’, indicate that the novel will be of a bohemian bent. It ‘underlines the point that in the early 1860s Hyde Park and the Row were the site of a new and alarming confluence of French and English sexual morality and, in novels, of French social realism and English.’²³ The novel goes on to describe the stilted upbringing of

²³ P.D. Edwards (1997) p. 84

Lily and a romantic portrayal of her wild and dangerous mother who was plucked from provincial France to become an entertainer in the theatres of Paris and London. It was this yoking of the realism of Balzac and the romance of Gautier that would be a constant theme in Sala's novels, and would be used to great effect in his travel journalism when he fused the prosaic with the romantic.

Sala was fortunate that his first novel, *The Baddington Peerage*, was commissioned for the *Illustrated Times* by Henry Vizetelly, an editor whose lax attitude towards moral values would allow Sala more licence and freedom than writing for Dickens had done. Vizetelly also bought the *Welcome Guest* magazine in which Sala contributed his *Twice Round the Clock* series, and he was later imprisoned for publishing the first English translations of Zola's *La Terre* (1887), having also published the first translation of Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* that same year. He would also feature as one of two travelling companions of Sala in his second novel *Make Your Game*, also serialised in the *Illustrated Times* and based on the real-life gambling trip the three men undertook to Hamburg. The other traveller was Gus 'Ponny' Mayhew, brother of Henry, whose nickname derived from his authorship of a ballad in praise of 'Poniatowski.' Vizetelly, editor of the *Illustrated Times*, the paper that serialised *The Baddington Peerage* from 21 March to 26 December 1857, joked about the novel's digressive quality and claimed that 'in one long chapter the only advance made in the story was the hero's ordering a cup of tea.'²⁴ It was this kind of criticism, and Sala's own derogatory comments about his work - he claimed in the preface to *The Baddington Peerage* that it was the worst novel ever written because it had no plot - that has led to the neglect of Sala's novels. The criticism is certainly

²⁴ cited in, *ibid* p. 33

justified at times throughout the five major pieces of fiction he wrote. But in this chapter I want to reassess Sala's fiction, not with the purpose of reclaiming him as a lost and great artist, but to show that a knowledge of his influences and the themes he was addressing in his novels, and the theoretical framework he builds these novels on, is crucial to an understanding of developments in Sala's personal style and the effect this would have on the next generation of journalists.

Dutch Pictures

In a *Household Words* article from September 18 1852 entitled 'The Shadow of a Dutch Painter', Sala takes a short biographical note about the artist Peter de Laar from an old copy he possesses of the Rev. Mr. Pilkington's *The Gentleman's and Coinnosseur's Dictionary of Painters* (1770), and transforms it into a sensational and supernatural tale. In the dictionary de Laar, known affectionately as Il Bamboccio, comes to Italy from Amsterdam to study landscape painting under the tutelage of Nicolas Poussin. He becomes melancholic and in 1675 drowns himself in a canal. Sala embellishes de Laar's standing as a joker and a hoaxer and paints him as an archetypal bohemian, a great frequenter of Italian wine-shops who charms everyone he comes into contact with. There are long passages of detailed description focusing on his physical deformity and the manner of his dress. While at a picnic with his brother Roeland de Laar and another Dutch apprentice Andrew Both, he is castigated by a monk for eating meat during Lent. Peter de Laar abuses the religious man and throws him into a stream whereupon the monk drowns. From that day onward the shadow of the monk is always before the Dutchman. 'His laugh loses its heartiness,

and his eye grows dull and his cheek haggard; it is the Monk.’²⁵ Struggling under the weight of the monk’s oppressive memory, Andrew Both drowns himself in 1650, Roeland de Laar perishes in water in 1663 and in 1675 the narrator informs us that Peter, ‘ruined in health by excesses, impoverished in purse, eclipsed in fame by the rising star of Wouvermans, is found drowned in a well at Haarlem. It is the Monk.’(23)

In this short tale Sala anticipates many of the traits of his novels; most notably the blending of historical detail with realism and sensationalism, an unhealthy interest in murder and crime and a predilection for minute descriptions of appearance suffused with the imaginative qualities of Dickens and Gautier. But it is the artistic school from which the painter Peter de Laar originates, the Dutch school of painting, and Sala’s fascination with Dutch and Flemish art that is most telling in this early piece.

The Golden Age of Dutch painting lasted approximately one hundred years, from 1580-1680, and Sala reinforced his association with this school of art when he titled one of the collections of his *Household Words* essays under the name *Dutch Pictures: With Some Sketches In The Flemish Manner* (1861). In the preface, under the subtitle ‘On the Batavian School of Delineation’, Sala set out to prove why he attached this particular title to his collection and he gave two reasons for this. He felt that Dutch Painters were ‘remarkable for their careful delineation of the minutest objects in nature, animate and inanimate, bestowing infinite pains on the reproduction of, or the shadows and reflections in, pots and pans.’ He also felt a natural kinship with them because he ‘endeavoured, perhaps unsuccessfully, but always laboriously, to imitate

²⁵ G.A. Sala, ‘The Shadow of a Dutch Painter’ in G.A. Sala, *Dutch Pictures: With Some Sketches in the Flemish Manner* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1883) p. 23 Subsequent references in parenthesis.

with the pen what these ingenious artists have done with the pencil, and to bring to the description of the men and manners of the times in which I have lived that minuteness – it may be pettiness of observation – which makes every Dutch Picture, to the meanest, curious, if not excellent.’²⁶ Looking back to chapter 1 and Sala’s battle between pen and pencil, we can see how he has deliberately cast himself in the role as a word-painter. We can also observe how minuteness of description and portrayal of the ordinary men and manners of the day were the prime motives for Sala’s appropriation of Dutch Painting. Sala seems to be nailing his realist credentials and respectability to the mast here, for as Ruth Yeazell has noticed, writers who alluded to Dutch painting in this manner are ‘writing a kind of shorthand for many of the characteristics we now associate with the bourgeois novel.’²⁷ These characteristics include the representation of ordinary people with a non-allegorical status rather than mythic or heroic ones, the attention to quotidian customs and habits and the detailed rendering of material objects and settings, particularly the domestic interiors of the lower classes.²⁸

In the first chapter we observed how illustrators and painters like Hogarth, Cruikshank and Frith had influenced Sala’s writing style with their evocations of low-life and everyday life, particularly in the urban milieu. Here Sala adds the Dutch school of painting to this list of visual influences, and stresses how their attention to rustic detail and how the un-heroic and ignoble elements of their art have been vital elements of his own writing style. George Levine has identified that the typical landscapes of Victorian realist fiction eschew the Romantic sublime of mountains and

²⁶ G.A. Sala, *Dutch Pictures* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1883) pp. ix-x

²⁷ Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) p. xv

²⁸ *ibid.* p. xv

instead concentrate on the lowlands of Holland and Belgium, quintessential English villages and the suburban areas of London or, the everyday and mundane. Levine relates this to the pictorial and suggests that ‘Notoriously, the pictorial analogue most frequently implied by the Victorians is not the sublime of Claude, Poussin or even Turner, but Dutch realism: landscapes barely varied by the slightest rise, flatlands and cows and peasants and northern skies...’²⁹ In this extract from *The Seven Sons of Mammon*, Sala describes just such an idyllic pastoral scene – the village of Hoogendracht – and even references some of the Dutch Masters to reinforce the analogy;

The cows were too proud to rise and stalk away as a stranger passed, but looked at him instead with their vast chests prone to the grass and their haunches bent, with a lazy, landed-proprietor kind of air, chewing the cud disdainfully as though they thought, ‘We are the cows that Cuyp and Karl du Jardin painted in the sheeny fields and the golden sunset, and that Verbeckhoeven paints so well now. We are historic cows.’ (107)

The extract is reminiscent of his descriptions of the scenery and menial labourers he encounters in Russia, but underneath the surface of this rural idyll the narrator informs us of the terrible wars and outrages that have occurred in Hoogendracht, thus shattering the reader’s pastoral notions of the place and reinforcing Sala’s commitment to historical association. By the time Sala writes these lines the comparison between Dutch art and prose was already a popular trope among

²⁹ George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly* (Chicago: CUP, 1981) p. 208

nineteenth-century writers. George Eliot had ‘paused her story a little’ during chapter 17 of her first full-length novel *Adam Bede* (1859) to defend its realist qualities and challenge those who thought her subject matter was not sufficiently worthy; ‘It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence...’³⁰ Eliot could well have been alluding to Ruskin and his acolytes when she mentions the ‘lofty-minded people’ who dislike the art of the Dutch. In *Modern Painters* (1843), Ruskin denounced Dutch Painting and when the Dutch school of art was transposed to novel-writing Ruskin was similarly unimpressed. This is how he described Eliot’s *Mill On the Floss*: ‘There is not a single person in the book of the smallest importance to anybody but themselves, or whose qualities deserve so much as a line of printer’s type in their description.’³¹ It was the ‘low’ and vulgar side of Dutch art that caused critics to react so violently to their painting. Even Hogarth, obviously influenced in many respects by the Dutch masters, sought to distinguish his own art from that of the Dutch and what he perceived to be the ‘indelicacies of Flemish and Dutch painters.’³²

But Ruth Yeazell describes how the French critic Théophile Thoré believed that this was ‘quite simply, ART FOR MAN’ and that Dutch art could be identified with the ‘liberation of mankind from the rule of court and church alike.’³³ It was this separation of man from restrictive and prohibitive institutions that appealed to writers as diverse as Eliot, Balzac and Sala. For French novelists, as well as English ones, the

³⁰ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (ed) Valerie Cunningham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 175

³¹ cited in, Yeazell (2008) p. 94. But Ruskin also felt that Rubens in particular, and to a lesser extent Rembrandt and Van Dyck, had produced ‘the first instances of complete unconventional unaffected landscape’, while all three comprised ‘the northern parallel to the power of the Venetians’. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* Vol. I (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1846) p. 89

³² *ibid.* p. 29

³³ *ibid.* p. 47

association with Dutch painting was a helpful one; it enabled them to justify their obsession with low and humble subjects, with the ordinary and everyday as well as the *demi-monde*. It was this aspect of Dutch painting and French novel-writing that Sala would incorporate into the realist aspects of his fiction.

So, for example, whereas George Eliot associated Dutch art with the toil of labour and what Yeazell terms ‘unidealised figures’ of a rural disposition, Sala was more interested in analogies to the Dutch school of painting from a more Balzacian position. In Eliot’s fiction Dutch painting’s association with ‘the comparatively low and humble’ meant the depiction of rural agricultural labourers, but for Balzac and Sala these rural representations were usually transposed to the urban milieu. Instead of portraying the rural poor Balzac and Sala were more concerned with exposing the urban underclass; typically vulgar, grasping figures who for one reason or another have found themselves embroiled in lives of vice and crime.³⁴ This is where Sala departs from the conventions of fictional realism and its insistence on quietude and the suburban milieu with his extreme depictions of life in the seedier areas of the metropolis. Building on his essays for *Household Words* in which he painted vivid, and often sympathetic, descriptions of the criminal underclass, and poured scorn on the excesses of the aristocracy, Sala’s novels positively come to life when, as in *The Baddington Peerage*, *The Seven Sons of Mammon*, and *Quite Alone*, characters like Sims and Tiggs, Florence Armytage, Jack Pollyblank and Sir Francis Blunt are introduced to represent either the criminal fraternity or the debauched aristocracy. It was through this representation of criminals and the fluidity of class that Sala was

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 9

able to imbue his novels with a sensational element: thus Dutch art, realism, French novelists and newspaper reportage were all intrinsic elements in Sala's fiction.

Critics noted that despite Balzac's painterly skill at description, an excess of the same description 'threatened not merely to impede the narrative but to drain it of meaning altogether.'³⁵ It was precisely this kind of criticism that would also be levelled at Sala's novels. His ability to paint 'word pictures' was offset by the way he digressed and stalled the narrative, negating the tension, drama and excitement from his fiction. It was Dutch Painter-like realistic descriptions of Rotterdam in his novel *Make Your Game*, that demonstrated Sala's indebtedness to the Dutch school of art;

Pagodas, indeed; queerly shaped windmills; triangular bridges,
with fat women and fatter children going over them; odd
concentric patterns in glowing hues on window-blinds; junk-like
boats with fan sails; porcelain tiles painted with blue devices; huge
jars at house doors: abundant flower-pots; and ivory toys, fans,
chessmen, dyed feathers, and brocaded silks in shop windows
abound.³⁶

There is a journalistic realism here and an ability to focus on particular detail while still managing to convey a wider sense of place and time, a style particularly suited to travel writing. But it was descriptions like this, of the fashionable commodities in the Parisian apartment of the evil heroine, Florence Armytage, in *The Seven Sons of*

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 11

³⁶ p 40-41 of *Make Your Game*

Mammon that come closest to Balzac's style and would exasperate critics and readers alike:

The suite of rooms on the first floor of the Rue Grande comprised a vestibule (coloured marble, fresco copy of Cephalus and Aurora, statuary, alabaster vases, &c), a dining-room (inlaid *parquet*, pictures of game by Mytens, boar-hunt by Snyders, fruit after Rubens, insects by Abraham Mignon, silver Venetian frames, Japanese bird-screen, &c); a grand saloon for receptions (needlework, tapestried furniture, ebony, mother-of-pearl...pianoforte by Pleyel, harp by Erard, &c. &c.)...a delicious boudoir (white and gold, select library in alternate vellum and crimson morocco bindings, stained-glass windows, porcelain door-panels, aquarium...and the entire apartment not much bigger than a butler's pantry, &c. &c. &c.) (34-5)

The terminal outlining of detail at least has a function here; it alerts us to the tasteful vanity and the accumulation of private luxury that will ultimately bring about the downfall of Florence Armytage, thus reinforcing the novel's critique of capitalist greed. Sala takes the Dutch Painting style, once again cites some of its representatives, and this time moves it to the urban milieu. We can also detect in this extended passage yet more examples of Sala's passion for, and ambiguity towards, ladies' fashion and we can link this style of writing back to his hyperbolic prose for Soyer on the 'Impenetrable Grotto of Ondine' in *The Book of the Symposium* and his obsession with commodities in his *Household Words* essays.

In a review of *The Baddington Peerage* in the *Athenaeum* - a journal often appreciative towards Sala's writing because of his friendship with the editor William Hepworth Dixon - the anonymous reviewer comments on how the story 'begins in a very striking manner' but soon 'loses itself through digressions, and tortuous windings innumerable.' We are told that 'the author himself seems to forget his original intentions...He does not hold out under the necessity of a continual effort, but is fitful, broken and wayward.' In a doleful lament the reviewer goes on to suggest that '*The Baddington Peerage* adds one more to the heap of "things incomplete and purposes betrayed" which are the saddest of all the wrecks which lie so thick upon the shores of life and time.'³⁷ The anxieties Sala displayed in his letter to Edmund Yates appear to have become justified. Critics seem to have picked up on the fact that Sala was adept at short, journalistic essays like the articles he wrote for *Household Words*, but that in the longer form he had no plan and could not sustain his narrative. Just as Dutch Paintings were carefully and skilfully crafted vignettes of everyday life that lacked a grand narrative, so too Sala's novels were perceived as well-written studies in manners and life but lacking in the kind of planning and sweep of humanity as in the novels of a Dickens or a Thackeray. At times even Sala seems to have realised that overlong descriptions in a Dutch painterly style were far more suited to travel journalism than to the novel. In *Make Your Game* he states that 'Dutch painting might perhaps be tolerated in the description of a voyage to the shores of Holland; but I am afraid that I should "make" neither my readers' game nor my own were I to indulge in very minute detail.' (19) It was in his travel writing that Sala was able to indulge in these kinds of realistic depictions without upsetting his readership or his critics.

³⁷ *Athenaeum* 1701 June 2 1860 p. 754

Yeazell has noted that the idiom of ‘Dutch Painting’ gradually disappeared from nineteenth-century discourse about the novel as the photograph usurped the place once exclusively held by ‘the faithful mimesis of the painters.’³⁸ She suggests that even Balzac, ‘that pre-eminent “Dutch painter in prose”, was increasingly compared to ‘the daguerreotype.’³⁹ The photographic, or as we have observed William Powell Frith term it, the ‘foe-to-graphic’, led to a more realistic portrayal of the world and a tendency to view novels in terms of realism rather than the theory of ‘Dutch Painting.’ The idealised rural landscapes were making way for the more contemporary and relevant realistic representations of everyday urban and suburban locales and the secrets and sensations hidden behind their respectable walls. But by claiming the Dutch Painters and their style for his own, Sala was committing himself to a realist agenda. As we have seen, his use of extended descriptions was, as Francis O’Gorman acknowledges, one of ‘the primary conventions of realism.’ O’Gorman states that realism views all people and things ‘within large containing social organisations’ and this leads to an ‘apparently digressive preoccupation with surfaces, things, particularities, social manners.’⁴⁰ Sala was, then, working within the formal conventions of realism but was also concerned with breaking down these conventions.

Realism

As well as long, digressive Balzacian descriptions, one of the elements of realism Sala utilises in his novels is explained by O’Gorman who notes how ‘narratives touched by the realistic impulse try to resist or circumvent the “formal” conventions

³⁸ Yeazell (2008) p. xvi For more on the the photographic influence on fiction see Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999)

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 16

⁴⁰ Francis O’Gorman (ed.) *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002) p. 111

of narrative.⁴¹ This is manifested in a self-consciousness in realistic fiction, which in turn goes on to become a convention. O’Gorman cites Thackeray and an excerpt from *Vanity Fair* as an example;

All which details, I have no doubt, JONES, who reads his book at his Club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental. Yes; I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half-pint of wine), taking out his pencil and scoring under the words ‘foolish, twaddling,’ etc., and adding to them his own remark of ‘quite true.’ Well, he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels; and so had better take warning and go elsewhere.⁴²

Like Thackeray, Sala would constantly violate realist conventions by stepping out of the narrative in order to persuade his readers that not only does he passionately care about his fiction, but that it was real to life and real to his own experiences of life.

O’Gorman likens these narrative tropes to the technique used by Elizabeth Gaskell in *Mary Barton* when she attempts to force upon the reader a recognition of the ‘hidden romances’ in ‘the lot of those who daily pass you in the street.’⁴³ In his defence of *Bleak House* written in the 1853 preface, Dickens explained away such controversies as Krook’s spontaneous combustion by claiming that ‘I have purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things.’⁴⁴ For Sala the flaneur who had ‘botanised the

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.111

⁴² cited in, *ibid.* p. 111

⁴³ cited in, *ibid.* p. 113

⁴⁴ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1936) p. xxiii

asphalt' throughout the 1850s and celebrated his experiences in *Household Words*, it was important for him to continue representing the high and low life he had come into contact with and to stress the romance and reality of this existence, a reality that he knew was beyond the ken of many of his middle-class readers. Dickens and Gaskell's remarks about 'hidden romances' also alerts us to the sensational aspect of their writing. Sensation fiction notoriously played on the anxieties of urban life in which one's respectable-looking neighbour could turn out to be a bigamist or a murderer. Sala, as we have seen, had touched on many of these urban anxieties already and his novels were an extension of this concern. In *The Seven Sons of Mammon*, Sala steps out of the narrative to assure his readers that,

...I have an implicit belief in the reality of my story, and of my characters. There is not an incident or a personage in these pages that is wholly imaginary, any more than in a dream; there is not a single thing, however wild and improbable it may appear, but has formed part, at some time or another, of the action of our lives...(428)

This personal address to his readers was a trope Sala had experimented with in his *Household Words* essays and is used time and time again in his novels. Like Thackeray, Sala's novels 'depend heavily on a narrator constructing a self by talking to his audience.'⁴⁵ As Levine has stated, 'the narrator is a gesture at community, a

⁴⁵ Levine (1981) p. 149

means of constructing self by invoking, even in the hopeless and untouchable separateness of other isolations, a community of private feelings.’⁴⁶

As with Sala’s journalistic pieces, this serves to establish a rapport with his readership, to build a personal relationship with them and to ensure that they are ‘on his side.’ It also highlights his obsession with being at the centre of everything and his ability, as Judy McKenzie notes, to ‘endow the ordinary with importance, and the important with ordinariness.’⁴⁷ Sala would frequently highlight his lack of imagination to defend the realism of his writing and in his future work as a Special Correspondent he would suggest that this lack of imagination forced him to write about the reality of the scene around him. But many disagreed and felt that his imaginative qualities, honed under the tutelage of Dickens and his reading of Gautier, were the finest aspect of his style. Two years after his death his widow, Bessie Sala, would contradict her husband about his imaginative powers, citing their domestic difficulties as evidence;

My husband used to frequently tell me that he failed to achieve so great a fame as a novelist as he had won as a journalist because he lacked the necessary gift of imagination, and that by reason of this deficiency he could only write on facts. But I differed from him in this opinion of his powers, knowing full well that in many questions touching his everyday and non-literary life his all too vivid imagination had often, and to our sore cost, run away with his sober judgement.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *ibid* p. 149

⁴⁷ McKenzie (1993) footnote to Letter 63 p. 106

⁴⁸ Bessie Sala – Preface to *Margaret Forster* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897) p. v

In *The Seven Sons of Mammon* Sala found himself constantly forced to defend the realism of his characters as his critics accused him of having a too vivid imagination. Sala would respond by defiantly claiming his characters and plot-lines were more realistic than contemporary domestic fiction.

The novel begins with the introduction of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe, ‘the richest man on ‘Change.’ (1) From modest beginnings - his father had been a small tradesman in a country town - Sir Jasper now owned property in Beryl Court, a palace in Onyx Square, and a ‘fine house’ at Kemp Town, Brighton. From these magisterial heights Sala slowly brings about the destruction of Sir Jasper and his fortune. The novel is concerned with satirising the Mammon-worship prevalent among the *nouveau riche* and the middle classes and in delineating the questionable motives and origins of society’s most ‘respectable’ citizens. At the heart of the novel lies the evil, scheming seductress Florence Armytage. She is described as ‘exquisitely *gantée* [gloved]. Her bonnet is a paragon. Her face is very pretty.’ (26) But behind the ostensibly respectable exterior, Florence is engaged in fraud, forgery, blackmail and even murder. She extorts money from Sir Jasper and disguises his son Hugh who has been presumed dead after a rail crash although Hugh never actually embarked on the train. She consorts with the money-lenders Mr Sims and Mr Tiggs, a shady poisoner called Hartley Livingstone and she possesses several pseudonyms. She eventually succeeds in bankrupting Sir Jasper and the novel ends with the gruesome image of Florence trying to hang herself and swallowing glass while incarcerated; she is sentenced to twenty years hard labour.

The novel also questions the stable and fixed notions of feminine gentility. Letitia Salusbury is raised in the highest of families but is decidedly 'fast' and has no interest in the pursuit of the arts or literature: 'She had the dreadful heresy to declare all poetry a bore...It is terrible to tell, but the Honourable Letitia Salusbury was an assiduous student of *Ruff's Guide To Turf* and the *Racing Calendar*.' (134) Sala was quick to defend his female characters; 'There is my Miss Salusbury, for instance. The majority of my female friends are enraged at the portraiture given of that young lady. They declare that a nobleman's daughter who swears, who bets, who reads *Bell's Life*, and who talks slang, is a monstrous impossibility. I can only shrug my shoulders, and say that I have known the Honourable Letitia Salusbury in the flesh.' (241-2) But it is when Sala begins depicting the low-life of London, the money-lenders and beggars of the streets of the metropolis, a world far removed from the comforts of middle-class life, that he really starts to provoke his readership.

Sala speaks directly to his feminine readers in a remarkable authorial aside just after he has introduced the two money-lenders, Mr. Sims and Mr. Tiggs, into the novel. 'Dear ladies', he begins, 'don't you think there is a great deal too much about money and not half enough about love in this story?' (172) Sims and Tiggs are not the sort of characters one finds in novels of domestic realism. The tenants are described as being 'cloudy and mysterious' and the third floor, where Sims resides, has a door so huge that 'you might have murdered a man behind that door, and nobody on the staircase would have been the wiser for it; nor if, by holding the ear to the letter-slit, the screams of the dying man had been heard, could any one without a dozen sledge-hammers have burst the massive portal open.' (150) Sala realises all this is not

particularly appealing to what he would consider some of his more delicate readers.

But he is unapologetic about the difference between his novel and those of his rivals:

Ladies, you must be just. If you want love-making novels, Mr.

Mudie will pile up your carriage-cushions with any amount of three-volume sentimentality... This story is not about the Seven Sons of Venus. It is called the Seven Sons of Mammon. It treats of the low and squalid, the sordid and the base, of dross-getting and dross-spending; it tells of the good and evil that by money may be wrought. (173)

By deliberately teasing, flirting and speaking directly to his feminine readership, Sala believes that he is finally providing them with the salacious and sensational material they have all along desired. Sala is also revelling here in what P. D. Edwards describes as Sala's 'rebellion against English standards of fictional realism.'⁴⁹ For Sala the real paradox in his notion of fiction was that his depiction of life was far more real than that of the so-called domestic realists. That this sensationalist form of writing should prove to be popular was not a calculated decision by Sala. Sensation novels were not yet considered as a popular sub-genre, it was rather a reaction by Sala to the domestic realism that he believed was threatening to suffocate the very life-force of the novel. Thackeray had written: 'we cannot show the gentlemen of the age as they are, with the notorious foibles and selfishness of their lives and their education. Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us

⁴⁹ Edwards (1997) p. 82

has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art'.⁵⁰ Sala disputes this premise and by placing a woman in her natural state at the centre of his novel and by portraying real characters with real flaws Sala was committed, like Dickens, to removing the novel from the constraints of a pallid domestic realism. But his commitment to a form of realism unpalatable to his readership forced him into defence and paradoxically led him at times in the novel to interrupt the flow of narrative realism with personal pronouncements. Here is Sala again, answering his critics and describing the way he 'paints' his characters as being true to reality;

Not many weeks since, a good friend was kind enough to remonstrate with me on the utter and glaring improbability, nay impossibility of some of the characters I have drawn in this story. In vain I strove to assure him that I had taken the world as I found it, and painted (with a free brush it might be) but from the very life. With great difficulty he granted Mrs Armytage...but as for Mr. Sims, or for Ephraim Tigg the Rasper, he would not hear of them for a moment. And yet I think I know where to put my hand on people ten times stranger in their ways of life than Sims or Tigg, poor, common rogues as they are...The ladies are even more difficult to convince than the gentlemen. They *won't* have Mrs. Armytage. There was never anybody like her, they say. Miss Salusbury also is to them simply an impossible character. These

⁵⁰ William Thackeray, *The History of Arthur Pendennis* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1944) p. xviii

complaints, these protests, constantly reach me. I am bidden to write a story all about purity and honesty, and truth, and the home-affections and the rest of it. Well, I will try to do so; but you must not be surprised to find my narrative so many blank pages. (325-6)

It must be remembered that Sala's novel was serialised in his own monthly magazine, *Temple Bar*, and because of this he at times seems unwilling or unable to make the distinction between novel and journalism, between speaking directly to his readers in a leading article and being an omniscient narrator in his novels. Sala no doubt felt that in many ways his novels were an extension of his journalistic pieces; in a letter to W.H. Wills from America while struggling to make the instalments of *Quite Alone* for *All The Year Round*, Sala again stressed the journalistic aspect of his novels; 'But I am not Wilkie Collins or Mrs. Gaskell, or Charles Reade: I depend entirely on pictures of manners, sketches of character, and general maunderings thereupon, and my plots are pegs on which to hang the old clothes of world experience which I have gathered up in my bag.'⁵¹ It was this confusion between journalist and novelist that critics were quick to highlight. But not all reviewers agreed with this impression of his novels.

In the *National Quarterly Review* the anonymous critic believed that *The Baddington Peerage* 'is undoubtedly a very clever novel. Few stories that we have recently examined has a more skilfully constructed plot, or one better calculated to beguile the time and attention of the lover of fiction...it contrasts the pomp, luxury,

⁵¹ Letter to W.H. Wills 30 May 1863 from Hotel de Russie Frankfurt, Box 6 Sala Papers Beinecke Library

hypocrisy and revelry of the rich, with the industrious and frugal habits of the poor, with a degree of success seldom equalled, and surpassed only by writers like Dickens.’⁵² In reviewing *The Seven Sons of Mammon* in the *Athenaeum*, the reviewer felt that Sala had actually finally overcome some of his more onerous novelistic sins of digression, ‘The picture of Sir Jasper Goldthorpe and his wife after their misfortunes is admirably painted and true to nature...As to Florence Armytage, there was someone who answered very much to her description tried at the last Court d’Assizes...The *Seven Sons of Mammon* proves that Mr. Sala is capable of a sustained effort, and we recognise his claims accordingly.’⁵³ Sala’s repeated assertions of verisimilitude seem to have influenced some of his critics at least. Later in the novel Sala would lay out his manifesto for writing fiction; ‘While I live, and while I write, I shall just tell the stories of the people I have met, and of the lives they have led, - so far as I have known them, - in my own fashion’ (325-6).

Sala was similarly forced to defend the plot and characters of *The Baddington Peerage*. The novel begins with a grand wedding at St. George’s Church in Hanover Square in 1830. The same church Anthony Trollope would use in which to marry the Duke of Omnium and Lady Glencora in his novel *Can You Forgive Her* (1864-5); in other words a temple to fashion. The father of the bride, Gervaise Falcon, is of low origins but the preponderance of titled and aristocratic folk is explained by the fact that he is nephew to Lord Viscount Baddington. The wedding day ends sensationally when a drunken old hag throws a letter into the departing carriage of the married couple. Although the reader presumes that the main protagonist of the novel will be Falcon due to his anti-heroism and his mundanity, the contents of the letter lead

⁵² *National Quarterly Review* Dec. 1860 p. 196

⁵³ *Athenaeum* No. 1783 Dec. 28 1861 p. 878

Falcon to commit suicide early in the novel. He digests a poisoned bead initially meant for his depraved and drunken first wife and bought from a shady character called John or Jack Pollyblank. His estranged wife is the hag who threw the letter into his carriage and who has reappeared after ten years absence in order to blackmail him. Their child is now heir to the Baddington Peerage but the drunken wife refuses to divulge his name or whereabouts and she soon dies of her intemperateness. The rest of the novel focuses on the trials and tribulations of this heir, John Leslie – who like Sala before his break into journalism is a lowly scene painter - and the machinations of men like Dr. Tinctop and the bohemian master of disguise John Pollyblank, who would endeavour to find this heir and so blackmail Lord Baddington. As with *The Seven Sons of Mammon* and *Quite Alone*, and as with Sala's *Household Words* essays, the narrative ranges freely between London and Paris and culminates in a duel fought between Leslie and Gervaise Falcon's other son, Charles Falcon, over the love of a Spanish dancer named Manuelita. Leslie kills Falcon, Pollyblank is incarcerated in Newgate for debt and on being granted his freedom befriends Leslie and appears in various guises as Professor Jachimo and Dr Ionides. The narrative then jumps forward ten years with the forlorn figure of John Leslie who commits suicide at Waterloo Bridge and with Pollyblank killing Tinctop in a fight in the back-room of a shop over the rights to Genevieve, the current Lady Baddington. Responding to criticism of the unrealistic plot and characters Sala in a typically self-deprecating manner declared that;

For all shadowy as they are, and rudely and clumsily depicted, I
 Believe in my people. They are not puppets, they are not marionettes;
 they are not stocks and stones. They exist. They do. They would walk

and talk, they would live and breathe, if a more cunning hand than mine could lift the curtain that veils them. I know Jack Pollyblank. I have seen Tinctop. I have dined with Lord Baddington, the old one and the young one. I have been in love with Genevieve; I, who write.

(Vol III pp. 222-3)

The strains of writing the novel while in Russia and working on *A Journey Due North* are felt by the reader as much as the writer as the disjointed and digressive narrative is frequently rambling and incoherent. Ironically the most stimulating parts of this bleak novel are when Sala depicts in Balzacian fashion the alcoholic sufferings of the blackmailing wife and the bohemianism of Pollyblank. The narrator describes the suffering woman in this manner; ‘The suddenness, the desperation, and abnegation of womanhood...her furious face, her wild appearance, that dreadful dress, which was not that of a peasant, nor that of a beggar, nor that of a wanton, but a mixture of all three.’(17) Sala describes the bohemian figure of Pollyblank as ‘shabby, ragged, dirty and disreputable-looking’ but who nevertheless manages to swindle and carouse his way across several Continents.(113) With insurmountable glee, Sala recounts how ‘So mused, smoking and drinking, Captain Pollyblank. He was an atrocious scoundrel and villain, with a dash of humour and a spice of bonhomie in him...’(122) Pollyblank becomes the perfect anti-hero for Sala, one calculated to offend the Mrs Grundy’s, and one that disrupts the tenets of realism in his extreme nature. But the novel’s unremitting bleakness, its cynical nature and its lack of hope for the characters or for humanity would uphold many realist tendencies and would also ensure its lack of accessibility to the general reading public.

Stepping outside of the narrative was not the only way in which Sala attempted to enforce a sense of realism in his novels. In his historical and picaresque novel *The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous*, written in the same vein as Thackeray's *Esmond* (1852), Sala reinforces the realism of the narrative with literary devices such as footnotes, and references to historical writers and statesmen, just as Walter Scott had done so successfully with his *Waverley* novels. In a review of Thackeray's *Esmond* in the *Spectator* in November 1852 we are told that 'The book has the great charm of reality. The framework is...historical: men with well-known names, political, literary, military, pass and repass; their sayings and doings are interwoven with the sayings and doings of the fictitious characters; and all reads like a genuine memoir of the time.'⁵⁴ Sala's novel was written after the *Seven Sons of Mammon* and was an attempt to distance his novels from the charge of sensationalism and unreality. By setting *Captain Dangerous* in a historical past Sala was able to provide sensational plot-lines, but by emulating Scott's blending of romance and realism and Thackeray's 'great charm of reality', he frames the novel with specific and accurate historical dates and historical figures to deflect from the excess. The novel opens in the year 1780 and the narrator, John Dangerous, lives in Hanover Square and is 68 years old. We are then transported back to 1720 to a time when a ninety-year old lady has just died in the very same house. This lady, rumoured to be a Papist and who arrived in London in 1714, turns out to be Dangerous's grandmother. Born in Bristol in 1630 her name is Arabella Greenville, daughter of Richard Greenville. She falls in love with Lord Francis after being sent to school in Hackney but on moving back west she discovers that on the 30th of January 1649 King Charles has been executed and Lord

⁵⁴ *Spectator* 25 (6 Nov 1852) 1066-7

Francis has been shot in the courtyard of Hampton Court. At the moment of execution Lord Francis kisses a lock of Arabella's hair and cries out 'Blood for blood.'

The narrative then moves to 1657; Arabella has been sent to London and in Hyde Park she attempts murder by shooting Oliver Cromwell but only succeeds in grazing his diamond buckle. She is locked up in Whitehall and Cromwell sentences her to jail. Moving forward again to 1720, Arabella dies on that most important of Royalist dates, January 30th. She is given a grand funeral but her death results in hard times for Dangerous as her servants spurn him and treat him with contempt; and so begin the adventures of Captain Dangerous. He is subsequently transported to the West Indies for poaching before returning to England where he meets among others Henry Fielding and William Hogarth. Sala revels in painting Fielding, one of his literary heroes, as a debauched bohemian 'always in love, in liquor, or in debt' who manages to almost single-handedly bring down the Jacobite uprising with his 'strong and caustic humour.' (223) Hogarth is affectionately and ironically portrayed as 'a skilful Draughtsman...but very Uppish and Impudent in his Tone.' (232) Sala was no doubt playing on the fact that he expected his readers to have read his articles on Hogarth's life for the *Cornhill*.

Dangerous then embarks on a four year voyage on the 'Marquis.' Sala then indulges himself and the reader with the kind of sea-faring and nautical fiction he was reading at that time, in particular the early novels of Herman Melville like *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) which he references on page 8 of *Make Your Game*. (We also know that Sala read *Moby Dick*, a novel unfashionable until the Melville revival of the 1920s,

and evidence of the wide range of Sala's reading.⁵⁵) Like Melville, Sala's novel builds 'onto the simple form of the eighteenth century realistic novel a romantic superstructure...'⁵⁶ Captain Dangerous becomes romantically involved with a girl called Lili as the narrative and the 'Marquis' roam around the world. Dangerous is hit in the chest with a musket ball in Chile, kills the cousin of Lili as in a duel, and spends three months in prison. He becomes a spy, is given a small emerald ring containing poison (Sala would repeat the poisoning plot device in *Quite Alone*) and winds up being captured in Algiers. Sala indulges in the kinds of romantic description of the East that he would use to good effect in his travel writing from Algeria, and Dangerous is set to work in the Dey of Algiers' garden. He becomes Bashaw of Broussia and has an audience with the Great Turk himself, Caliph Al Islam, then takes a turn round Europe before finally, after thirty years absence, returning to England where he buys the house in Hanover Square belonging to his grandmother, Arabella, and the novel has come full circle back to 1780.

By taking the novel away from the confines of England Sala is able to portray excess and extremity without being accused of sensationalism. An anonymous reviewer in the *Illustrated London News* declared that, 'Meanwhile, those to whom plot in a book is of little consequence, and who find enough sensation in real life to dispense with it in fiction, will be found sufficiently numerous to ensure to Mr Sala's last work a very gratifying and successful reception.'⁵⁷ The reviewer highlights the lack of sensation in the work thus validating Sala's decision to write a historical piece of fiction. By setting his novel in foreign countries Sala not only engages in a precursor to his subsequent career as a travel journalist, albeit in a historical sense,

⁵⁵ McKenzie (1993) footnote to Letter 98 pp. 152-3

⁵⁶ George Woodcock intro. to Herman Melville, *Typee* (London: Penguin, 1986) p. 20

⁵⁷ *Illustrated London News* 23 May 1863 p. 8

but also deflects the plot's excessive qualities. George Levine states that 'At least as often, [in Victorian fiction] the place of excess is literally a foreign country. When Dickens seeks a place for the young Martin Chuzzlewit's radical moral conversion, he sends Martin into the swamps of the American South...France is where Edith Dombey and Carker have their violent assignation.'⁵⁸ For Sala historical association and foreign travel negate such excess.

In *Make Your Game*, the realism is implicit in the journalistic style of the narrative, based as it was on a true gambling adventure. It is also Sala's most extended musing on the topic of gambling, a long-serving trope throughout his writing. Here we can see him gambling at first-hand and trying to communicate his pleasures and his despair at the experience. Although Sala declared in the preface that his novel contained a 'tiny scrap of morality' in that he claimed it was a warning against the dangers of gambling, this was most likely necessary in order to get the work published. In fact this most un-novelistic of Sala's novels reads like a travelogue, with elements of Thackeray's *Kickleburys on the Rhine* from his 1850 Christmas Book, in which Thackeray satirises English travellers bound for a German casino, along with the more debauched moments from Hogarth's 'Grand Tour' thrown in for good measure. In a letter to Vizetelly from November 1858 Sala mentioned that he would write about their tour to Hamburg in a way that would 'make it a sort of 'Sentimental Journey' in fact.'⁵⁹ Like Laurence Sterne's travelogue from 1768, *Make Your Game* has an intimate quality through the use of a conversational tone and blurs the boundary between fact and fiction. Like Sterne, there is no real plot to speak of in Sala's novel but in place of this there are digressions and idiosyncratic conversation.

⁵⁸ Levine (1981) p. 206

⁵⁹ Letter from Sala to H. Vizetelly Nov. 1858 Box 1 Sala Papers Beinecke Library

It also shares with Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* a penchant for 'suggestive eroticism with consistent use of punning, innuendo and *double-entendre*.'⁶⁰ It feels more like an extended *Household Words* essay than a novel and looks forward to Sala's career as Special Correspondent with its amusing, but by no means prejudiced, portrayals of the differences between foreigners and Englishmen, its jokey asides on modern topics and its historical references. The narrative plods along with extended descriptions of Belgium and Holland until the gambling begins in the 'Monte Carlo of Germany,' Hamburg, and then the pace of the writing speeds up and the excitement begins. More importantly for the modern reader is the autobiographical and personal nature of the work, and for its insights into three of the more colourful characters of nineteenth-century journalism, the Stout Gentleman – Gus Mayhew, the Slim Gentleman – Henry Vizetelly, and The Man with the Iron Chest – Sala. Indeed the novel is the most obvious precursor to the career of a Special Correspondent Sala would begin in 1863 and as such is a suitable bridge between *A Journey Due North* and *My Diary in America in the Midst of Civil War*.

Sala paints himself early in the novel as the man with the iron chest, a man of mystery, a radical and a bohemian. We are told that the man in the iron chest 'was remarkable for the democratic vehemence of his political opinions' (7) and that he was mysterious because no-one knew where he lived; 'the most reasonable chance of finding him was to lie in ambush in a certain dark, mysterious and deserted little arcade between Wellington and Catherine Streets, in the Strand, where he sometimes gave audience to ambassadors on affairs connected with the paper mill.' (12) But Sala could also be self-depreciative as when he describes the man with the iron chest as

⁶⁰ Introduction to Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth editions Limited, 1995) p. 1

being ‘very mysterious, but not picturesque, for he had, you see, such a red nose...he could be rude, very rude.’(13) Indeed this red nose of his would become even redder after the fight at Panton Street during the writing and serialisation of the novel and would lead to his disagreement with the editor of the *Illustrated Times*, the Slim Gentleman, or Henry Vizetelly. The Slim gentleman is described in the novel as ‘a cynical philosopher’ while Mayhew, the Stout gentleman, is portrayed as a bon viveur and an amateur journalist who has no need for recompense for his writing. There are moments of masculine bawdiness and good humour as the three men all fall in love with the same ‘fawn’ on board ship to Rotterdam but have to be careful because ‘the fawn’s papa was a terrible old buck of military appearance.’(21) On arrival in Holland the man with the iron chest gives out the sort of advice he would become famous for as a Special Correspondent, ‘On your arrival in a foreign land, you are ordinarily received either by policemen, Jews, or boys’ (31) and, ‘As a general rule in all towns extensively engaged in the colonial trade, the groceries are detestable, even as in seaports you always get the worst fish.’(37) He would also litter his journey up the Rhine with historical associations, a technique used throughout his *Household Words* essays and his travel reportage.

On arrival in Hamburg Sala likens the city to a Vanity Fair as if to stress the links between Thackeray’s ‘Kicklebury’s’ and *Make Your Game*. But whereas ‘the wheel [of roulette] has all but ceased to revolve in moral England’ here in Hamburg the pleasures of gambling are freely available. But as if to enforce the moralistic tone he suggests in the preface, Sala relates that ‘When people want to commit suicide at Hamburg, they do it genteelly; early in the morning, or late at night, in the solitude of their apartments at the hotels.’(186) He then endeavours to stress the innateness of

gambling to the English and compares it to modern forms of finance capitalism as a means of validation; ‘We gamble in England at the Stock Exchange, we gamble on horse-races all the year round...there is mixed up with our eagerness for the stakes the most varied elements of business and pleasure; cash-books, ledgers...’(194) This was a theme that he had already pursued in his *Household Words* article ‘On Gambling.’ Once the play commences there is a rumour that the man with the iron chest had ‘been seen to light a cigar with a thousand-franc note.’ But slowly the ‘system’ of the three men begins to collapse and they begin to detest one another. Ralph Straus observed that Vizetelly actually won £1000 within the first day or two of arrival but this slowly broke down and at the end of a fortnight all three were penniless.⁶¹ ‘Besides’ says the narrator, ‘the mill in England was beginning to want grist by this time.’(255) Throughout the novel the mill is referred to as being journalism and so grist equates to the journalists as well as being a suitably alcoholic metaphor. The journey back home takes only three short sentences and the travellers are back on British soil in Dover. Sala had either become bored with the project or was just under too much pressure to devote any more of his time to the novel. In a letter to Yates Sala describes how ‘I am now under five hundred extra powers of pressure grinding away at ‘Make Your Game’; and believe that this continuous grind will end either in jaundice or congestion of the brain.’⁶² In a different letter written to Yates Sala writes describing the real-life voyage. He simply states, ‘I suppose you have heard that our expedition up the Rhine was a lamentable failure. I lost sixty pounds.’⁶³ *Make Your Game*, for all its dullness and lack of plot is the most extreme example of realism in all of Sala’s novels in that it documents a real-life and real-lived experience.

⁶¹ Ralph Straus, *The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable and Co., 1942) p. 135

⁶² McKenzie (1993) Letter 22 p. 54

⁶³ *ibid.* Letter 17 p. 42

Sensation

Deborah Wynne has noted that from 1850 to 1860 there was a change in middle-class reading tastes. Wynne notes that ‘the social problem and domestic novels of the 1850s were falling out of favour as readers sought more exciting plots which represented insecurity and danger temporarily disturbing the genteel home.’⁶⁴ Middle-class sensationalism made its first major impact in 1859 with the serialization of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman In White* in *All The Year Round*, Dickens’s successor to *Household Words*. This new form of the novel might be viewed as a reaction to the realism of the domestic novel. But Wynne has also noted how sensation writers like Mrs Henry Wood owed much of the domestic nature of their novels to popular authors of domestic realism like Charlotte M. Yonge and Margaret Oliphant. Wynne states that ‘Mrs Henry Wood in particular promoted middle-class domesticity as an ideal to be protected, while even more radical sensationalists, like Collins, Braddon, and Reade, invariably resorted to closing their novels with a triumphant middle-class family surviving all attacks.’⁶⁵ Far from being a radical breaking away from contemporary fiction, sensation novelists were actually working within the dominant discourses of realism.

As we have seen, Sala was also working within the conventions of realism but he was also suffusing his novels with sensational story-lines and incidents. By the time Collins wrote his first piece of sensation fiction Sala had already written *The*

⁶⁴ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001) p. 39

⁶⁵ *ibid* p. 10

Baddington Peerage, with its sensational suicide and blackmailing plots and he would go on to write his two other sensation novels, *The Seven Sons of Mammon* in 1861 and *Quite Alone* in 1864. The sensational aspect of Sala's fiction is most evident in his use of modernity, in telegram messages, railway accidents and newspaper advertisements that drive the narrative, and the extent to which he questioned and blurred fixed notions of class identity. Sala's fiction documents what Charles Reade and his contemporaries insisted – that the sensation novels were, to an extent, 'studies from the life', extending from the discourses of the newspapers. No wonder, then, that Sala was so insistent that his characters and plots were real and true to life and it was no wonder that Sala would become one of the most well-known champions of the genre. His two stirring defences of the sensation novel were both written for Mary Braddon's monthly periodical, *Belgravia*, in 1867 and 1868, after he had personally given up the writing of novels. Solveig C. Robinson believes that Sala's articles 'go furthest towards relocating sensation novels at the centre of Victorian fiction.'⁶⁶ Sala was engaged in taking sensation fiction from the margins to the heart of contemporary fiction and stressing its relation and derivation to a long tradition of literature.

In both essays for *Belgravia*, Sala 'not only establishes a kind of 'counter-canon' of sensation, but he also stakes out a claim for sensation fiction that is clearly within 'mainstream' realist fiction's territory.'⁶⁷ In the first of his articles, 'The Cant of Modern Criticism', he links Braddon's novels to *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede*, describing Braddon's, Bronte's and Eliot's works as powerful representatives of 'the modern, the contemporary novel of life...'⁶⁸ Sala goes on to repudiate Margaret

⁶⁶ Solveig C. Robinson, 'Editing *Belgravia*: M.E. Braddon's Defense of 'Light Literature'', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 28:2 Summer 1995 p. 113

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 113

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 113

Oliphant's claim in "Novels", her 1867 article for *Blackwood's*, that English novels from the time of Walter Scott up until the emergence of sensation fiction were epitomised by 'sanity, wholesomeness, and cleanliness.' Sala cites the coarse language, crime and sensation prevalent in the novels of authors like Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Benjamin Disraeli and Frances Trollope. He also dismisses the contemporary affection for wholesome literature and culture, stating that 'prurient prudery is a distinguishing characteristic of modern cant and modern criticism.'⁶⁹ For Sala sensation fiction is reality at its toughest and most unremitting but claims that this is what adults want, '...meanwhile we men and women who live in the world, and have, many of us, lived pretty hard lives too, want novels about That which Is, and not about That which never Was and never Will be. We don't want pap, or spoon-meat... We want meat; and this is a strong age, and we can digest it.'⁷⁰ Sala desired a tough form of writing, one that reflected the bohemian tastes and mores of his friends and colleagues, and one that he realised, due to the success of the *Telegraph*, a large proportion of the population also demanded.

In Sala's second article, "On the 'Sensational' in Literature and Art," he 'more overtly positions the sensation novel as central to nineteenth-century literature' and he does so by creating a list of sensational writers and artists that is, as Robinson suggests, 'a virtual 'who's who' of the mid-nineteenth century: a list that includes Dickens, Millais, Ruskin, Darwin, Newman, Napoleon, Bismarck, Ulysses S Grant – and Braddon, of course.'⁷¹ Likening the current denunciation of sensationalism with the attacks of the French classicists of the nineteenth century towards romantics like Gautier, Sala says, 'may I whisper in the reader's ear that the agitation against

⁶⁹ G.A. Sala, "The Cant of Modern Criticism" *Belgravia* 4 Nov 1867 p. 53

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 54

⁷¹ Robinson (1995) p. 114

‘Romanticism’ in literature and art in France was an exactly analogous outcry to that with which we are now deafened in England against ‘Sensationalism’?⁷² Winifred Hughes claims that ‘What distinguishes the true sensation genre, as it appeared in its prime during the 1860s, is the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally its two contrary modes of literary perceptions.’⁷³ Sala’s reading of Balzac and Gautier had likewise enabled him to reconcile romance and realism, and with his close links to newspaper reportage we can see that he was aptly positioned to become a sensation novelist. Sala cites Shakespeare and Dickens as being particularly adept exponents of the sensation genre and cries out that ‘In the opinion of dolts and dullards and envious backbiters, everything is “sensational” that is vivid, and nervous, and forcible, and graphic, and true.’⁷⁴ He imagines a scenario where all writers of sensation were forced to lay down their pens and documents the result. We would go back, says Sala, to ‘the calmly dull, to the tranquilly inane, to the timorously decorous, to the sweetly stupid.’⁷⁵ This sounds like a similar outburst in *The Seven Sons of Mammon*, where the narrator asks his audience ‘And, finally, how would you like a newspaper in which there were no police-reports, no law or assize intelligence, no leading articles on any other subject save missionary societies, governess institutions, the art of pickling onions, and the best means of obliterating freckles?’ (325-6) Sala thus links the role of the journalist with sensation and asks the public how they would like their newspapers without a sensational element.

As we observed in the first chapter, Sala’s early engravings for ‘penny dreadfuls’ – particularly for Edward Lloyd and his chief wood-engraver Edward Calvert – were

⁷² Sala (1868) p. 453

⁷³ cited in Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women’s Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 69

⁷⁴ Sala (1868) p. 457

⁷⁵ *ibid.* p. 458

designed to have a sensational impact on the readership with Lloyd demanding that there be more vigour in Sala's drawings and 'more blood, much more blood.' Lloyd realised the element of sensation needed to satisfy his consumers and it was to be a lesson well learnt for the young artist. George R. Sims revealed in his memoirs that 'Sala was doing the illustrations for Edward Lloyd's *Penny Sunday Times* and also for a number of periodicals of a highly sensational order' and so when Sala came to write his own novels it was inevitable, given his former visual training, his avowed bohemianism and his apprenticeship on the *Daily Telegraph*, that he would inject elements of sensation into his plot-lines.⁷⁶ Critics have long realised the connection between newspapers and sensationalism. Thomas Boyle found that the average Victorian newspaper 'was sensational to say the least, [and] certainly not supportive of an image of domestic tranquillity.'⁷⁷

One of the most important aspects of the sensation novel, the personal advertisement seen or even placed in a newspaper by one of the protagonists, was a device used by all the acclaimed sensation novelists. In Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* the 'heroine' Lady Audley is able to fashion a new identity for herself by faking her own death and placing an obituary in *The Times*. Helen Talboys thus becomes Lucy Graham and Lady Audley's machinations begin. Lucy Graham responds to an advertisement offering employment as a teacher at a school in Brompton and subsequently sees another advertisement for a governess in close proximity to Audley Court where she goes on to become acquainted with, and then bigamously marry, Sir Audley. In Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) Isabel Vane's

⁷⁶ George R. Sims, *My Life, 60 Years Recollections of Bohemian London* (London: Eveleigh Nash Company, 1917) p. 43

⁷⁷ Thomas Boyle, *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead: Beneath the Surface of Victorian Sensationalism* (New York: Viking, 1989) p. 3

reported death in a railway accident enables her to return to her former home as Madame Vine the governess. As Rubery has noted ‘The advertisements imply a story behind the story that would remain untold without the novelists’ intervention.’⁷⁸

Sala was ideally placed to capitalise on the plethora of newspaper reports on divorce cases, murders and the untold stories behind the personal advertisements. These advertisements were a way of ‘managing the isolation of urban life’ and Sala has recourse to them time and time again in his novels as he repeatedly inserts these types of newspaper reportage to drive his narrative.⁷⁹ In *The Baddington Peerage* an announcement in the *Times* of the marriage between Gervaise Falcon’s daughter, Lord Baddington’s grand-niece, to Sir William Guy attracts the attention of Gervaise’s long-lost alcoholic wife and sets in chain the blackmail plot and the subsequent search for John Leslie, the product of Gervaise and his first wife’s marriage. In *The Seven Sons of Mammon* an announcement in the French newspaper, the *Girouette*, falsely claims the death of Hugh Goldthorpe, son of Sir Jasper, in a railway accident. This leads to Florence Armytage’s blackmailing of Sir Jasper and the downfall of the Goldthorpe dynasty. Rubery notes how ‘the mistaken obituary indicates how even intelligence reported in the births, marriages and deaths might withhold an entire personal history from the newspaper reader.’⁸⁰ The advertising columns also brought respectable readers into close contact with a variety of criminals, although they may have been blissfully unaware of this. Money-making schemes, dodgy employment agencies and unscrupulous nurse-maids were ‘among the many hazards of commerce

⁷⁸ Rubery (2009) p. 65

⁷⁹ *ibid* p. 55 Sala had devoted two articles to *Household Words* on the topic of personal advertisements. ‘Want Places’ (HW vii Aug. 27 1853) and ‘More Places Wanted’ (HW viii 15 Oct. 1853) had identified the various social types among housekeepers.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 68

through newsprint.’⁸¹ Sala demonstrates his knowledge of such schemes in *The Seven Sons of Mammon*. Sims and Codger advertise ‘always through the medium of the newspapers’ a scheme whereby if half-a-crown’s worth of postage stamps are sent to their address, the sender could be taught ‘an accomplishment by which from three to five pound a week might be realised.’ (273) In fact Sims and Codgers merely send out dirty scraps of paper with absurd recipes on them and retain the stamps for their own pecuniary advantage.

In *Quite Alone* Sala anticipates the sensational newspaper series ‘Baby Farming and Infanticide’ written by Frederick Greenwood for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1866-68 and considered an important forerunner to the New Journalism.⁸² In Sala’s novel Mrs Pigott sees an advertisement in the *Morning Advertiser* for a nurse to look after an infant for a ‘respectable person’ and so she begins her three and a half year position looking after the novel’s heroine, Lily. Meanwhile Lily’s mother has no knowledge of the arrangement. The narrator states that Pigott did not think to ask any more questions because ‘infants are put out to nurse every year, without references more searching than a money-payment in advance.’ (Feb 20 1864 p. 28) The narrator then questions whether such a system ‘encourages immorality.’ Greenwood’s series ironically singled out the *Daily Telegraph* as being the worst offender in taking money for advertisements without a word of inquiry concerning the advertisement’s contents. Greenwood highlighted how the intention of advertisements like the one Pigott answers in Sala’s novel were to pay the surrogate mother or nurse a fee on the understanding that the infant would be sold for a profit to a couple wanting to adopt a child. But these adverts very often led to the nurse or surrogate mother offering to

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 58

⁸² for more on Greenwood and the *Pall Mall Gazette* see Joel H. Wiener (ed) *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988)

‘dispose’ of or kill the child for a sum. In *Quite Alone* the arrangement leads to Lily’s mother being forced to kidnap her own daughter.

In the same novel Jean Baptiste Constant receives a 100,000 franc windfall from a dead uncle and then reads in the *National* that the long unrequited object of his affections, Valerie, has cancelled her dancing engagement with the Porte St Martin theatre and is to leave France to marry Sir Francis Blunt in England. This doomed union leads to Constant travelling to England, working for Blunt and culminates in Valerie’s reunion with her child and the heroine of the novel, Lily. Lily’s arrival as a young girl in Paris is accompanied by various exclamations of how wicked the city is compared to London. On reading the *Gazette de Tribuneaux* she thinks how wicked Paris must be with so many pages dedicated to crime, perhaps an inside pun on Sala’s part, writing as he was for the *Telegraph*, a newspaper renowned for its over-reliance on sensational crime stories. Lily sees a column entitled, ‘Un Anglais à la Morgue’, and it is confirmed that the dead man she so recently saw being taken to the Paris Morgue was her father, Francis Blunt. Later in the novel Lily reads in an English newspaper about the success of Ranelagh Gardens and of her mother, now called Mme Ernestine. She begins to question the veracity of newspaper reporting when the article cites her mother’s age as being twenty seven. (Sep 3 1864 p. 86) Rubery has noted how sensation novels tap into uncertainty about newspapers because there is a ‘constantly modified understanding of the newspaper as a documentary source of reliable information as well as a purveyor of far less reliable kinds of information found among the advertisements.’⁸³ Sala knew from first hand experience that fiction and realism were intertwined and important elements of both novels and newspapers.

⁸³ Rubery (2009) p. 78

By the time Sala had abandoned his final novel, *Quite Alone*, while working for the *Daily Telegraph* in America in 1864, leaving it in the hands of Andrew Halliday, he knew that his time as a novelist was over and the rest of his career was to be devoted to journalism as the *Daily Telegraph's* Special Correspondent. In a letter to W.H. Wills Sala pointed out the lack of respect he had received as an author in England compared to the favourable view of him in the States; 'They fall upon every Englishman of letters to lionise him first...and I have a horror of being feted as a first-rate author in a foreign country when I am profoundly aware of my status in my own.'⁸⁴ Sala was coming to terms with the realisation that his attempt at respectability and fortune as a novelist had failed. Sala had believed through his deep engagement with the fiction and life of Balzac and Gautier, and from the examples of Thackeray and Dickens, that the only way to become respected as a writer in the mid 1850s, and the only way to transcend the ephemeral nature of journalism, to make serious money and to escape the constant stream of creditors perpetually announcing themselves at his door, was to write novels and to become a novelist. That Sala never attained his goal is down in no small part to the deficiencies as an author of fiction he so perceptively flagged in his letter to Yates in which he raised his anxieties about his 'd---n descriptions and digressions.' Judy McKenzie's statement that 'GAS's problem seems to be that he became confused between the knowledge that his talents really lay in journalism, and the pressures of a society that demanded more of its writers if they were to rank as "eminent men of letters", something that he aspired to with all his heart', takes on deeper significance when reading Sala's letter to Yates.⁸⁵ Yes, Sala was aspiring with all his heart to be a novelist, and as we have seen in his *Household*

⁸⁴ Letter to W.H. Wills 15 Dec. 1863 Sala Papers, Box 2 Beinecke Library

⁸⁵ McKenzie (1993) p. 5

Words' articles, and his writings from Russia in particular, they bear all the hallmarks of a fledging imaginative writer of fiction, but he seems through the self-analysis of his style to already acknowledge that he was first and foremost always a journalist. As McKenzie realises, Sala became a victim of the pressures of a society who still felt strongly the divide between novel-writing and 'mere' journalism. Sala's brief career as a novelist was not without merit however; it inculcated a sense of narrative and story-telling into his journalism that New Journalists like W.T. Stead would prize so highly and, ever attuned to change in the public taste, Sala was quick to adapt to his future as a Special Correspondent by incorporating the realistic and sensationalistic aspects of his novel writing into his foreign reportage. Ironically, it was Sala's abandonment of fiction and his pioneering style as a travel correspondent that would bring more respectability and financial reward to the journalistic profession.

6. ‘There really is a world outside Fleet Street’; completing the Journalistic Education: Sala as Special Correspondent

This chapter will trace Sala’s movement away from his role as a London journalist and novelist to that of one of the world’s first ‘Special Correspondents’. Although Sala would be sent to many destinations across the globe I have selected his accounts from America (1863-4, 1879, 1885), Algeria (1865), Italy (1866-67), Australia and New Zealand (1885-1886), in order to create a cohesive picture of his personal pronouncements on the issues affecting travel and travel writing in the second half of the nineteenth century. These travel narratives span over twenty years of Sala’s professional life; they were all originally written as a series of letters for the *Daily Telegraph*, and all of the letters were subsequently published in book form, apart from those from Australasia. It was during these twenty years of foreign reportage that Sala climbed the ‘topmost rung’ of the journalistic ladder, as Ralph Straus termed it, and his name and initials became famous across the world.¹

What we can discern in Sala’s shift from concern with London and the plight of the poor at home to a more cosmopolitan and international outlook, is similar to what

¹ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable and Co., 1942) Title of Chapter Fourteen pp. 232-251

Patrick Brantlinger terms a more general shift in Victorian thinking; ‘away from domestic class conflict toward racial and international conflict.’² In an article for the *Westminster Review* in 1863, Justin McCarthy acknowledged a shift in focus when he stated that ‘already there are quickly spreading indications that the public have had nearly enough of the fast novel of London life – the dashing article on London haunts, the wearily droll burlesque in which the classic and the Cockney are blended in fantastic *olla podrida*. For, after all, there really is a world outside Fleet Street.’³ Sala, ever attune to the shifting fads and fashions of modern life and modern newspaper readership, would forego novel writing and solving the problems at home and would instead spend the next three decades reporting on foreign countries and in the process completing his journalistic education. Simultaneously, Sala provided his reading public with what Mary Pratt describes as ‘a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized.’⁴

When Sala came to visit America during the Civil War in 1863, he was, like Dickens, initially optimistic at what he saw. On observing the opening of the 38th Congress in Washington Sala noted that, ‘Everything which I beheld appeared to me thoroughly modest, simple and noble – the free citizens of a great commonwealth setting about the task of governing themselves, and doing it sensibly and well.’⁵ But, like Dickens, by the end of his visit, Sala’s relationship with America had deteriorated

² Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) p. 35

³ J. McCarthy, ‘The Literature of Bohemia’, *Westminster Review*, Jan-April 1863, cited in Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 100

⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes; Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008) p. 3

⁵ G.A. Sala, *My Diary In America In The Midst Of War* vol. 1 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865) p. 118
All subsequent references in parenthesis

so badly that, while back in England preparing the preface to the book of his visit, *My Diary in America In The Midst of Civil War* (1865), he wrote that ‘what with the new US passport system, and this Book of Mine, I don’t know whether the Yankees will ever suffer me to land at New Jersey again.’ (Vol 1 7) Sala’s pro-Southern account is deliberately biased and bigoted, a product of his personal sentiment and of the rise in racism in England in the 1850s and 60s.

Five months after his first visit to America, in April 1865, Sala was instructed by his employers at the *Daily Telegraph* to travel to Algeria, with a view to covering Emperor Napoleon III’s journey through one of his prized African possessions. Coming so soon after his American trip, it was clear to Sala that his superiors at the *Telegraph* believed he had a bright future as an overseas correspondent; ‘My proprietors knew perfectly well what they were about; they wished to continue my training as a journalist, and as special correspondent.’⁶ The published letters subsequently became his book *A Trip to Barbary* (1866). The Barbary Coast, or Barbary, was the term used by Europeans to refer to the middle and western coastal regions of Africa, the area that is now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The name was derived from the Berber people of North Africa and was most commonly used to refer to the Barbary pirates and slave traders based on that coast, who attacked ships and coastal settlements in the Mediterranean. Ever since the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, in which France took over the colonising role previously held by the Ottomans, there had been a long and violent period of oppression. The majority of Algerians were resistant to the occupation, necessitating a permanent armed French fighting force of 80,000 men. The pertinent question in 1865 was whether the French

⁶ G.A. Sala, *Life and Adventures* Vol. II (London: Cassell & Company, 1895) p. 68

should return Algeria to the Algerians. For many Frenchmen it was considered a 'white elephant' and Sala quotes the Duke de Broglie who suggested that 'Algeria is to France only a box at the Opera,' thereby consolidating Sala's view of the French as a nation addicted to 'spectacle.'⁷ Napoleon III believed it was impossible for France to exterminate the native people, as the Americans were in the process of doing to the native American population. Their more 'humane' approach meant 'civilising' the natives and Napoleon III remarked that 'We must be the masters because we are the most civilised; we should be generous, because we are the strongest' (194), in the process defining the Western mantra towards Africa and other colonial possessions for the next hundred years. Sala's own mission there reflected that of the Emperor; he was to bring back for his *Telegraph* readers reports on the country and its people, to question the ability of the French to 'civilise' the country and whether they had the right to undertake such a mission in the first place.

Shortly after the Governor Eyre Affair in October 1865 Sala was sent by the *Telegraph* to Brussels followed by a long Continental journey revisiting many of the countries he had visited when writing his novel *Make Your Game*. He travelled to Rotterdam, Amsterdam, the Hague and Hamburg, arriving in Berlin for Christmas 1865. The tour was to have ended at St. Petersburg and Moscow and, as Sala says, 'I was making arrangements to proceed to Konigsberg, en route for St. Petersburg, to see what the Tsar's capital looked like in winter, when I received a telegram containing only these words: - "Revolution. Spain. Go there at once."'⁸ It was to be the first in a series of terse demands made by his employers but the Spanish

⁷ G.A. Sala, *A Trip To Barbary By a Roundabout Route* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1866) p. 185 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁸ Sala (1895) Vol. II p. 71

expedition of 1866 was not as exciting as Sala may have expected.⁹ He recounts that ‘The revolution in Spain turned out a sorry ‘fizzle’; there had been a military Pronunciamento against the government of Queen Isabella in one of the regiments in garrison near Madrid; but after a few courts-martial had been held...confidence was restored and order reigned in Madrid.’¹⁰ The book resulting from this trip was entitled *From Waterloo to the Peninsula. Four Months’ Hard Labour in Belgium, Holland, Germany and Spain* (1867). Sala had intended to go to Seville, Granada and Malaga but another brief despatch arrived; ‘War between Italy and Austria imminent. Go to Venice.’¹¹ Sala was sent to Italy at a crucial period in the Risorgimento (1866-67), and was to leave his readers in no doubt as to his opinions on the Austrian oppression of Italy and the country’s need for immediate modernisation. Sala solved the problem many travel writers faced when trying to describe the country that had been written about more than any other by blending historical association with a thoroughly contemporary and realistic account. His letters were published as *Rome and Venice: With Other Wanderings in Italy 1866-7* in 1869.

Forced by illness into languishing at home for four years, between February 1871 and January 1875, it wasn’t until 1879 that Sala wrote another travelogue (his book from 1872, *Under The Sun*, had reprised many of the chapters from *Rome and Venice* and *A Trip to Barbary* along with unreleased material on Cuba and Mexico). But this account of the rebuilding of Paris after the war with the Prussians, *Paris Herself*

⁹ These constant terse demands by the *Daily Telegraph* culminated in one of Sala’s favourite after-dinner anecdotes. In the second week of March 1881, while at a dinner-party given by the Earl of Fife in Cavendish Square (indicating the rise in social status Sala was experiencing) a despatch arrived from Belgrave Square saying that the Tsar was dead. Sala waited ominously for the expected communication and ‘sure enough, just before lunch I received the following message...Please write a leading article on the price of fish at Billingsgate, and go to St. Petersburg in the evening.’ Sala (1895) Vol. II pp. 390-1

¹⁰ Sala (1895) Vol. II p. 72

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 86-7

Again (1879), would prove to be his most perennial work of travel literature. Sala described Paris as having been ‘barricaded, bombarded, beleaguered, dragooned, and all but sacked’ but conformed to what Colette Wilson describes as ‘the officially promoted view of the city as a modern, healthy and hygienic metropolis.’¹² Sala would subsidise his income in this decade with leaders on foreign and domestic matters and art criticism for the *Telegraph*, along with his popular ‘Echoes of the Week’ series in the *Illustrated London News*. But he was always drawn back to foreign travel. He journeyed to America for a second time between November 1879 to April 1880, the resulting book was entitled *America Revisited* (1882), and then travelled to Southern Europe in the autumn of 1881; the published account, *A Journey Due South* (1885), was to be his last travel book to find a publisher.

Sala had long harboured a desire to visit Australia. As we saw in the first chapter, his contributions to *Chat* from 1848, ‘Australian Nights’ Entertainment’, had been inspired by his reading of the Blue Books in the British Library. They had also, along with much of Sala’s journalism, influenced the most talented nineteenth-century Australian novelist, journalist, and fellow bohemian, Marcus Clarke. To Australians and New Zealanders Sala was representative of a type of popular journalism made famous in their own country by Clarke. Sala was conscious of this debt and of the history of the penal transportation system, evident when he claims that ‘For the image, both moral and material of the dark days of convictism long since departed from this now happy and prosperous land, you must study the pages of the late Marcus Clarke’s

¹² Colette Wilson, ‘Memory and the Politics of Forgetting : Paris, the Commune and the Exposition Universelle’ *Journal of European Studies* March 2005 Vol. 35 no. 1 p. 47

wonderful romance, *For the Term of his Natural Life*.'(52)¹³ Sala landed at Sydney harbour on March 12 1885, having first arrived in New York on Boxing Day 1884, and given a series of lectures on the east coast before travelling overland to San Francisco. His visit down under coincided with the perceived threat from Russia and with growing political tensions concerning the prospect of Federation, the idea of a United Australasia free from colonial rule. The clamour for an autonomous republic was competing with those voices wishing to strengthen Australia's ties with Britain. Early newspaper reports were polite and favourable to Sala but they became more and more personal and hostile. The newspaper *Bulletin*, suggests Judy McKenzie, is a good example; 'sending him up unmercifully as a passé product of a class-ridden society whose message had nothing to offer a maturing Australia. To them he was not only a monarchist, but an agent of the middle classes, something that their aggressive egalitarianism could not stomach.'¹⁴ The radical bohemian had become in the eyes of the Australians, at least, a symbol of conformity. But Sala was keen to analyse the democracy and egalitarianism practised in Australasia, and would compare it with the American system. He would also question the plight of the aboriginal peoples of New Zealand and Australia and their right to citizenship. These letters to the *Telegraph* were never published, an indication that Australian's notion of him as passé was correct. But the title of his *Daily Telegraph* articles, 'The Land of the Golden Fleece', soon came into popular usage to describe Australasia, as did the term 'Marvellous Melbourne,' coined by Sala on his visit and subsequently used in a melodrama from

¹³ Sala also mentions in his account his visit to Wagga Wagga and the butcher's shop once owned by Thomas Castro, the famous Tichborne Claimant and integral to the plot of Clarke's novel. Sala, always interested in the instability of identity in nineteenth-century society, would become involved in the Tichborne Case both professionally and intimately as he reported on and became socially intimate with 'Roger Tichborne.' For more on the Tichborne case and Sala's involvement in it see, Rohan McWilliam, *The Tichborne Claimant: A Victorian Sensation* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007) and Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable & Co., 1946)

¹⁴ Judy McKenzie, 'G.A.S In Australia: Hot Air Down-Under?' in *Australian Literary Studies* 1992 15 (4) 313-322 McKenzie notes that there were other papers, notably the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Argus*, who due to the syndication of Sala's articles were always favourable towards him.

1889 and even in the 1980s as a cliché of travel brochures and official reports.¹⁵ Sala was in the Antipodes for a total of ten months, from 12 March 1885 to 14 Jan 1886, visiting all the colonies except Western Australia.

Building on the realistic and sensational style of his novels, and the imaginative style Dickens impressed upon him as a writer for *Household Words*, Sala's style of travel writing would be an amalgamation and a culmination of all his previous work in different mediums. We have observed how Sala blurred fiction with fact in his Russian account and in his novels. As a Special Correspondent the 'word-paintings' derived from his visual work would be evident, and the romantic and imaginative aspects of his essays and his novels would also be incorporated into his travel narratives, where he merged historical association with contemporary references, especially in the Orient. Realism was again of paramount importance because he was concerned with painting an ultra-realistic and modern depiction of the countries he visited, in stark contrast to many of the purely romantic and historical accounts of his predecessors. He would also either personally interview, or be in close proximity to, some of the most important figures in nineteenth-century history; Abraham Lincoln, the Pope, Emperor Napoleon III and Garibaldi. But his travel writing was not particularly concerned with these 'grand narratives' and celebrities; Sala would ironically, given his pronouncements on race, expend much energy persuading his readers that he was more comfortable talking to the 'negro boot-black' on the street than to the most important political figures and that he was most definitely not some kind of celebrity tourist.

¹⁵ James Button 'He came, he saw, he marvelled' www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/01/09 Accessed 12/05/09

Travel and Tourism; the Archaic and the Modern; the Poetic and the Prosaic

Thomas Cook was one of the prime movers behind the growth of nineteenth-century travel and in the 1840s he began organising a succession of excursion trains alternating between Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Birmingham. In 1846 these were extended into Scotland and in 1852 to Killarney, Ireland.¹⁶ In 1855 he arranged tours to the Paris Exhibition, opening up the way for tours to the continent. He was able to run the first 'package' tour to Italy in 1864, North America in the spring of 1866 and in 1868 Cook took his first party to Egypt and Palestine, for which the company became especially famous.

Cook's tours had extended the notion of modern travel to the petty bourgeois and sections of the working class and James Buzard notes how 'the old elites sharpened their pens against the infringements and invasions of their own hitherto exclusive spaces of travel by common "tourists."' ¹⁷ (The word 'tourist' became a derogatory term, often associated with technological advances, in the 1840s.¹⁸) William Wordsworth was vehemently opposed to the 'industrial menace' of tourism encroaching on his beloved Lake District, Thomas Babington Macaulay scorned the 'clerks and milliners' who enjoyed Loch Katrine, and inevitably Ruskin lamented 'the British desecration' of Lake Geneva with the influx of the lower classes.¹⁹ In the year of Cook's first Italian tour, Dickens commissioned Sala's friend and journalist Edmund Yates to interview Cook for *All The Year Round* (7 May 1864). Yates's

¹⁶ Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991) p. 94

¹⁷ James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p. 7

¹⁸ *ibid* p. 32

¹⁹ Brendon (1991) p. 94

subsequent article, 'My Excursion Agent', reached a favourable verdict to the tour operator, thereby denoting the new elite of journalists' defiance of the old guard. In the preface to *Rome and Venice* (1869) Sala echoed Yates's pronouncements, personally fashioned himself as one of Cook's middle-class tourists, underlined his realist credentials, and criticised the intellectual snobbery inherent in British travellers;

There are two ways of doing everything – the poetic and the prosaic...it has often struck me that one of the lower animals – say a dog or a pig – coarse as may be its appetites, gross its manners, and unintellectual its organisation, may have more and better opportunities of judging the qualities of things which are of the earth, earthy, than the Colossus, stalking along sublimely, his head in the clouds, and his nose upraised, in the direction of the Milky Way.²⁰

Sala was in part responding to recent attacks made by Matthew Arnold on himself and the *Daily Telegraph*. The newspaper had become a convenient symbol for Arnold in his 'campaign against Philistinism.'²¹ In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold diverted most of his irony from the newspaper to Sala and in the Preface he stated that Sala was 'the ultimate obstacle to a successful English Academy.'²² Sala responded in his Italian travelogue, *Rome and Venice* (1869), by describing Arnold as a 'shallow and conceited sciolist' who had used the term Philistine 'in order to insult writers whose minds and views were broader than his.'²³ In the pages of Mary Braddon's

²⁰ G.A. Sala, *Rome and Venice: With Other Wanderings in Italy in 1866-7* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869) p. 3 All subsequent references in parenthesis

²¹ Sidney M.B. Coulling, 'Matthew Arnold and the *Daily Telegraph*' in *The Review of English Studies* Vol 12 No. 46 (May, 1961) p. 177

²² *ibid.* p. 177

Belgravia magazine Sala would once again defend something he felt strongly about, this time it was his role as a 'Special' and he used Arnold to force home his point; 'His name is the Special Correspondent. You cannot live mentally without him. He is a necessity. Your newspapers would be as dull as Mr. Matthew Arnold's prosings, and duller than his poetry, without the Special Correspondent's aid.'²³

Cook became for Sala a convenient symbol of the progress in travel being made for the common man, and not just professional members of the learned elite like Arnold. Cook's eventual success ushered in a new era of travel in the Victorian age. Maria H. Frawley has noted that 'an increasing number of Victorians travelled at leisure, justifying their excursions away from home by turning their trips into pilgrimages that sought to improve their spiritual, cultural or physical health.'²⁴ Due to this increase in travel, Frawley notes that 'travel literature became the bread-and-butter of both the periodical presses and book publishing industry.'²⁵ What Sala realised, even as he undertook his first trip as a Special Correspondent, was that this increase in travel would lead to an 'anxiety in travel-writers', or the desire to constantly find a 'novel and entertaining way' of describing increasingly familiar sights.²⁶ Sala made a conscious decision to concentrate on the less-travelled roads and the ordinary people he encountered off the beaten track, along with a sustained and concentrated focus on the modern problems and spaces affecting cities, and realised that by doing so he would have an edge over his travel-writing rivals.

²³ *Belgravia* 4 (Apr: 1871) 214

²⁴ Maria H. Frawley, *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994) p. 20

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 28

²⁶ Buzzard (1993) p. 7

There was a danger, however, that this prosaic reaction to the older forms of picturesque travel-writing would itself become stultifying if, as James Buzard notes, ‘cultures existed and could be understood only in terms of their present manifestations, without reference to the past.’ Sala seems to have found a solution to this problem, in a form of writing that Buzard describes as ‘capable of testing and examining the relationships...between people and the places and things around them, between the present and the accretions of history.’²⁷ In other words, Sala was able to wed the past with the present, the prosaic with the poetic, in order to create a more realistic whole.

Objecting to the practice of being driven around Australia in a buggy, for instance, Sala exclaimed that he was ‘not a fair-weather tourist in search of the picturesque, but a grimly-earnest student of the aspects of cities and the ways of men and women.’ (94) He also railed against the continual round of sight-seeing he was supposed to indulge in, particularly if it took him away from his beloved urban milieu. In Australia he proclaimed that;

If the estimable Mayor of east Jackaroo, if the worthy Town Clerk of west Bandicoot could only realise the fact that I can learn a hundred times more than is to be learnt by driving round mountains or over arid plains by pottering about the main street of a little bush township, and looking into the shops – especially the barber’s and the druggist’s – and listening to what the folks have to say!²⁸

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 212

²⁸ Robert Dingley (ed.) *The Land of the Golden Fleece* (Canberra: Mulini Press, 1995) p. 94 All subsequent references in parenthesis

In order to understand how refreshing and modern this take on travel writing was, we have first to trace the ways in which this form of writing developed and Sala's position within this development.

In the eighteenth century the Grand Tour had been based on an appreciation of classicism and its literary texts. Later in the century, when the Continent became a no-go area due to the Napoleonic Wars, the focus was turned back to the British Isles, and to the picturesque. In his excellent study, *The Beaten Track*, Buzard writes that 'the Grand Tourist ritually joined himself to the 'Classical Mind' by visiting the sites made famous by the texts he had studied.'²⁹ This textual obsession would be allied to a compulsion to *produce* texts of a picturesque nature and these writers were charged with touring solely in order to write tour memoirs.³⁰ Dorothy Wordsworth's memoir of her trip to Scotland with her brother William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge is often considered 'a classic of picturesque writing.'³¹ Although never published in her lifetime, her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland 1803* contained passages like this:

We had not climbed far before we were stopped by a sudden burst of prospect, so singular and beautiful that it was like a flash of images from another world. We stood with our backs to the hill of the island, which we were ascending, and which shut out Ben Lomond entirely...The sun shone, and the distant hills were visible, some through sunny mists, others in gloom with patches of sunshine; the lake was lost under the low and distant hills, and the islands lost in

²⁹ Buzard (1993) pp. 109-110

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 158

³¹ <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usebooks/wordsworth-scotland/index.html> Accessed 21/6/10

the lake, which was all in motion with travelling fields of light, or
dark shadows under rainy clouds.³²

The picturesque was essentially a rural genre that incorporated elements of the romantic sublime. After the disruption occasioned by the Napoleonic Wars, tourists after 1815 appropriated Byron as an exemplary author, traveller, and manifestation of this Romantic aesthetic and as a rejection of mainstream tourism. As Buzard has noted, 'Byron offered tourists a means of imagining and dramatizing their saving difference from the crowd of other tourists around them.'³³ It wasn't long, however, before this new generation of travellers were discovering that their 'originality and difference' was itself becoming mainstream, as more and more tourists followed the route of Byron's *Childe Harold*, just as they had previously followed the classical tour. Byron's travels had themselves pursued a classical agenda as he toured through Sestos and Athens but his anti-imperialism and romantic nationalism meant that he celebrated the modern and 'fiercely independent Albanians and Greeks.'³⁴ The challenge to nineteenth-century travel writers became how best to negotiate and participate in this textual and cultural domain while still presenting some 'originality and independence.' This quest for originality would become a pursuit concerned with how best to combine the prosaic with the poetic and antiquity with modernity.

In 1834 Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote his novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*, a best-seller that imaginatively and spectacularly brought to life the ancient and preserved lava-buried site. Thirty-five years later, while in Italy, Sala reflects that Lytton's book,

³² <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usebooks/wordsworth-scotland/10.html> Accessed 21/6/10

³³ Buzard (1993) p. 121

³⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) p. 140

sent everybody, in person or in imagination, to that wonderful place. The novel so exquisitely and so truthfully portrays the city, that the houses of Glaucus and Pansa, the theatre, and the gladiators' wine-shop, have become as indelibly impressed on the readers' minds as the forms of the dead Pompeians on the hot ashes with which they were stifled. Bulwer has made Pompeii his own; the *Last Days* are the best possible guide-book to the disinterred city...(426)

Imaginative and historical novels like those of Bulwer-Lytton and Walter Scott instilled 'a much-needed charge of novelty and excitement in the European tour.'³⁵ But while Bulwer-Lytton's novel inspired its readers to visit the classical site and display their imaginative capacities it was also, suggests Sala, 'responsible for much of the sadness thus engendered by the destruction of fondly-cherished illusions.'(426) For while one could read historical novelists like Bulwer-Lytton or Scott and be imaginatively transported back to a bygone age, the modern-day experience of a nation like Italy, suggests Sala, can leave visitors with 'a sensation of bitter disappointment.'(426) Anyone looking for repasts 'after the manners of the ancients' and 'youths from the Isles of Greece to warble soft melodies in praise of Venus Aphrodite' were going to be less than impressed with the reality of the present. (426) Sala felt strongly that Pompeii was *not* the paragon of classical beauty as described in Bulwer-Lytton's novel, but instead consisted of small hovels and streets that were 'narrower than the meanest alleys in the meanest Moorish town; that their houses were badly lit and badly ventilated.'(428) In fact, suggests Sala, 'bad as modern Rome

³⁵ Buzard (1993) p. 114

is, badly built, badly paved, and but half-lit with gas, ancient Rome was even more intolerable.’(429) Writing this in 1867, we can discern the substantial shift Sala has taken away from the Romantic, the picturesque, and the veneration of classical antiquity to a realisation that a truer representation of the historical and the modern would become the most important aspect of travel writing. Sala was building on his journalistic style for *Household Words*, in which he had portrayed the problems of contemporary London and Paris while noting the importance of historical association. During his visit to Italy Sala asks, ‘why should not the truth be told about this country?’(23-4). He suggests that just because Italy is blessed with the most magnificent historical monuments, that should not mean that the whole country is ‘hallowed ground.’ Linking this back to London, Sala observes that there are numerous examples of wonderful Greek statuary in the British Museum but that should not blind us to the fact that the desperately poor district of St. Giles is very near Great Russell St in Bloomsbury. Buzard notes how Sala, ‘objecting to most tourists’ habits of exalting the sanctity of historic associations over prosaic contemporaneity’,³⁶ would ask,

Didn’t Julius Caesar invade England? and am I then to be debarred from talking about a grocer’s shop in Snargate Street, Dover, or the... slipperiness of the Admiralty Pier? Every country is full of historical associations,’ Sala insisted, ‘Every country has a history; every country is old; but the actual modern conditions, manners, and circumstances of every land need close and careful study and record, which will be all the more trustworthy if it be constantly compared

³⁶ Buzard (1993) p. 211

with the conditions, manners, and circumstances which have gone before. (24-5)

It was a realisation that the modern had to be referred to in conjunction with the ancient and that the prosaic would take precedence over the romantic and picturesque that had begun with writers like John Murray III, Dickens, Thackeray and Gautier.

In the 1830s John Murray III introduced the tourist guides known as Murray's *Handbooks*. They were liberally sprinkled with Byronic quotations and historical fact and contemporary information on where to find the best places to eat and sleep. (Murray's father, John Murray II, had made his fortune by publishing Byron's poetry) While some travel writers, like Thackeray, admired the *Handbooks* but were insulted by the Byronic quotations, others like Dickens gently mocked both the extreme factuality of the guide books *and* the obsession with Byron.³⁷ Thackeray objected to 'Byron's celebration of barbarism' and wrote; 'Now that dark Hassan sits in his divan and drinks champagne, and Selim has a French watch, and Zuleika perhaps takes Morrison's pills, Byronism becomes absurd instead of sublime, and is only a foolish

³⁷ In his *Notes Of A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (1844), Thackeray describes a trip made by steam on the 'Lady Mary Wood' from Southampton to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1844, including a change on to a Nile steamer for the leg from Alexandria to Cairo. Referring throughout his journey to his copy of Murray, Thackeray expressed his indignation that 'Murray's Guide-Book calls [Byron] 'our native bard.' Thackeray felt that, 'That man [Byron] never wrote from his heart. He got up rapture and enthusiasm with an eye to the public...Our native bard! *Mon Dieu! He Shakespeare's, Milton's, Keats's, Scott's native bard!*' W.M. Thackeray, *Notes on a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1887) p. 237 (author's emphasis). But in his 'Little Travels and Roadside Sketches,' Thackeray outlines his appreciation for the factual element of Murray's project; 'Much delight and instruction have I had in the course of my journey from my guide, philosopher, and friend, the author of 'Murray's Handbook.' He has gathered together, indeed, a store of information, and must, to make his single volume, have gutted many hundreds of guide-books. How the Continental ciceroni must hate him, whoever he is! Every English party I saw had this infallible red book in their hands, and gained a vast deal of historical and general information from it.' cited in Buzard (1993) p. 75.

expression of cockney wonder.’³⁸ Thackeray is embracing modernity and pouring scorn on Byronic posturing and the romanticisation of travel.

In Dickens’s *Pictures from Italy* (1846), an account of his extended retreat from novel writing in Italy during 1844 and 1845, the infatuation with Byron is encapsulated in the highly humorous passage where a Bolognese waiter, observing that Dickens takes no milk declaims that ‘Milor Beeron had also never touched it’ and proceeds to insert Byron’s preferences into all of his replies to Dickens’s enquiries.³⁹ By highlighting these comedic exchanges Dickens had a more serious point to make. He may have been deliberating on his own celebrity status and his future position in posterity, occasioned by the hysterical response to his arrival in America in 1842, and the notion of becoming another literary celebrity or Byronic tourist attraction seems to have given him much cause for anxiety. But Dickens was also highlighting a paradigm for bad travel-writing, such as the blatant insertion of spurious accounts of out-dated ‘celebrities’ like the *Handbooks* instead of a concentration of focus on the reality of one’s surroundings. This highlighting of the negative aspects of fellow travel writers would become a feature of nineteenth-century travel reportage; for as Jerome Meckier points out, ‘exposing the unreliability of predecessors justified adding yet another travelogue to those already in existence.’⁴⁰ Dickens began the process that would ultimately become almost a duty of the travel-writer, to obstinately and deliberately refrain from consulting the *Handbooks*, and those who neglected Murray and his followers would ‘commit this sin as demonstratively as possible.’⁴¹

³⁸ cited in, Brantlinger (1988) p. 140

³⁹ Kate Flint (ed.) Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (London: Penguin, 1998) p. 72-3

⁴⁰ Jerome Meckier, *Innocent Abroad: Charles Dickens’s American Engagements* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1990) p. 126

⁴¹ Buzard (1993) p. 164-6

Sala's stance on Byron and Romanticism reflects his ambition to negotiate a middle way somewhere between Thackeray's derision and Dickens's parody. Sala declared in *Rome and Venice* that,

Byron gushes tremendously in *Childe Harold* about the Coliseum and the Dying Gladiator; but he gushes milk and honey... In his letters, however, to Murray, and in his conversations with his friends, Byron showed that he had a very shrewd, practical, and even humorous appreciation of Italy as a land inhabited, not by poetical abstractions, but by substantial human beings; and there can be little doubt that, had Lord Byron chosen to do so, he might have written one of the best prose works on Italy or the Italians with which it was possible to endow his country's literature. (22)

Sala attempts to re-fashion Byron as a travel-writer in his own modern, realistic mould, rather than as a 'gushing', abstract, Romantic poet.⁴² While in Rome Sala

⁴² Sala recognises Byron's influence on his generation of young men in the 1840s; like Bulwer-Lytton, Byron's works made his readers determined to visit the sights they were reading about. Sala recounts how 'Byron's words used to drive us crazy to see Sestos, and Abydos, and Athens...and, later in the day, *Eothen* sent us wild to catch a gazelle, and bathe in the Dead Sea, and read the *Quarterly Review* in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.' Sala (1869) p. 22 Alexander Kinglake's *Eothen* was an extremely popular account of his travels through the Near East in 1835 and sparked a fascination with the region which later explorers like Richard Burton and tour operators like Thomas Cook would tap into. Burton in particular, but also his fellow explorers Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley, with his daring African explorations would play with the Byronic notion of the Romantic explorer/celebrity. For more on Burton and the Near East see Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005)

As Dane Kennedy has discussed this fascination with the Near East was deeply rooted in Victorian culture. It derived above all from the Bible and the images it conjured up of Christianity's birthplace and would attract artists like David Wilkie, William Holman Hunt, Frederick Lewis and David Roberts. Kennedy writes that, 'Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and other Romantic writers regarded the Near East both as a region oppressed by Ottoman despotism and a site associated with heightened feeling, a realm where Romantic sensibilities could find free reign. For Victorian sages such as Thomas Carlyle, the desert domain of the Arabs harboured an innate spirituality, a view that Disraeli racialized in his novel *Tancred* (1847)...By the early nineteenth century, a small but steady stream of Britons had begun to venture into Egypt, Palestine, and surrounding territories, publishing accounts of their travels that fascinated the reading public at home.' Kennedy (2005) p. 61.

illustrates this modern way of travelling by suggesting that the best way to inspect the streets is 'to break your pocket-compass and burn your maps and guide-books...take Chance for your Mentor, and lose yourself.' (430) The Parisian flaneur in Sala comes to the fore here and he demands a less textual and more emotional way of observing cities. But while Sala understood the intellectual limitations of the guide-books, and advised moderns to read Bulwer-Lytton instead, he also realised their positive aspects; their ability to fashion their readers as 'instant experts'. He says, 'Murray's cram is the most digestible I know; and he enables you to quote Dante and Guicciardini and Frizzi, without having actually read a line of those admired authors.' (193) To the lesser-educated middle classes this was a sure and quick way to feign intellectual superiority and for a dilettante like Sala having a handy edition of Murray could prove invaluable when it came to providing copy for a leading article.⁴³ In *Rome and Venice* Sala actually validates the possession of a good guide-book. He cannot understand why travellers would shun their use and thereby 'undergo the hardship of a Speke, a Livingstone or a Burton' when trying to view art in some of the more provincial Italian towns (179). But while the guide-books thus served some function for Sala, it was to be the more personal and modern accounts produced by Thackeray and Dickens that would leave a more enduring impression on his own style and his own theory of travel. For Sala it was not that modernity was necessarily better than antiquity, in fact he is negative about many of the modern conditions of the cities he visits, it was more that he was acknowledging the duty modern writers had to inform their readers of this contemporary state of affairs.

⁴³ It would even lead, towards the end of his life, to his producing his own lively and witty guide book to Brighton that addressed some of the wrongs he may have felt at the over-factuality of Murray but which also recognised the importance to the public of such guides. (*Brighton As I Have Known It* 1895).

The way that Dickens overcame the problem of modernity in *Pictures from Italy* was to merge historical association with the contemporary to present a complex but realistic understanding of a nation and its manners. Sala used Dickens's example in his writing on Italy but went to further extremes, like Arthur Hugh Clough, to present a negative but truthful account. In his poem, *Amours De Voyage* (1858), Clough had written that 'Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand but/*Rubbishy* seems the word that most exactly would suit it.'⁴⁴ Eschewing the romantic and picturesque qualities of Italian life Sala would similarly criticise the 'sloppiness and muddiness' of Italian cafés, the filthy inns and the way that 'Italians of the middle class, unless they have visited England, are absolutely ignorant of what comfort, cleanliness, or common decency mean.' (168) In Italy his modernistic approach meant denigrating what he felt were the anti-progressive aspects of Roman Catholicism. When Sala hears a preaching friar say it is better that the world is devoted to God than to people, Sala says 'and arguing upon this position, the Papal Government is clearly justified in neglecting to pave its streets, perforate its postage-stamps, ventilate its houses, and wash its population.' (399) Pre-empting many of Mark Twain's sentiments in *Innocents Abroad*, Sala bemoans the wealth needed to furnish all of Rome's churches, 'what a pity that some proportion of the wealth swallowed up here, say twenty per cent of the gross amount, was not laid out in repairing the filthy road which leads to the glorious edifice...or in washing and clothing the deplorable creatures who crawl about the sumptuous basilica.' (411) This unworldliness reaches its apotheosis when Sala exclaims;

⁴⁴ Patrick Scott (ed.) Arthur Hugh Clough, *Amours de Voyage* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1974) Canto 1 Lines 19-20 p. 3

You man in the shovel-hat, who talk so unctuously about the Virgin Mary – you who have set up at every street corner a painted idol, with a lamp before it – you who fill the minds of your penitents with all kinds of lying legends about the saints and their miracles-are you, too, so blind, so ignorant, so stupid, as not to see that in the lives of these deplorable creatures, fluttering in rags, wallowing in dirt – in these mothers, who from sheer lethargic carelessness suffer their babes to become humpbacked and bowlegged – in these slouching, unkempt men and lads – in these swarms of beggars, now cringing and now clamorous - in these homes, unfit for human beings, and scarcely fit for hogs, there is one constant, dull denial both of the Mother and the Son of God – there is one standing negative to the tremendous assertions of Romanism in the basilica hard by?(450)

Sala's anti-Catholicism, evident as far back as 1850 and his *No Popery* panorama, appears to have shown no signs of abatement in middle-age.

When it came to writing about the New World it was more difficult for Sala to fall back on the negative aspect of historical association he had found in European cities, and the divide between rich and poor could not simply be attributed to venial spirituality. While this is at first disconcerting, by the time he travels to America for a second time and then to Australia, it is clear that he has come to relish the modernity of these environments. Sala echoed many of Dickens's complaints in his *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842) when first visiting America and complained at the monotony of the scenery, the taciturnity of the working classes and he described

New York as dirty and insufferable, ‘a slovenly, untidy, ill-kept Augean stable.’⁴⁵ We can sense in the itinerary he follows, however, and his missives back home that Sala was deliberately endeavouring to write in a more modern and intimate manner on America. This meant eschewing the standard visits that Dickens had made to institutions - prisons, universities, hospitals and mental asylums – in favour of descriptions of the back streets of a run down part of New York, Washington and Boston and the quotidian existences of their inhabitants. On his second visit to the country Sala stressed in *America Revisited* that ‘the Americans are justly proud of their cemeteries and their prisons; but I have a rooted aversion from sight-seeing, so far as gaols and Golgothas are concerned.’⁴⁶

Sala would also blatantly mock antiquity at the expense of modernity. Like Twain, Sala deliberately inverts Dickens’s views of the New World. The metaphor of youth, so condescendingly used on his first visit to America in 1863 would, in 1879, be praised as a virtue when describing urban conditions, ‘A youthful American city is more interesting than any monuments of antiquity.’ (Vol. 1 282) Displaying his modernist credentials again, Sala admits to being more impressed at receiving five hundred dollars by wire in Chicago from London, than at any of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. (Vol. 2 115) On his arrival in Sydney, a city with little historical past to mention, Sala outlined his anti-guide book feelings, ‘As to urban Sydney, it would be desperately wearisome to English readers to describe the great city and its many and noble public buildings in guide-book style.’(52) Back in the Old

⁴⁵ G.A. Sala, *My Diary in America in the Midst of War* 2 Vols. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865) Vol. 1 p. 418 All subsequent references in parenthesis

⁴⁶ G.A. Sala, *America Revisited* 2 vols. (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1882) Vol. 1 p. 253 All subsequent references in parenthesis

World Sala is free to mock the ancient and in Padua he would observe that, ‘the antiquity [of Padua] is, as you know, immense; and the city really looks its age.’⁴⁷

But offset with these condemnations of antiquity were also positive affirmations towards the past and historical association. In *Rome and Venice* Sala would praise the ancient aspects of Verona over the hideous modernity inscribed by the Austrian oppressors; ‘its degradation notwithstanding, the old amphitheatre still looks superb, and frowns down with infinite contempt on the biggest of the barracks which the Austrians have built up in its vicinity.’ (76) Dismayed at the Austrian’s destruction of the beautiful old bridges of Italy during the war, Sala condemns the ‘old Austrian blockhead’, General Kuhn, and asks ‘how long is the world to continue under the sway of these mischievous old dodderers.’ (128-9) Unlike the American tourist whom Sala overhears saying, ‘Rome was quite a nice place, but the public buildings much out of repair’ (324), Sala actually admires many of the ruins and at times finds the modern structures to be the dilapidated and tumbledown ones. (324) The ambiguity of his pronouncements concerning ancient and modern is manifested in Venice where he notes that ‘the architectural remains are magnificent, but they all belong to the remote past.’ (258)

One of Sala’s methods of portraying Algeria was to adopt an exaggeratedly prosaic attitude towards its topography, produce, and population. Mockingly alluding to Dickens’s exposure of the excesses of utilitarianism in *Hard Times* (1854), and ironically gesturing towards the overt factuality of the *Handbooks*, Sala would provide taxonomical details such as; ‘Everyone knows Algeria was once the granary

⁴⁷ G.A. Sala, *Under The Sun: Essays Mainly Written in Hot Countries* (London: Vizetelley & Co., 1886) p. 337

of Rome...in 1854, Mr. Gradgrind, total grain produced 9, 371,640 hectolitres, grown on 761,470 hectares of land, and representing a money value of 137, 743, 847 francs, or about five millions and a half sterling.’ (30) Sala instructs his readers about the vegetables, tobacco and livestock, along with the average temperatures throughout the year, the length of coastline and the abundance of the country’s natural resources. We learn that the cultivation of cotton is increasing due in part to the American Civil War and that in the space of ten years it has progressed from 8000 lbs cultivated in 1851 to 318,000 lbs in 1861. After providing detailed information on the wild animals to be found, Sala writes ‘And now, Mr. Gradgrind, having told you about the animal and vegetable kingdom, suppose I give you a few facts concerning the *bibes implumis* – the Algerian man.’ (52) We learn that the entire population of Algeria is 2,999,124 and Sala concludes by claiming; ‘Such is the state of the case, Mr. Gradgrind’ (53)

Why would Sala concentrate on statistical reportage in such a fashion? As Robert Dingley states in his introduction to *The Land of the Golden Fleece*, ‘his travellers’ tales...are refreshingly short on political analysis, useful statistics, and catalogues of approved “sights.”’ (ix) The answer lies in a review of *A Trip To Barbary* in *The Athenaeum* 30 December 1865. The reviewer states that ‘There are those, Mr. Gradgrind amongst the number, who will wish that the Special Correspondent had given them a more liberal supply of new and special information concerning a country in which Englishmen yearly take greater interest.’⁴⁸ Sala’s reference to Gradgrind and his relentless procession of facts must have been added into the 1866 edition, and can be read as a direct rebuke to the anonymous *Athenaeum* reviewer. By mocking this overly-factual style of travel writing Sala makes the point that there are far more imaginative ways to represent modern, foreign cities.

⁴⁸ *The Athenaeum* 30 December 1865 p. 918

Fiction and Romance

In fictional and imaginative terms, Théophile Gautier had attempted to bridge the divide between ancient and modern in his short story from 1850 entitled 'The Tourists.' The story begins in a museum in Naples where a group of three young friends 'making the tour of Italy together' observe the collection of antique artefacts excavated from Pompeii. One of the group, Octavian, becomes transfixed by the curvy molten lava figure of what he imagines was a beautiful woman, preserved forever 'unbroken and inviolate.' When they visit Pompeii they are amused by the uncanny conjunction of old and new; 'the three friends got off the train at Pompeii, smiling to each other at the absurd combination of ancient and modern inevitably conjured up by the words, *Stazione di Pompeii*. An antique Graeco-Roman city boasting a railway platform!'⁴⁹ On entering Pompeii the 'sudden leap back across nineteen centuries fills even the most prosaic and unimaginative visitor with astonishment. Two strides take you from contemporary life into the antique world, and from Christianity into paganism.' (116) The uncanny aspect of the *mise-en-scène* is exacerbated when Octavian takes a lone night walk and notices the houses have been transformed into a pristine condition, almost as though they were still occupied. He then sees old-fashioned carts laden with vegetables pass by and beautiful young women balancing water jugs on their heads. At a performance of Plautus' *Cassina* Octavian finds himself drawn to a voluptuous woman whose bodily contours seem to match those of the exhibit in the museum at Naples. He is invited back to her villa where she admits that his love for her at the museum has helped bring her back to life.

⁴⁹ Théophile Gautier, *My Fantoms* (New York: New York Review Books Classic, 2008) p. 114 All subsequent references in parenthesis

While they lie together in an erotic embrace on a divan her Christian father chastises her for her philandering ways and at the sound of a church bell she returns to dust.

Not only does Gautier criticise the harsh, cold and utilitarian tenets of the Christian religion, he also questions the yearning of antiquarians to ‘bring to life’ the past while neglecting the reality of the modern. Gautier believed in an art that was contemporary and seductively modern, but one that was concerned with the importance of the historic. Given Sala’s appreciation of Gautier’s art it is not hard to see how he found ways to incorporate the contemporary with historical association in this imaginative fashion, and it is in Sala’s travel writing that he finally finds the perfect medium for this conjunction. We have seen in Chapter 4 how Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs noted that ‘The relationship between the genres [fiction and travel writing] remains close and often troubling.’ While readers demand and expect a ‘literal truthfulness’ from the travel genre they would not necessarily expect this from fiction. Hulme and Youngs show that ‘each form has long drawn on the conventions of the other, an often-cited example being Lawrence Sterne’s difficult-to-categorise, *A Sentimental Journey* (1768).’⁵⁰ We have seen how Sala blended fact and fiction in *A Journey Due North* and in his novel *Make Your Game* and how he used Sterne’s travelogue/novel for inspiration. He is engaged in a similar blurring of genres in his travel writing.

Like Gautier, Sala found the opportunity in Italy to demonstrate the fictional and imaginative style honed during his time as a novelist. While travelling on the through train from Milan to Ferrara Sala transports his readers back in time and concocts a short, sensational story in which he becomes the protagonist, a captain in the Venetian

⁵⁰ Peter Hulme, Tim Youngs ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* ed Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 6

army. He is arrested by the Duke and Duchess for cutting with his dagger at the letter B that has been carved in stone outside the Ducal Palace. There are frequent and dark allusions to the Duchess's hatred of the Duke and when the Duke drinks a toast with the captain it becomes apparent that they have both been poisoned. The Duchess offers the Venetian captain an antidote, the Duke dies, and the Duchess implores the captain to leave Ferrara by the next train, an anachronism given that this is actually the sixteenth century and the Duchess's name is Lucrezia Borgia. The Venetian captain/Sala turns out to be the son of Lucrezia and is eventually killed by eating a pigeon pie full of strychnine. Sala explains that Italy was the kind of country where such fictional imaginings were not difficult to contemplate because of the vast amount of historical material associated with the place. Back in the contemporary realm Sala traverses modern Ferrara, wonders why there are so many doctors' shops there and explains that 'the whole place reeks of poison and carving-knives' and that it is 'the abode of horror and the cave of despair.'⁽⁹²⁾ Sala's insinuation is that Ferrara has never recovered from its historical association with the Borgias, and while this is fertile ground for the writer of fiction, it is another example of the negative and backward-looking aspect of the contemporary country for the modern traveller.

Sala's fictional and romantic style would be put to the ultimate test when it came to describing the landscape of America and Niagara Falls. Just as in Russia, when Sala finds himself way from the urban milieu he struggles to delineate what he considers to be the depressing barrenness of the American landscape and the homogeneity of its people. Sala clearly acknowledges his literary insecurity and his reliance on Dickens's account of America, for it was well known that only Niagara Falls and Boston had lived up to Dickens's American expectations. The very word was known to strike

feelings of insecurity into the most experienced of writers. Sala comically interprets this insecurity;

‘Niagara! Fearful word; ominous and overwhelming always to the literary mind. I have looked upon it for months as a monstrous bill, for ever coming due...I had some thoughts...of appending as a foot-note to one of my letters home the remark; ‘There are some waterfalls hereabouts, which are said to be pretty.’ Or this: ‘For a description of the Falls of Niagara the reader is referred to the works of Mr. Charles Dickens, Dr. Charles Mackay, Mr. Nicholas Woods, Baron Humboldt, and ten thousand more or less accomplished tourists and sketch-writers.’ (Vol 1 163-4)

His subsequent attempts to describe the view remind us that, like Dickens, Sala’s aesthetic is essentially an urban one and that, as Juliet John remarked about Dickens, ‘his Romanticism impresses us as a copy.’⁵¹ This was how Sala eventually described the Falls; ‘With a burst like the sound of a trumpet, the sudden Sun came out. God bless him! there he was...; and there, too, in the midst of the foaming waters, was set the Everlasting Bow... and, looking around me, I saw that the scene had become glorified...I began, as many men have begun, perchance, to wonder at and to love Niagara.’ (Vol 1 177) Away from the urban and the Old World, with its wealth of historical association, Sala descends into cliché, second rate biblical allusion, and an outmoded picturesque style reminiscent of romantics like Dorothy Wordsworth.

⁵¹ Juliet John, ‘A body without a head’; The Idea of Mass Culture in Dickens’s *American Notes*’ *Journal of Victorian Culture* (Summer: 2007) p. 191.

Isabella Bird, the English-born travel writer, stressed the unromantic side of Australian nature and the mammon-worship prevalent there, 'I think the Australian colonies must be more prosaic than any others. Such hideous country. Such hideous leafage and the golden calf the one deity.'⁵² Sala agreed and suggested in *The Land of the Golden Fleece* that 'We can afford, perhaps, to dispense with the picturesque...' (117) Trying to find a way to describe Australia when faced with such a bleak and barren landscape led Sala to imagine what little of the past he could extract from the country's history. In a remarkable passage written on his return to England, and published in *Right Around the World, With Some Stories I Found In It* (a collection of tales edited by Sala for the *Bow Bells Annual* of 1887), Sala casts his mind back to his recent journey Down Under;

In my mind's eye I saw the sugar plantations of Queensland; the vineyards of Adelaide; the palaces of Marvellous Melbourne; the enchanting harbour of Sydney; the luxurious verdure of Tasmania. Then I was at that unique asylum for senile and imbecile convicts, the Cascades near Hobart...and stood face to face with the Ghost of Transportation. An awful ghost, a terrible ghost...they showed me in a paved courtyard the gutters down which the blood used to flow from the bodies of the miserable wretches who were being tortured at the triangles...But Nemesis had overtaken the sworn tormentors of the Cascades. Only the inferior fiends, mind you. The demons-in-chief had gone home long ago to be made Baronets...and Grand

⁵² Judith Johnston and Monica Anderson (eds) *Australia Imagined: Views from the British Periodical Press 1800-1900* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2005) p. 61

Crosses of the Bath. I was shown a group of septuagenarian lunatics, who, in the transportation times, had been employed as constables to scourge the convicts. The gore which, with their cats, they were continually making to stream and spurt around them, had mounted to their brains at last, and addled them. The whippers had gone as mad as their victims. (3-4)

Replicating his work as a visual artist for the penny dreadful in which he was told there must be more blood, Sala presents a sensational picture of the colony's early days, reminiscent of Marcus Clarke's novel *For the Term of His Natural Life*. But the colony had endeavoured to shake off its ties to its criminal past, aided in part by the discovery of its gold fields and the excessive demand for labour this created. The subsequent growth of the colonies had been astonishing, an article in *Leisure Hour* entitled 'Australia I – Its General Features and Resources' from 1852 states that 'Sydney, after an existence of sixty years, had nearly 40,000 inhabitants; Adelaide and Melbourne, in the space of sixteen years, had each grouped an estimated population of 25,000 persons; while at the time of the American revolution, after a period of more than a century and a half, Boston only possessed 18,000 inhabitants, and neither Philadelphia nor New York at all equalled the size of Sydney.'⁵³ Sala was fascinated with the meteoric rise of the colony and found himself constantly alluding to the gold rush, 'Those were the days of alluvial deposits, of big nuggets looking at the diggers in the face, so to say...the consequence was that everybody, from all parts of the world...started for the diggings....it soon became a case of survival of the fittest.'(64) The Darwinian struggle in the burning Australian landscape is evoked again when

⁵³ cited in *ibid.* p. 45

Sala, a long-time devotee of Charles Reade, cites Reade's novel *It Is Never Too Late To Mend*, that depicted the gold rush and the struggles of George Fielding and Tom Robinson in Australia. George must make £1000 before he can return to England and marry Susan Merton, but a combination of animal disease and human greed constantly puts paid to their money-making schemes, even when they discover gold in Bathurst. Always more interested in the real and hard lives of men and women, and the uncertainty of modern life, the way that fortunes could be made and lost with such rapidity, Sala in Australia was content to conjure up an exciting past and explore an uncertain future rather than portray the natural landscapes he encountered.

In 1855, ten years before actually visiting Algeria, Sala had imagined the capital city, Algiers, and painted an eloquent word-picture of it in a *Household Words* essay entitled 'Yadace.' (HW May 5 1855) Claiming that from reading the *Akbar* newspaper he could 'form a tolerably correct mind-picture', Sala goes on to describe 'the deep blue skies, the low white houses with projecting balconies and porticoes painted a vivid green, and roofs fantastically tiled. The purple shadows that the houses cast. The narrow dark lanes where the eaves meet, and where you walk between dead-walls, through chinks of which, for aught you know, bright eyes may be looking.'⁵⁴ The thought of Algeria and the Orient seems to have brought out some of Sala's very best imaginative, romantic and descriptive writing, and the country played an important part in the denouement of his novel *The Strange Adventures of Captain Dangerous*.

⁵⁴ G.A. Sala, 'Yadace' HW xi May 5 1855 p. 320

When Sala actually arrives in Algeria his constant references to the *Arabian Nights* contribute to the Western impression of the East in an Oriental fantasy that would be written and painted throughout the nineteenth century. Gustave Flaubert wrote his novel *Salammbô*, depicting the doomed Carthaginian Empire and described it as a ‘fever-dream of Orientalism’. Flaubert wrote his work in 1862 while the French were in the process of colonising the same region.⁵⁵ Frederick Leighton’s painting ‘Courtyard in Algiers’ (1879) and John Frederick Lewis’s numerous representations of Cairo are among the best artistic examples of this Western Orientalism.⁵⁶ Sala paints vivid word descriptions of the exotic sights and smells for his readers; ‘the *Arabian Nights* are all around you. There goes the Sultana Scheherezade... The Sultana may be one of the wives of a wealthy Moresco, or she may be a washer-woman.’ (172) The women all possess ‘an omnipresent perfume of the East – of the dreamy, vaporous, sensuous land of mystery and sorcery and jealousy and intrigue.’ (176) Sala’s ambiguity towards ancient and modern was at its height in Algiers, in a land so suffused with ancient association and contemporary difficulty. He swiftly brings his dreamy, imaginative prose back to the prosaic when describing the yashmak, or veil. It promotes outdoor equality, says Sala with tongue firmly in cheek, because the pretty women still remain comely while the uglier ones are hidden from view. But in a more serious vein Sala feels that the Muslim women in Algeria are better off than their counterparts in Tunis or Morocco where they are ‘still the victim

⁵⁵ Adrienne Mayor, ‘Pacesetter’ in *London Review of Books* Vol 32 No. 12, 24 June 2010 p. 30.

⁵⁶ Sala would mockingly refer to paintings like J.F. Lewis’s ‘The Light of the Hhareem’ as not being as realistic as they purport to be. Describing ‘Fathma’, an Algerian lady of wealth and physical corpulence who puts on balls for wealthy Europeans, Sala says that ‘without the facilities offered by these balls you would not see on the walls of the Royal Academy those brilliant representations ... which seem to argue so amazingly intimate an acquaintance with the inmost penetralia of Oriental life.’ (269-70) Sala then goes on to question the artists’ models for their authenticity, claiming that ‘putting a real Moorish lady from nature on canvas’ the artist ‘has about as much chance as of drawing a portrait of the late Queen of Sheba from the life.’ (270)

of a stupid and brutalising code, founded on and bound up in a religion whose theory is pure, but whose practice is barbarous.’(179)

But the prosaic soon dissolves once again into a Romantic image of the alluring, sensual and mysterious East; ‘And then I turned from them and looked over the dark bulwarks at the long, soft, silken swell of this matchless Mediterranean Sea – this sea that is like a beautiful woman; for, all soft and silken as she is, there will come, almost without a warning, the sharp and sudden tempest – the mistral or the squall.’ (133)

The erotic use of ‘silken swell’ reminds us of Enobarbus’s description of Cleopatra’s gentlewomen aboard her oar-driven ship in Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra*, ‘the silken tackle/Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands.’ (2.2 215-6)⁵⁷ It is the beginning of a passage in which Sala chastises the French for their relentless modernisation of the capital city, Algiers, and culminates in the criticism of French architecture, with its inability to cohere past with present, archaic with modern.

Although the French have demolished the most romantic portion of Algiers, ‘still, Algiers is yet delightful...the city of most sepulchral whiteness.’(144) In the Jewish quarter ‘the houses are, in their way, - in the artistic way – gems,’ but in the eyes of the French ‘they are simply so many abominations, which need to be swept away to make room for the alignement.’(154-5) In fact, says Sala, ‘the French would pull down the Alhambra or the Taj Mahal’ (154-5) and are thus *too* fixated on the modern and lack appreciation of the ancient. When visiting Oran Sala observes that the European quarter is ‘broad, clean, smart, pert,’ but also ‘distressingly well ventilated, monotonous, and – well, the word must out – ugly.’ (367) Modernisation is again questioned here; Sala reflects that although he is not the type of romantic to grumble

⁵⁷ Stephen Greenblatt (ed.) *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 1997) p. 2648

about ‘well-paved and well-lighted streets’ he still feels that ‘for once in a way it may be pardonable to bid economy, both social and political, go to Jehanum – to let one’s picturesque sympathies get the upper hand – to bewail the genteel barbarisms with which the French are sweeping away every vestige of Moorish architecture in this country.’ (367-8) Although Sala endorsed the improvements Haussmann and Napoleon III were making in Paris, he is not so appreciative of their public buildings and believes that unlike the English the French haven’t managed to devise a truly national style of architecture, a perfect wedding of past and present, like that of the Gothic style. In fact Gothic architecture is a perfect metaphor for Sala’s own travel writing style; it possessed an imaginative quality that was also very realistic and solid in design and finish, and it blended the best aspects of modernity (such as the state of the art heating system in Charles Barry’s and A.W.N. Pugin’s Houses of Parliament) with a faithful reverence to the past. Like Gothic architecture, Sala’s synthesis of ancient and modern seems to have struck just the right note with the British public. At a time of imperial expansion it was not a hindrance to conjure up ancient glories while flagging contemporary and future greatness. When it came to portraying race and slavery, Sala’s opinions and his conjunction of ancient and modern were also in line with his readership. But for the modern reader Sala’s pronouncements become seriously flawed as he found himself caught up in contemporary racial debate founded on ancient prejudice.

Race, Slavery, Oppression

In Chapter 2 we discovered that Sala was interested in the process of circulation and the consumption of commodities. His experiences at the Great Exhibition meant that he was in tune with the way in which commodities were processed and transported, the culture of movement and dislocation. This fascination with goods and commodities was extended to his *Household Words* essays, particularly in his musings on old clothes, the city, and the docks and ports of London. Speed was one of the fundamental conditions of the new commodity culture and we have noted how Sala ‘celebrates the restless movement of imperial goods, marvelling at the linkage of incongruous sites and the vast distances commodities can travel.’⁵⁸ In his career as a Special Correspondent Sala would have personal experience of this ‘restless movement’ as he was shipped from one continent to another in order to provide the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* with information on the far flung outposts of Europe and the Empire. In his travel journalism Sala would reflect on the ‘restless movement’ of *human* imperial goods (slaves), and would provide forthright personal opinions on this trafficking of human commodities.

While in Russia Sala’s modernist credentials had remained intact as he castigated white slavery as a blight and an anachronism, but when he travels to America his personal opinions and the growing tide of racial thinking back in England cloud his better judgement as he fully endorses Southern black slavery. But Sala also reflects on oppression in Italy and Austrian imperial ambitions there, the rights and wrongs of French colonial rule in Algeria, and in the plight of the aboriginal populations in Australia and New Zealand.

⁵⁸ Murray Baumgarten, ‘London, Dickens and the Theatre of Homelessness’ in Debra N. Mancoff and D.J. Trela, *Victorian Urban Settings* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 1996) p. 79

As the 1850s progressed middle-class attitudes towards slavery and race changed. Catherine Hall notes that the assumption of a middle-class attachment to anti-slavery was no longer viable in the 1850s and 1860s. The middle-classes had become fatigued by abolition and philanthropy, suspicious of emancipation and its implications for extending the franchise and ‘throughout the 1850s a more racist discourse became increasingly legitimate.’⁵⁹ Dickens had spoken out against slavery in his *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), but had attacked philanthropists in his 1848 essay on the Niger Expedition in *The Examiner* and criticised ‘telescopic philanthropy’ in his portrayal of Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House* (1852). Both Dickens and Thomas Carlyle subscribed to the philosophy that ‘the work at home must be completed thoroughly, or there is no hope abroad.’⁶⁰ Scientific notions of race led to a new biological and racial determinism culminating in the polygenist theory, the notion that the races of men were as different and separate as humans were to animal species. British scientists like Robert Knox and Charles Hamilton Smith rejected environmental explanations of racial difference and maintained that polygenesis not only explained the different races to be found around the globe but also ‘proved’ the notion of a hierarchy of race with Europeans at the top and Africans and aboriginal Australians at the bottom. Thomas Carlyle’s essay ‘Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question’ (1849) had argued that Caribbean slaves were an inferior race and was hostile to these slaves for their refusal, in his opinion, to work hard without the threat of the whip. Tim Barringer notes how Carlyle’s analysis, like Mayhew’s, ‘resonates with the moral discourses of labour’ and enforced the differences between

⁵⁹ Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) p. 275.

⁶⁰ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1988) p. 178.

racial types.⁶¹ Catherine Hall sees the essay's publication as 'an extremely significant moment in the movement of public opinion away from anti-slavery as the respectable orthodoxy and towards more overt forms of racism.'⁶²

In December 1857 the organ of the middle-class establishment, the *Times*, published a series of leaders reassessing the wisdom of slave emancipation. Echoing Carlyle's analysis, the leaders argued that the inherent laziness of the Negro race had produced the economic difficulties to be found in the West Indies.⁶³ The *Times*' strong pro-Southern stand would be partly due to the West Indian origins of its manager, Mowbray Morris, but the African-American ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass commented during his second visit to England in 1859 on the growing disillusionment with the success of West Indian emancipation along with a troubling rise in racism. As far as Douglass, author of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) was concerned, the two were related and the product of a growing American influence in Britain. Carlyle argued that emancipation had been an abject failure because 'it freed a people incapable of appreciating the boon of freedom and failed to put in place a new order that regulated labor.'⁶⁴ R.J.M. Blackett notes how 'Southern supporters saw little to dispute in Carlyle's analysis and warned against the danger of repeating the failures of the West Indian experiment.'⁶⁵ We can observe, then, how during the shifting cultural and scientific racial climate of the 1850s English middle-class opinion began to gradually

⁶¹ Tim Barringer, 'Images of otherness and the visual production of difference: race and labour in illustrated texts, 1850-1865' in Shearer West (ed.) *The Victorians and Race* (Aldershot; Ashgate, 1996) p. 43.

⁶² Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) p. 275.

⁶³ Cited in, Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978) p. 123.

⁶⁴ Cited in R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts; Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 2001) p. 37

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 37.

move away from a position of abolitionism to one whereby not only the wisdom of emancipating American slaves was challenged, so too was their essential humanity.

The 1850s were also the dawn of the age of African exploration. Sir Richard Burton, the polymath and explorer (and friend of Sala), believed that his numerous expeditions to Africa had given him privileged access to the innate abilities of Africans. Dane Kennedy notes Burton's belief that 'slavery was the great civilizing agent of primitive races.' Burton argued that the African could not improve in his own country, and that 'the removal of the Negro from Africa is like sending a boy to school; it his only chance of improvement.'⁶⁶ The idea of white superiority had entered mainstream discourse with the scientific racism of James Hunt, a disciple of Knox, and the Anthropological Society of London, formed in 1863. Hunt was one of the most significant proponents of polygenesis and stated that 'No man who thoroughly investigates with an unbiased mind, can doubt that the Negro belongs to a distinct type...there is in the Negro that assemblage of evidence which would, *ipso facto*, induce the unbiased observer to make the European and the negro distinct types of man.'⁶⁷ Although Charles Darwin was brought up as an abolitionist and monogenist, the racial manipulation of his theories of natural selection in the *Origin of Species* (1859) meant that, 'far from dislodging old racial ideas, evolution strengthened them, and provided them with a new scientific vocabulary of struggle and survival.'⁶⁸ In *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Darwin tried to establish the continuity between animals and man and he used the example of 'savages' and lower races to prove his point. Stepan suggests that 'later,

⁶⁶ Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005) p. 140.

⁶⁷ cited in, Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982) p. 3

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 49.

scientists would find it only too easy to interpret Darwin as meaning that the races of man now formed an evolutionary scale.’⁶⁹ Even a celebrated abolitionist and adherent of Darwin’s theories like T.H. Huxley had, by the end of the American Civil War, worked through Darwin’s theory of evolution and come to the conclusion that the ‘innate inferiority’ of blacks, ‘held them to a low place in the scale of civilization.’⁷⁰

As we shall see the Governor Eyre Affair of 1865 would lead to a more imperialist, jingoist, and racist notion of Englishness in the ensuing decades. Sala would find himself from the 1850s on caught up in these cultural and scientific debates on race and slavery. His writings from this period demonstrate that he was part of a wider move to discredit black people’s ability to govern themselves and to question the sagacity of allowing them their freedom.

The *Daily Telegraph*, founded in 1855, was also representative of this changing of attitude towards race and slavery. Although initially politically neutral, in a leader from November 24 1856 it admitted to having espoused the cause of John C. Fremont in that year’s American presidential election. Fremont was the first presidential candidate of a major party to run on a platform in *opposition* to slavery. The leader stated that, ‘We knew that every inch of ground advanced by Fremont, in his struggle, inflicted a blow upon the abominable slave system.’⁷¹ But with the onset of more scientific and cultural racial discourse prior to the American Civil War the *Telegraph* had, along with *The Times*, given its full support to the Confederacy and had become one of the most pro-Southern of British newspapers.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 55.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 79

⁷¹ *Daily Telegraph* 24 Nov. 1856 p. 2

In the Midst of War

Although Sala was refused access to the South while in America, and never actually witnessed the workings of the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery, he was unable to contain his excitement when, via a telescope and a steep climb up Poney Mountain in Culpepper, Virginia, he was given the opportunity to witness General Robert E. Lees’ Confederate Army. Sala’s impressions were shattered when instead of the rich, fertile land he expected he saw a ‘howling wilderness,’ with ‘no trees, hedgerows, or gardens visible. All was incult and horrid – without form and void.’ (Vol 1 340)

Although in Dickens’s account of America from 1842 the ‘ruin of the land is a metonymy for the moral ruin created by slavery’ for Sala it became an example of the ruin that necessarily occurs when the slave system is removed.⁷² Sala thus inverts the free labour critique and states that, ‘The curse [slavery] has departed, and so have the blessings. The slaves are gone, and so is the land, and the fatness thereof.’ (Vol 1 340) Sala leaves his readers in no doubt who is to blame for all of this desolation; ‘The Federals have simply acted the part of a swarm of locusts, and devoured the land. They have rioted on the fatness thereof, and they have left nothing for those who are to come afterwards.’ (Vol 1 266-7) The disappointment he feels on finally witnessing his beloved South leads him to begin a full-frontal assault not only on the North, but also on the black population of North and South.

Sala insisted that only the South held the true ‘Anglo-Saxon stock’ and that the people of the North were ‘aliens who had sold themselves for certain sums of money.’ He stressed the ‘despotism’ of Northern politicians, and blamed the Northerners for

⁷² Patricia Ingham (ed) Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (London: Penguin, 1995) p. xxv.

‘unleashing a tyrannical and fratricidal war in the name of a specious piety and humanitarianism.’⁷³ He even refused to meet his literary heroes, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson, because of what he considered their ‘complacent acquiescence in a vulgar “scallwagg” despotism.’ (Vol 2 25) Warning his readership of the barbarous and uncultivated qualities of white Northerners, Sala used the type of language he would later reserve for the slave population; ‘You must beware of the Yankee,’ wrote Sala, ‘in an underground bar, “tight” and with a pistol or knife in his pocket, he is about the savagest creature to be found out of the country of the gorillas.’ (Vol 2 315) Sala denounced the treatment of free blacks in the North and claimed that, ‘of all the miserable and woe-begone objects I ever beheld out of a Russian gaol or an Italian lazar-house, the free negroes I have seen in New York are the wretchedest and most forlorn.’ (Vol 1 42) Echoing Carlyle’s gloom-laden fears on emancipation, Sala informs his readers that if we ‘turn them loose in the blessed land of freedom’ then we will ‘see how long it will be before they hopelessly deteriorate.’ (Vol 1 43) He ends his diatribe with a rejection of the North’s reasons for the cause of the war and the effect it would have on the black population; ‘You told me, you told us, you told England and Europe that yours was a righteous war and a holy crusade to emancipate the Black Man...instead you have been emancipating him into the grave by the thousand and the tens of thousands.’ (Vol 1 48)

Sala then totally disregarded claims of the maltreatment of slaves and in his strongest statement on the slave system, published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 2 January 1864 just after Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, he maintained that:

⁷³ Cited in, P.D. Edwards, *Dickens’s Young Men: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 109.

slavery is an evil, and to a certain extent a curse: but it is not a worse evil nor a worse curse than Prostitution, than Drunkenness, than Pauperism, than the tyranny of capital over labour, or than the greed for wealth and dominion...I believe that he [the black man] is and has been ten thousand times better off as a bond-servant in the Southern States of America than as a free negro in the North...I believe that he is naturally inferior to the white man in mental organisation...willing and obedient only when he fears the eye or the hand of his master...always as lecherous as a monkey and often as savage as a Gorilla...I believe that he must always have a 'boss' or a master of some sort over him; and I believe that in default of this master he will go to the Devil...as he has been going in his own country, Africa, for I don't know how many thousand years.(Vol 1 37-40)

The influence contemporary racial thought has had on Sala is not difficult to detect. He iterates Burton's paternalism when regarding slavery as the 'great civilizing agent of primitive races' and Carlyle's insistence on the inherent laziness of Africans. The notion of idleness had become a major current in racial discourse. Catherine Hall argues that one of the ways in which white middle-class males in this period were able to 'silence the disruptive relations of ethnicity' and to assert for themselves a secure and stable English identity was to 'define themselves in relation to others.'⁷⁴ Carlyle's belief in the morality of a Puritan work ethic would be reinforced if it could be shown

⁷⁴ Hall 1992 p. 206.

that Africans couldn't and wouldn't undertake hard labour. In a chapter of his autobiography entitled 'Lotus Eating', Sala pointed out that during the 1850s there did not exist 'a lazier and more dissolute young loafer' than himself.⁷⁵ By defending Carlyle's views on the idleness of Africans Sala was able to disassociate himself from his bohemian days and refashion himself as a tireless, industrious journalist. Sala also repeats the polygenist argument of Knox and Hunt on the hierarchy of race when he alludes to the 'natural inferiority' of African slaves compared to their white counterparts. By comparing Africans to monkeys and gorillas Sala is engaged in racially manipulating Darwin's ideas on evolution.

It wasn't only Sala's views on race and slavery that had significantly changed since his satires of slave-owners in 1850, his readers had also radically altered their opinions on the subject. In the letters section of the *Telegraph* there are no indications that readers found Sala's views offensive or biased. In fact the only letter printed in the *Telegraph* that referred to Sala's journey was in the 8 January 1864 edition and contained a rather innocuous protest at his unfavourable comparison of the morose and surly janitors at the House of Commons with the civil doorkeeper of the House of Congress. Nearly eighteen months before the spectacular 'war' over the Governor Eyre Affair was played out in the British press, Sala was engaged in persuading his readers of the inferiority of the black race in precisely the same terms that Carlyle and other members of the Eyre Defence Committee would use.

As a justification for his views Sala claimed in an introductory chapter of *My Diary in America in the Midst of War* that his support for the slave system stemmed from

⁷⁵ G.A. Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* (London: Cassell & Co., 1895) p. 311

purely personal reasons. Like Mowbray Morris of the *Times*, Sala's grandfather had been a West Indian slave-owner and the advent of abolition there had meant that, despite compensation, his family had incurred financial difficulty as a result. P. D Edwards speculates on whether Sala's forthright opinions were really best explained as 'a gesture of piety to his mother's memory.'⁷⁶ It seems more likely that Sala had been swept up by the climate of increased racial prejudice and that he was once again articulating his readers' prejudices and providing them with the sensational views of race and slavery that they desired.

Sala's defence of his personal opinions was designed as a manifesto for his own romanticised image of the Special Correspondent. He asked his readers, 'Should a strong man be ashamed to avow that his Book is Himself, and that in whatsoever he writes that treats of individual thought or individual opinion, he must be, to a great extent, his own hero?' (Vol 1 14) But as support for the South escalated in Britain it became clear that if these were Sala's personal opinions then they were shared by his *Telegraph* readership. At the height of their popularity, there were over 250,000 readers of Sala's letters. If Sala's views were representative it suggests an alarming retreat from the emancipationist zeal of the 1830s, and the anti-slavery sentiments of Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe in the 1840s and 1850s. Did Sala change attitudes or merely reflect existing prejudices that were deepened by the Civil War? Although support for the Confederacy was strong in Britain, scholars have tended to put this down to conservatives' dislike of American democracy and liberals' enthusiasm for national liberation causes rather than to a resurgence of support for slavery.⁷⁷ But how

⁷⁶ P.D. Edwards (1997) p. 110.

⁷⁷ For liberal support for the Confederacy see, Richard Shannon, *Gladstone* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982) For Tory support see Ephraim Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*

else do we account for the lack of reaction to Sala's pro-slavery outbursts from his *Telegraph* readers? It seems from readers' non-reactions to Sala's opinions that any criticism of England in the *Telegraph*, no matter how puerile, was subject to censure, while the United States could be damned to impunity in a climate of collective hysteria, exaggeration and sensationalism.

When Sala's extreme views appeared in the American press there arose 'a howl of rage which did not die down until long after his departure.'⁷⁸ The newspapers variously dubbed Sala a 'bloated miscreant,' a 'fat cockney,' a 'venal hack', a 'Secesh spy,' and 'the enemy of the country and deserving of a lynching.'⁷⁹ The British press was less severe towards Sala; even the staunchly pro-Union reviewers praised the quality of his writing while unsurprisingly disagreeing with his views on slavery. Reviewing Sala's book for the Methodist organ, the *London Quarterly Review*, the anti-slavery campaigner and ex-Indian missionary William Arthur felt that 'he [Sala] soon threw off the vain semblance [of partiality], and became the open and extreme partisan of the South.' Arthur points out that W.H. Russell, to whom Sala dedicates his American book, had just inserted in his most recent publication, *Canada*, the caveat that, 'Slavery is to me truly detestable; the more I saw of it, the less I liked it.' But Arthur also admits that 'in the two handsome volumes before us there is much to amuse; and we do not doubt but that they will have a wide circle of readers. There is, in fact, scarcely a dull page in them; and of how few books can this be said!'⁸⁰ The anonymous reviewer for the *Illustrated London News*, to which Sala was himself a contributor, wrote that 'One is pained at Mr. Sala's views on the negro question; but,

(New York: Russell, 1958). For an excellent overview on both positions see, R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts; Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 2001).

⁷⁸ Ralph Straus, *Sala: The Portrait of an Eminent Victorian* (London: Constable & Co. 1942) p. 173

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p. 173.

⁸⁰ *London Quarterly Review* 24:47 (Apr: 1865) 147-71.

on the whole, one is inclined to look upon his picture as a faithful representation of matters as they appeared to a writer who was far from a Northern sympathiser; who was on the lookout for literary capital, and who was expected to make of his capital the most that he possibly could.’⁸¹ We can observe from these exchanges that Sala’s views on race and slavery were not completely representative. His opponents, however, were prepared to forgive his opinions. They realized the intensity of the political climate Sala was operating in and the way in which he sensationalised his reports. What they perhaps failed to consider was the extent of the influence Sala’s letters had on his middle-class readership. This influence would be played out shortly after Sala’s return against the backdrop of a Jamaican uprising. But first there was the small matter of a trip to Africa.

Arabs and Africans

When Sala realised that Emperor Napoleon III would visit the interior of Algeria and that he was ‘desirous of learning the condition and wants of the autochthonic population’ Sala ironically cries to his friends for help; ‘Captain Burton and the Anthropological Society, come to my aid.’ (114) Although Burton and his colleagues in the Anthropological society were undertaking cutting edge field research in Africa, they were also promulgating racist and ethnocentric ideas of the African race. Sala would extend his increasingly racist comments on black African-Americans to the Arab, Berber and African populations of Algeria. Initially at least, Sala tries to paint a cheerful, optimistic picture of racial relations in Algeria. ‘The French have not the slightest prejudice against the negro on account of his ebony skin,’ says Sala. Sala

⁸¹ *Illustrated London News* 11 Feb 1865

informs us that ‘The French have a partiality for negroes, and treat them with a sort of humorous kindness.’ (198) But in terms of what the French plan to do to the Arabs in the future, Sala rather naively believes that ‘the French are actuated by no wish more earnest than to deal justly and generously with the Arabs and to live in harmony with them.’ (351) In terms of the hierarchy of race, we learn that the Bedouins ‘contrast most favourably with the sedentary natives.’ (183) Algerian Jews are ‘the handsomest people, both in face and figure, in all Algeria.’ (308) Arabs ‘are never to be confounded with niggers’ (396) and compare favourably with Oriental races because they have ‘...no straight lank locks, high cheek-bones, pig’s eyes, simpering faces as Chinamen and Japanese have, no liver-hued, flaccid-muscled, Hindoo forms do you find here. They are men – Adam-like men, stalwart, and tall, and beautiful – fit to marry Eves, and beget Abels, and Cains too, sometimes.’ (396) The preservation and enrichment of the Jewish race and the beauty of the Arabs is set in stark contrast, as the narrative continues, to the plight of the Africans in Algeria.

Sala echoed his pronouncements on the inherent laziness of this race who are doomed to ‘sleep in the sun’ only waking up to replenish themselves with ‘abundant pumpkin’ or ‘plenteous plantains.’ (265) Commenting on the large number of freed slaves in Algeria, emancipated in 1848 by the Provisional Government, Sala describes how happy and contented they were before this and how ‘Since the blessed Act of enfranchisement, my military medical authority hints, our black brothers have turned thieves, loafers, and sorcerers – practising the abominable rites of obeah with the cheerful independence of freemen.’ (115) But Sala contradicts this image of manically possessed black magic worship by stating that ‘religion of any kind to a negro means a drum, and some money to buy rum with. That faith is to him the most

orthodox which affords him the greatest opportunity for kicking up a shindy, and howling forth his savage anthems.’(265)

This supposed lack of faith in the negro is, in turn, contrasted with the unassailability of the Muslim religion. ‘Wild, savage, vindictive and debauched, no reasonable persons can deny that the Arabs are eminently religious.’ (392) Sala felt that the only way in which the Arabs of Algeria could be ‘civilised’, the only way in which they could successfully assimilate with the French would be ‘the destruction of the Mahometan religion.’(352) He cites as evidence for this, and by doing so we can understand to what extent his personal views on imperialism and race have changed, the fact that ‘we have not been able to exterminate the Kaffirs. We have failed either to convert or to kill off the New Zealanders....three centuries and a half of Spanish administration, cruelty and oppression in Mexico have failed to extirpate the Indians there...and yet the Mexican Indians are infinitely inferior both morally and physically to the Arabs of Algeria.’(352)

What is Sala’s solution, then, to the ubiquity of the Muslim religion? Amazingly enough, his solution is bound up with his anti-Catholicism, ‘the stern simplicity of the Protestant ritual might find more favour in the eyes of the Moslems than the gaudy and meretricious ceremonial of Romanism.’(391) He suggests that the Arabs and the French could learn from the English way of doing things;

Could anything be done to civilise the Arabs from an English point of view – I mean by way of tracts, Sunday schools, tight-lacing, police reports, mothers’ meetings, penny readings, district visiting,

the cane savings banks, working men's clubs, lending libraries... The effort is worth making, at all events. (391)

On his return home from Algeria Sala was met with the first rumblings of discontent over the Governor Eyre Affair. On 11 October 1865 a crowd of black settlers, led by the Baptist preacher Paul Bogle, protested before the court house of Morant Bay in Jamaica over the harsh sentences imposed by local magistrates to black squatters. When the local militia fired into the crowd, killing seven protestors, Bogle and his followers set fire to the court house murdering eighteen members of the militia. The Governor of Kingston, Edward John Eyre, ordered troops to Morant Bay, decreed martial law, and executed 439 black Jamaicans, while 600 were flogged and 1,000 houses burned to the ground. George William Gordon, a member of the Jamaican House of Assembly and illegitimate son of a white planter by a slave-woman, had been one of the few white members of the House of Assembly to champion Bogle's cause. Eyre summarily charged him with treason and as Ian Thomson states 'hanged him from the surviving arch of the charred Morant Bay Courthouse.'⁸² Douglas A. Lorimer states that 'Following fast on the heels of the American Civil War, the Governor Eyre controversy prolonged the mid-Victorian debate about the Negro,' and battle lines began to be drawn in England.⁸³ Patrick Brantlinger notes that Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Henry Kingsley, John Ruskin, and Alfred Tennyson all supported the Governor Eyre Defense Committee, they felt that Eyre was the hero not the villain of the Jamaica Rebellion of 1865. Sala would certainly have supported them and opposed J.S. Mill, T.H. Huxley, Charles Darwin, Tom Hughes, and other liberal intellectuals who set up the Jamaica Committee and wanted the government to

⁸² Ian Thomson, *The Dead Yard: Tales of Modern Jamaica* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009) p. 139

⁸³ Lorimer (1978) p. 179.

prosecute Eyre for his over-zealous handling of events in Morant Bay.⁸⁴ Adam Roberts notes that Alfred Tennyson's response to the setting up of the Jamaica Committee was not untypical, 'we are too tender to savages; we are more tender to a black man than to ourselves. Niggers are tigers, niggers are tigers.'⁸⁵ Sympathy for Eyre, notes Hall, was 'linked into the growing fears amongst the middle class of working-class activity around the issue of reform.'⁸⁶

Likewise, in the midst of rising reform agitation, radicals and members of the working class were concerned that Tories would treat them as Governor Eyre had treated the Jamaican blacks. But in a leader in the *Daily Telegraph* from 14 November 1865, possibly written by Sala, the black population are portrayed as child-like savages and the lives and honour of English men and women is feared for.⁸⁷ Tied in with Sala's growing racism was his movement away from radicalism and concern for the working class and for the oppressed, and his adoption of more conservative views.

The ultimate failure of the Jamaica Committee, although Eyre was not reinstated he did not stand trial for any of the charges brought against him and received a pension in 1873, ushered in what Catherine Hall describes as 'a new hegemony.'⁸⁸ Whereas in 1849 Carlyle's racial proclamations had been of an isolated nature, in 1866 he was fully backed by this growing hegemony, a conservative movement that would go on to construct 'a new popular imperialism in the decades to follow.'⁸⁹ J.S. Mill was

⁸⁴ Brantlinger (1988) pp. 28-9

⁸⁵ cited in, Adam Roberts, *Victorian Culture and Society* (London: Arnold, 2003) p. 182.

⁸⁶ Hall (1992) p. 277

⁸⁷ Lorimer (1978) p. 183. The Governor Eyre controversy also reflected political tensions back home; in the midst of rising reform agitation, radicals and members of the working class were concerned that Tories would treat them as Governor Eyre had treated the Jamaicans.

⁸⁸ Hall (1992) p. 286.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 286.

convinced that the Jamaica Committee ultimately failed because of its lack of middle-class support and Sala's *Telegraph* readership would certainly have been guilty of this charge. In the aftermath of the Eyre Affair Carlyle's influence could be judged as 'elevating and sustaining the tone of the nation in a conservative, ethnocentric and racist conception of Englishness.'⁹⁰ As we shall see, Sala would increasingly adopt this tone on his next American visit.

European Oppression

But whereas French colonial oppression of Algeria and English domination over Jamaica was considered by Sala to be vital for progress for those nations, the Austrian oppression of Italy came in for some of his heaviest criticism. Sala couched his criticism in the contemporary American situation, he ironically stated that 'For the Austrians, politically, I have an affection about as passionate as that which Mr. Thaddeus Stephens (sic) might be supposed to entertain for Mr. Andrew Johnson.'¹³⁵ Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868) was one of the prime leaders of the Radical Republicans during the Civil War, fighting for the abolition of slavery, a position that Sala has clearly argued against in his American account. Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) became 17th President of America after Lincoln's assassination, presiding over the Reconstruction era and, unlike Stevens, sympathetic to the white South.

When Victor Emmanuel II of Savoy had been crowned King of Italy on 17 March 1861, his reign did not include control of Venetia and Lazio. The situation of the

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 288-9.

Irredente created continual tension throughout the 1860s. The growing differences between Austria, rulers of these regions, and Prussia's predominance in Germany turned into open war in 1866, providing Italy with the opportunity to regain control of Venice. On 8 April 1866 the Italian government, through the mediation of Napoleon III, signed a military alliance with Prussia. Prussia began hostilities on June 16 1866 by attacking several German principates allied with Austria. Three days later Italy declared war with Austria and Sala arrived in Venice. He was immediately dispatched once again, this time the message read, 'Garibaldi in the Tyrol in force; join him. Letters to him waiting Milan.'⁹¹ Sala expunged his meeting with Garibaldi from the book of his Italian travels, *Rome and Venice: With Other Wanderings in Italy 1866-7*, along with any descriptions of the military hostilities he witnessed. As we have seen, even from Sala's first work abroad during war, when writing 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Musketry' in Paris for Dickens in 1851, through to the American Civil War, Sala was always, despite his own frustrations at the role more a sideline commentator than a man of action. Sala's reason for omitting his time spent with Garibaldi was simply that 'I am not a military critic'. He maintained that if he did embark on military commentary he would offend 'both to form and to foundation...Italians and Austrians.'⁽⁸⁵⁾ Sala accompanied Garibaldi and his red-shirts through two successful battles and an unsuccessful one before news reached them that the Prussians had routed the Austrians at Koniggratz and Italy, instructed by Napoleon III, was to make peace with the Kaiser. In return, Italy was to regain Venice but Rome and the Papal State were still to be kept in Austrian possession. Garibaldi was enraged with the deal, particularly the way in which Venice was contemptuously ceded by the Austrians not directly to the Italians but through the mediation of the

⁹¹ Sala (1895) Vol. II p. 94

French Emperor. He was also sorely vexed by Napoleon III's acquisition of Nice and Savoy and referred to the deal as a '*merciminio*' or 'vile, illicit and contraband transaction.'⁹² Sala's personal feelings were that the French influence in Italy was a positive force, and he displays his own growing conservatism when he explains that the French established a '*mezzo termine*' – between, 'the peril of a return to the stupid and cruel despotism of the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons on one hand, and, on the other, the equally dismal danger of red Republicanism.'⁽⁷⁾ He also refers to Daniel Manin as his 'beau ideal of a patriotic Italian' because he was 'by no means an advanced democrat and was an uncompromising advocate of a strong government.'

(6)

Arriving in Milan, on his way to Peschiera then Venice, Sala is struck by the beauty of the frescoes on display in the railway station. Of particular interest to Sala is a noble allegory of Venice which portrays 'a Turk, a Jew and a Negro' all paying homage to the Queen of the Adriatic. Sala asks 'when is the day of her deliverance to come.'⁽³³⁾ Sala then contrasts this beautiful mural with the functional but undesirable station at Peschiera on the Austro-Veneto frontier. Sala considers it to be, along with Fenchurch-street and Jersey City railway stations, 'the most abominable railway station with which in the course of my wanderings about this sublunary globe I have ever met.'⁽³⁴⁾ He describes the refreshment room 'as regards to its fare and cleanliness, about on a par with a Hottentot kraal.'⁽³⁴⁾ Sala is conducting his own form of allegory here, as he compares Italian glory with Austrian commonplace. He compares the Austrians' legacy with that of another Italian oppressor, Napoleon I. Predictably, given that Napoleon was one of his heroes, Sala comes down in favour of

⁹² *ibid.* p. 104

Napoleon. He says that while the Austrians will leave behind them only fortresses and barracks Napoleon helped construct roads, bridges, hospitals, quays and theatres. This lack of enterprise on behalf of the Austrians has left their occupation redundant. He declares that ‘while on the Italian side of the frontier traces of energy, enterprise, and go-aheadism meet you at every step, the posts no sooner begin to be striped with the Austrian colours than you find inertia, stagnation and neglect.’ (39)

The Austrian oppression of Italy becomes representative of degeneracy and decline, and on entering the Veneto Sala observes that ‘Austrians have turned half this luxuriant region into a howling wilderness.’ (131) This ironically contrasts with the way Sala witnessed a similar howling wilderness in Virginia. On that occasion it became for Sala an example of the ruin that occurs when the slave system is removed, but in the Veneto it is the Austrian’s role as oppressors or slave-masters that has caused the desolation. On entering Venice this desolation continues, Sala describes the city as being ‘as empty as Napoleon’s grave at St. Helena. She is a despoiled sepulchre, desolate, deserted and despairing.’ (41) Sala feels that the Venetians have been ‘bullied, outraged and oppressed’ by the Austrians. (212) He can hardly suppress his glee when Venice is finally handed back to the Italians, ‘the scene on the Grand Canal was astounding’ and ‘dulled and hardened as I have been to shows and sights all over the world – I saw it, and felt inclined to cry.’ (223) The oppression of the Italians has become little more than slavery and in Sala’s hierarchy of slavery, the white slavery of Austria is comparable to the Russian slavery he witnessed in 1856, while black slavery in America and Algeria is simply the ‘lot’ of the black man, destined to be forever enslaved by his ‘betters.’ Sala conflates these notions of hierarchy in the following statement;

The Austrians feel for the Italians the mingled anger and scorn which a South-Carolinian planter might feel were he to find himself elbowed on the side-walk, and sued in the courts of law, by the 'buck-nigger' whom he bought for so many dollars from the auction-block. The Italians feel for the Austrians the deep and vindictive loathing with which an emancipated New Orleans quadroon might regard the quondam master who used to send him, for a trifling fault, to the whipping-house. (120)

Although hopeful for the future of a unified Italian nation, Sala believes the country will need help in order to extricate itself from bondage; 'I do say that a nation which has been more or less enslaved and held captive to the foreign bow and spear for 1500 years has some need of guidance and protection ere she sets entirely up for herself as a great European power.' (10) Sala criticises those quick to scorn the Italian national character without realising the extent of Austrian domination; 'There are those who sneer at the Italian people because they are mendacious, parsimonious and inhospitable; but these critics forget that centuries of slavery are sure to produce the first of the vices of slavery, untruth, and that the people who have been so long accustomed to see their little all wrested from them in ruinous imposts and forced loans, are reluctant to give, voluntarily, that which was habitually extorted from them by force.' (267-8) Sala's inability to detect the awful truths lying behind the American slave system is sharply contrasted with the way in which he denounced the oppressive nature of white slavery in Russia and Italy.

America Revisited

Unsurprisingly, given the North's victory and his reception by the press, Sala remarked in an article for *Belgravia* magazine in 1868 that 'I dare not return to America.'⁹³ But in 1879 he was once again commissioned by the *Telegraph* to report on American affairs. Unlike W.H. Russell, whose return twenty years after the Civil War had seen him 'grow more opinionated than he had ever been,' Sala had changed his stance so appreciably that he was able to beg forgiveness for taking what he now considered as the wrong side by supporting the South and that he had been 'very prejudiced, very conceited, and very ignorant' for doing so.⁹⁴ The resulting letters were published in 1882 as *America Revisited*. But as the cover indicates, with its caricatured black 'sambo' figures who appear unable to resist fidgeting and inanely grinning while waiting to be introduced to Sala, who is portrayed as the archetypal middle-class English gentleman, there were no signs that Sala's racial views had similarly altered. (See fig. 9)

⁹³ G.A. Sala 'The Great Circumbendius' *Belgravia* 6 (1868: Oct) 559-574.

⁹⁴ Richard L. Rapson, *Britons View America; Travel Commentary, 1860-1935* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971) p. 251.



Fig. 9 Front cover of *America Revisited* (1882) by G.A. Sala

This time his travels across America encompassed the Deep South, the Mid-West and the Far-West and while observing segregation on a Pullman train from Baltimore to Washington, Sala naively suggests that, ‘It did not appear to me that they were in any manner coerced into thus segregating themselves from their white brothers and sisters. They seemed to keep themselves apart as much from choice as from custom.’ (151) In Washington he remarks on how ‘the black man...seemed to be doing remarkably well.’ (Vol 1 201) Sala’s affections still obviously rested with the South despite his

apology for backing the Confederacy during the war. On arriving in Richmond he states that, 'It is a Genial City; that is enough for me; and in the whole course of my travels I have not met with a more courteous, a kindlier, or a more simple-hearted people than I have met with here.' (Vol 1 251) In a letter to his friend Mrs Skirrow from 25 Jan 1880 Sala describes the almost royal reception he and his wife received in the South: 'The Southern ladies have been specially kind to my wife, and the Governor of Virginia got up a party in her honour. All the old surviving Confederate generals have been to see us and I have been made much of in the Senates and Legislative Chambers of Virginia, Georgia and Louisiana.'⁹⁵ But in Virginia Sala moans about the black 'cross-road loungers' he encounters and gives the impression that under the slave-system these types of loafers did not exist. Although he details their ragged clothing and hungry and emaciated look, he states that, 'The negroes are probably much better off than they look, from a sumptuary point of view, and in fact I fail to see that they have very much to complain of.' (Vol 1 240-1)

Visiting the Deep South at the tail end of the Reconstruction Era, Sala witnessed free slaves in positions of authority in the New Orleans House of Representatives. While those of a fairer skin, the 'mulattos,' are seen by Sala as possessing reasonable intelligence, the 'true-blooded negro' was, Sala believed, completely out of his depth. Sala seemed to be suggesting that a return to slavery, where he believed miscegenation had proliferated, would be desirable and lead to a diluting of the unwanted 'true-blooded negro.' But in the current climate he notes that miscegenation 'is simply a social impossibility' due to the proliferation of lynching. (Vol 2 55) First coined in 1864, the term 'miscegenation' or inter-racial sex was, Robert Young

⁹⁵ Letter from Sala to Mrs Skirrow 25 Jan 1880 Sala Papers Box 6 Beinecke Library

suggests, 'at the heart of Victorian race theory.'⁹⁶ Polygenists claimed that descendants of these unions quickly displayed signs of degeneration but the proliferation of mixed-race offspring in the American South also hinted at the erotic 'power relation between slave-owner and slave.'⁹⁷ Sala's desire for more inter-racial mixing demonstrates some of the muddled thinking of nineteenth-century notions of what Young terms 'hybridity.' While his references to the 'picturesque and fantastic negresses'(Vol 2 93) at the Mardi Gras hint at the disgust and desire underpinning colonial relations, Sala's argument that slavery actually promoted better and closer relations between blacks and whites was a common Southern justification of slavery before the war. Towards the end of the century the subject of 'hybridity' would become a common theme in imperial discourse, where the 'half-breed' or product of miscegenation is 'a symbolic and physical threat to empire and race.'⁹⁸

Commenting on the New Orleans legislator's lack of imagination and independent thought, Sala gives them a back-handed compliment when he states that, 'as regards Parliamentary procedure, the coloured members are very often not only on a par with, but superior to, their white colleagues.'(Vol 2 54) He summarises his position on these law-makers when he says, 'Our dark brother as a legislator must...be considered as in an infantile condition' (Vol 2 54). Sala's attitude towards the free slave population in the South is summed up when he states that: 'The negro is, from many different aspects, a bad job; but the Southerners are trying hard to make the best of him.'(Vol 1 235) On Dickens's second visit to America in 1868 he held similar views. Dickens commented that 'the melancholy absurdity of giving these people votes, at any rate at present, would glare out of every roll of their eyes, chuckle in their mouths,

⁹⁶ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 102.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 152.

⁹⁸ H.L. Machow, 'The half-breed as Gothic unnatural' in West (1996) p. 109.

and bump in their heads.’⁹⁹ We can glean from these pronouncements that the cultural and scientific shift in racial attitudes in the 1850s, followed by the American Civil War and the Governor Eyre Affair in the 1860s, allied with the new spirit of colonialism that came with imperial aspirations in the 1870s, meant that representative commentators for the middle class like Dickens and Sala, had now come to take for granted the notion that white Europeans were an incontrovertibly superior race.

Sala’s triumphant return in 1879, he was feted in the South wherever he went, but even in New York he was accepted with no opprobrium and even some affection, can be attributed to a number of reasons. Sala had shown his affection for American humour by his prominence in bringing to the British public’s attention the wit of Artemus Ward and by compiling an anthology of American humorists entitled *Yankee Drolleries* (1866). The American journalists and newspapermen had appreciated this. More importantly, there had been a softening of stance by Americans towards their British observers after the Civil War. The time when a Dickens or a Sala could cause such press indignation had gradually receded. Americans were more confident in themselves, the British realised America was on its way to becoming a great superpower, and those Britons who did continue to criticise America, like Sala’s nemesis Matthew Arnold who went on the obligatory lecture tour in 1882, were treated with disdain and held up as figures of fun rather than apostates who could disrupt the democracy. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold had characterised Americans as being ‘just ourselves, with the Barbarians quite left out and the

⁹⁹ Ingham (1995) p. xxvi.

Populace nearly.’¹⁰⁰ In other words Americans were all Philistines, hardly a flattering portrayal of the country.

Richard L. Rapson notes that Americans’ reaction to Arnold’s lecture tour differed from the treatment given to Sala and Dickens; ‘Arnold was laughed at, abused, satirized, mocked, reduced to insignificance...instead of leaving Americans with lasting moral lessons and injured egos, he provided them with an ever-amusing stereotype.’¹⁰¹ The Americans were no longer so sensitive to Old World criticism and had no intention of ‘undergoing another Dickens trauma.’¹⁰² Indeed it could be said that both Americans and British had considerably shifted in their attitudes towards one another.

This change was cemented in 1902, when the crusading British journalist and pioneer of New Journalism, W.T. Stead, wrote his *The Americanization of the World, or the Trend of the Twentieth Century*. In the book he ‘expressed no dismay at the world-wide spread of American ways of doing things, but celebrated it with full gusto.’¹⁰³ Stead asked his fellow countrymen to embrace the American way of life and to ‘forge powerful British-American ties.’¹⁰⁴ It could be argued that Stead set in motion the ‘special relationship’ between the two countries. Given that the New Journalism was heavily influenced by Sala’s work for the *Telegraph*, Sala can also be credited for strengthening the ties between Britain and America. He was certainly responsible, as we have seen, for a shift in attitude towards race and slavery during

¹⁰⁰ Rapson (1971) p. 13.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* pp. 12-13.

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p. 255.

see also Laurel Brake’s paper ‘W.T. Stead and the Americanization of the World’ *Idea of America in the Nineteenth Century* conference (Senate House, University of London) 28/6/08.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 255

and after the Civil War. Whether Sala's fluctuating opinions were opportunism, a product of the cultural climate or simply passionate conviction is more difficult to ascertain. What we do know, however, are Sala's final words on America and Americans. At the conclusion of his second visit in 1879 he stated simply that it was, 'a wonderful country and a wonderful people.' (Vol 2 326) Given all the intense mental and physical battles that had been fought since Sala's first representation of Americans in 1850, it is hard to think of a blander sentiment with which to leave his readers.

Topsyturvydom

On arrival in Australia on 12 March 1885, Sala attended a mayoral reception in Sydney Town Hall in which he announced the intention of his visit; 'I want to speak to the 300,000 people who read the *Daily Telegraph* every day about Australia and tell them what the country is like, and what the Australians want.'¹⁰⁵ Sala's commitment to telling the truth about a country was by now a familiar aspect of his travel writing and would lead to a more political and factual discussion of the country than some of his previous accounts. Sala had departed for America on Boxing Day 1884 and spent some weeks there before going on to Australia. On the boat journey he seemed particularly interested in the relationship between the Chinese and the Australians, especially coming from San Francisco where he had witnessed the 'hoodlum' element and their prejudice against the Chinese race. On board ship he notices that the Chinese crew blatantly smoke opium and realises that the white Sydney dockworkers are far from happy with the Chinese labour situation; 'strong

¹⁰⁵ cited in Robert Dingley, (ed.) *The Land of the Golden Fleece* (Canberra: Mulini Press, 1995) p. xi

agitation among Sydney trade-unions connected with shipping against the employment of coloured hands on board...I suppose that the white union men of Sydney will eventually get the best of the controversy.’(16) Sala’s own prejudices come to the fore when he claims that ‘John Chinaman’s picturesqueness is apt to become, after a time, monotonous, and then to cloy, to satiate, and at length to revolt.’(8) Describing the Chinese New Year celebrations Sala describes how ‘Li Hung Chang was having a ‘high old time of it’, Quang Choo Loo was entertaining all his wife’s relations and Go Bang Wum was giving a banquet...’(9) There is a sense of full circle in Sala’s narrative here, and we are reminded of his first printed article for the *Family Herald* back in 1845 and the story of the Chinaman Choo Lew Kwang. But whereas there had been humour and a certain respect shown for the Chinese in Sala’s first published work, in 1885 there is cynicism and disrespect. He is able to gauge the Australian aversion to the Chinese and exploits this distaste to satisfy his readers;

from the Brotherhood of nations, so far as the scheme of policy extends, the Yellow Man is excluded. He is industrious, he is ingenious, he is willing, cheerful, and docile; but his industry, ingenuity and docility have made him no more popular here than they have in California...But, as a rule, the Chinaman at the Antipodes is abject, squalid and degraded – not actively persecuted and hated hither and thither by the pigtail, as it is his wretched lot to be by the ‘hoodlums’ in San Francisco; but still an object of contempt, aversion and suspicion. (128)

Sala had already summarised his position on the Chinese and the African in 1872 in his book *Under The Sun*; ‘he whose forefathers may have been over-civilized some thousands of years ago, and the negro, who seems never to have been civilized at all since the world began, are about the most hopelessly impracticable beings ever created to the curse and despair of philanthropists and missionaries.’¹⁰⁶

On his tour of Australasia Sala lectured in the capital cities of the colonies and the four main towns of New Zealand and also spent seven weeks touring the small towns of Queensland and New South Wales. His lectures began with titles like ‘Two Princes of the Pen; Dickens and Thackeray,’ ‘Shows and Pageants,’ ‘Costume, Culture and Cookery’ and ‘Wars, Revolutions and Tumults.’ As the titles suggest, they were reflections and recollections of Sala’s personal observations over the duration of his career, fitting given that this trip was to be possibly his last as a ‘Special.’ But although the initial demand was high, his first Melbourne lecture made £300, his second £80 and the third only £20. Although there were criticisms of his deficient lecturing style, his inability to speak ‘extempore’ and his inaudible voice, Judy McKenzie cites the content of the lectures as being Sala’s main problem. She states that, ‘this is understandable since the titles alone of his lectures reveal them essentially to comprise an elegy for a dying age.’¹⁰⁷ The Australians, says McKenzie, were more in the mood of ‘a young country longing to join the fray’ than they were for celebrating past achievements.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ G.A. Sala, *Under the Sun: Essays Mainly Written in Hot Countries* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1886) p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Judy McKenzie (1992) p. 317

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p. 317

The air of jingoism that suffused Sala's visit was occasioned by the 'emotionally-charged departure of a public-funded contingent of New South Wales troops to the Sudan, to help England avenge the death of Colonel Gordon at Khartoum; the first colonial force to fight under the Union Jack.'¹⁰⁹ Despite their returning home after only a few months, the mood of jingoism resurfaced with the apprehension of the Russian threat, the perception that the fight over India between Russia and England would soon commence, and that Australia would be threatened by the Russian fleet moving into the South Pacific from its naval base at Vladivostok.¹¹⁰ Sala commented in the *Telegraph* on his arrival back in England that 'to the Australian mind the Russians are always coming. They dread not the raging heat of the sun, it is the Muscovite who is the only Antipodean 'bogy.'¹¹¹ There was also some expectation that Sala would deliver his lectures in a similar spirit as his predecessor, Archibald Forbes, who had made the most in his Australian lectures of his experiences working for the London *Daily News* in the 1879 Afghan War, when he had ridden from the field of victory at Ulundi through enemy territory in order to deposit his copy at the telegraph office 110 miles away. As McKenzie notes 'Forbes's lectures had capitalised on graphic descriptions of actual battles', whereas 'Sala's style was much more generalised, with an intelligent concentration on historical cause and effect.'¹¹²

Sala was still content to leave the war reportage to men like W.H. Russell and Forbes, while he 'generalised' and observed on people and manners. But facing a tide of national pride and impatience, Sala quickly introduced his lecture, 'Russia: What She Is and What She Means' to Melbourne audiences, with some success. No jingoist

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 318

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 318

¹¹¹ *Daily Telegraph* Sep 1 1886 p. 7

¹¹² McKenzie (1992) pp. 318-9

himself, and throughout his life resolutely anti-war, Sala was still able to adapt to his audience's requirements. Although there are no written remains from his lectures, we can glean part of the Russian lecture from the *New Zealand Herald*;

[Sala] began by describing the occasion of his first visit to Russia, just after the Crimean War...He described the Russian peasant, the droschky driver, the noble, and other types of Russian society...He remarked that Peter the Great built St. Petersburg because, as he said, he 'wanted to see a window into Europe,' and now Russia appears to want a window to see into Europe. Mr. Sala pointed out the different elements in Russian society, and showed the great danger from the powerful influence exerted by the military class.¹¹³

We can see from this tantalising extract that Sala was able to combine his own past personal experiences from his first trip as a 'Special', with that of the present Australian desire for information on Russia. Sala is in his own way endorsing the jingoism apparent everywhere in Australia and New Zealand with his warnings on the military threat to everyday life in the country. Even after Gladstone had successfully neutralised the Russian threat with diplomacy and negotiation, Sala would continue to supply his 'Russian' lecture to his eager audience.

In an article for *Cornhill Magazine* from 1866, Catherine Helen Spence described her impressions of England having lived in Australia since 1839. She noted that 'In England you have enormous wealth side by side with great want. In Australia labour

¹¹³ cited in *Illustrated London News* 31 Oct. 1885 p. 5

and the rewards of labour are more equally divided. With you the suffrage is limited, with us it is all but universal.’¹¹⁴ Sala would appreciate her impressions and he uses the trope of ‘topsyturvydom,’ a suitably Dickensian expression that summed up his antipodean position but also his perception of the confused sentiments of the Australians. As Judy McKenzie states, Sala found it ‘very hard to reconcile the extremely egalitarian sensibility of the individual with such rampant public support for imperialism.’¹¹⁵

Reiterating Australians’ support for the British Monarchy and their democratic leanings, Sala wrote that, ‘My readers at home cannot be too often nor too proudly told that the Australians are loyal to the backbone, and that they hold Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal family in the most enthusiastic affection and veneration.’ (46) He goes on to compare their political system with that of America, ‘Otherwise their political constitution is as purely democratic as the constitutions of the United States, and their social manners are even more democratic than those of the Americans. Politically they already enjoy all the franchises for which the extreme Radicals at home are clamouring.’ (46) These franchises included the lack of an Established church, no law of primogeniture, no law of entail; but there was secular education which was both compulsory and gratuitous. In America, Sala found neither ‘wigs, nor gowns, nor chains of office, nor academic hoods.’ (47) But while the Australians enjoyed these symbols of British rule and love ‘the ceremonial usages of the old country’ they were ‘in their institutions and manners, as fully and frankly democratic as the Republican Americans.’ (47) But whereas in America they will ‘dote on you if you are a Lord, not so in Australia. The people will care a great deal more about you

¹¹⁴ Catherine Helen Spence ‘An Australian’s Impressions of England’ in Johnston and Anderson (2005) p. 51

¹¹⁵ McKenzie (1992) p. 319

if you are a handy man, able to use an adze or chisel.’ (48) Although America has democratic pretensions Sala feels that, ‘it is not until you come to Australia that you find a community purely democratic both in its social and its political characteristics.’ (48) In fact, suggests Sala, ‘The next emulator of the fame of Alexis de Tocqueville should come not to the United States but to Australia, if he wishes to study Democracy in ‘full blast’, to study it, I mean, in its social as well as its political aspect.’ (84)

We can deduce from these remarks that Sala is satisfied with the purity of the democracy on display in Australia, but somewhat confused with their adoration for the monarchy and their dislike for servants. Why can’t they keep more domestic servants? asks Sala before suggesting that Australia is:

virtually destitute of a servile class...the Australian-born girl does not like domestic service...the idea of servitude is repugnant to her...because this is a country where the people, thoroughly loyal as they are to the Throne and Constitution, are in all respects radically democratic and will not tolerate the idea of a servile class. It is easy enough to sneer at hair powder, plush, shoulder-knots, and so forth; yet in democratic America the rich man can obtain as many footmen as ever he chooses. There is the Negro. To the Australian mind the idea of coloured labour is utterly abhorrent. (45)

This ‘topsyturvydom’ towards race allows Sala to extract the essential difference between America and Australia. Although both countries could accept publicans,

journalists or even shopkeepers rising to political positions, Australians can never accept a servile class while American negro servants are ubiquitous in that country. Sala says, 'Democracy in America is tempered by the presence of a prodigiously numerous servile class – the negroes. They are politically free; but their lot in life is to serve the white man, and capital servants do they make.' (85) In this sentence we can understand all the confusion behind Sala's thinking on African-Americans in America. He knows there is something suspect about their filling these menial positions but accedes to the argument that they make great servants. Sala's racial pronouncements concerning the inhabitants of Australasia would be similarly confused.

On passing through the Samoan Islands on his way to Sydney Sala was met by a deportation of 'locals.' Harking back to his ironic panoramas depicting cannibalistic New Zealanders Sala nervously but humorously asks, 'was barbecued Special Correspondent to be one of the entrées that night at a Samoan supper?' (26) But the physical proportions of the Samoans meant that in the hierarchy of race they were 'real children of Nature.' (25) Their intelligence was also said to be 'greatly superior to that of other Aborigines of Oceania, the Maoris alone excepted; and somebody has given the Samoans the soubriquet of 'the Greeks of the Pacific.' (25) The Australasian racial hierarchy placed the Samoan islanders, along with the Fijians and Hawaiians, as superior to the aboriginal Australians who were in turn inferior to the Maoris. Aborigines were invariably referred to by early commentators as 'the last link in the chain of humanity' and likened in resemblance to the mandrill ape.¹¹⁶ Sala's public letters to the *Telegraph* were surprisingly free from comments on the aboriginals but

¹¹⁶ Anon, 'Aboriginal natives of Australia', *Westminster Review* 1830 in, Johnston and Anderson (2005) p. 71

in a private letter to Mrs. Skirrow from 25 July 1885 he summarily dismisses them when he tells her that he has been ‘right up into the tropics in Queensland; sugarcane, bananas, arrowroot and alligators... Far away into the ghastly bush. Sheep, cattle, kangaroos, possums, dingoes and – well, scarcely, human beings!’¹¹⁷

When it comes to the Maoris Sala echoes the standard complaints about the difficulties of Maori nomenclature. But this is counterbalanced by the playfulness of a language that can produce a sentence like, ‘At all events, a ‘haka,’ as it is at present performed before ‘pakehas’ who are not ‘larrikins’(169) ‘Pakehas’ are Europeans and ‘larrikins’ are the Australian equivalent of San Franciscan ‘hoodlums’ or ‘Loafers.’ Like the Red Indian Sala met at the Niagara Falls, the Maoris display a nobility and a sense of equality that Sala approves of;

the habitual manners of the Maori are, like those of the Turk, the manners of a gentleman. The Arab, perhaps, puts on more ‘side’ in the way of taciturn hauteur: the red Indian may be slightly more dramatic in his assumption – when unaffected by rum – of phlegmatic impassability. The Maori chiefly excels in an easy, cheerful, but not too familiar amenity, putting you at once at your ease, but, at the same time, letting you know that, although he recognises, perforce, the fact that superiority in the arts of civilisation have made the ‘Pakeha’, or European, the dominant race, he, the Maori, is, as a man, your equal.’(147-8)

¹¹⁷ Letter from Sala to Mrs Skirrow 25 July 1885 Sala Papers Box 6 Beinecke Library

All this equality is reciprocated, however, suggests Sala. The natives are ‘never insultingly qualified as ‘niggers’ or ‘black fellows’ – the last the universal appellation of the Australian aborigines. They are simply ‘natives’ or ‘Maoris.’(148) The Maori is not ‘while politically free, socially a pariah, as is the case with the negro and the mulatto in the States.’(148) Europeans may take Maori wives ‘without any peril of social ostracism’ and in some cases ‘the Maori is the Europeans’ “boss” and carries on matters not as the European but as he – the Maori – pleases.’(148) Sala felt that the government of New Zealand had acted with a ‘strict justice and equity’ to the Maoris that their European counterparts have singly failed to achieve in their colonial dealings. (149) But just when it seems as though Sala may be hinting towards a future in which racial harmony is to be the norm, he cannot help but insert a comment that demonstrates the influence of current imperial thought;

...still, taking the Maori at his very best, and recognising to the utmost the determination of the government of New Zealand to protect the natives and to ensure that not one hair of their head shall be harmed nor one square foot of their lands taken from them without just cause, it would be idle and mischievous to gloss over the fact that the Maoris are a decaying race, and that their dying out altogether is merely a question of time. As a rule, they are indolent, listless, and averse from taking to any kind of mechanical labour.

(150)

Rehashing many of his ideas on the African-American, Sala was contributing to a late nineteenth-century racism that had grown increasingly more extreme as imperialism

developed. Anthony Trollope had written in his travel account *Australia* (1873) that genocide was desirable with regard to Australian aborigines; 'Of the Australian black man we may certainly say that he has to go. That he should perish without unnecessary suffering should be the aim of all who are concerned in the matter... Their doom is to be exterminated; and the sooner their doom be accomplished – so that there be no cruelty – the better will it be for civilization.'¹¹⁸ In his poem 'Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After' written the year after Sala's Antipodean visit, Tennyson wrote, 'ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.'¹¹⁹

Sala was also contributing to the emergence of an embryonic imperial press system. His role as Special Correspondent helped quickened the impetus for the growth of the modern newspaper press within the colonies. As Simon J. Potter has stated 'major newspapers in South Africa, Canada, India, Australia and New Zealand, for instance, were established and staffed by printers, editors, and reporters from Britain.'¹²⁰ British journalists were more willing to migrate after witnessing Sala's success and they 'carried with them their experiences of newspaper work in Britain, and imposed metropolitan models on the colonial press.'¹²¹ This flow of talent was reciprocated as British newspapers saw an influx of journalists from the colonies coming over to Britain to learn their trade.

On his last day in Auckland, Sala was met with a small group of local worthies who listened patiently while he abused some of the newspapers who had accused him of travelling for personal gain. After receiving a fee of one hundred pounds from an

¹¹⁸ Hume Dow (ed.) *Trollope's Australia* (Sydney: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1966) pp. 138-141

¹¹⁹ cited in, Roberts (2003) p. 181

¹²⁰ Simon J. Potter, *News and the British World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) p. 306

¹²¹ *ibid.* p. 13

unknown source to promote a new bath while in Rotorua, and being offered further inducements to publicise the Hot Springs district, Sala duly devoted five out of his thirty-two articles to the region. Sala questioned whether there was anything essentially wrong with this anyway, before stating that his sole motivation for his travels was his desire to ‘see the new world – the Southern Hemisphere’ and to ‘complete his education as a journalist.’(xix) It was typical, given his investment in the personal and his strong views, that at the end of his career as a Special Correspondent he would be tainted with self-promotion and self-interest. Sala had completed his journalistic education but he had not as yet completed his journalistic career.

Reflecting on his career as a ‘Special’ I want to end this chapter with a quote about the modern day American travel writer Paul Theroux that can be just as easily applied to Sala;

Theroux is the travel writer we love to hate. His writing is opinionated, at times racist, and rarely useful. But, as Samuel Johnson said, we do not always want to be taken ‘through wet and dry, over rough and smooth, without incidents, without reflection.’ Theroux certainly takes this to heart. He is the ‘sentimental traveller’ par excellence, following in the footsteps of Laurence Sterne and the splenetic and cantankerous Tobias Smollett.

Theroux turns fellow passengers into characters and reinvents himself as a dogmatic and jaundiced observer of humanity.¹²²

Sala's engagement with the problems of the romantic and picturesque style of travel writing with its obsession with the ancient would lead to his more modern, personal and complex style of travel reportage. His racism was a product of what T.S. Escott has described as his ability to master 'the tastes and requirements of the colossal circle of readers to which he appeals.'¹²³ His increasingly 'jaundiced' view of humanity, the way in which he blended the past with the present, and fact with fiction would all become standard elements of foreign reportage, and all of these elements are visible in a contemporary writer like Theroux, demonstrating the impact and influence Sala had on the genre.

¹²² Paul Smethurst, Entry on 'Paul Theroux' in Jennifer Speake (ed.) *Literature of Travel and Exploration: an Encyclopaedia* Vol 3 (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003) p. 1168

¹²³ T. S. Escott, 'A Journalist of the Day' *Time* (1879 1: 120) cited in Judy McKenzie (ed.) *Letters of George Augustus Sala to Edmund Yates* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1993) p. 2

Conclusion

In a letter to his cousin from 9 July 1884, Sala revealed his dreams about making enough money while in Australia to retire.¹ When writing to his close friend and confidant, Mrs Skirrow, from 14 February 1885, while actually travelling through Australia, Sala brought up the subject of money once again. Pleased that he had earned seven hundred dollars for two ‘speechifyings’ or lectures, he casually quipped that he might ‘give a lecture at Honolulu and earn three hundred dollars while I wait for the steamer.’² He appealed to Mrs Skirrow to not think of him as being mercenary because ‘you know why and for whose dear sake I am working the mine of my capacity to the last vein of the ore.’³ He was of course talking about his wife who accompanied him on his tour of Australia. In fact Sala probably came away from his last overseas engagement with £3000, a decent sum but nowhere near enough to enable him to retire with the kind of lifestyle he was accustomed to, and only a quarter of the amount which his friend and fellow journalist Archibald Forbes had made five years earlier while on his Australian tour.⁴ In any case, his wife was suddenly stricken with peritonitis in Melbourne and died twenty-four hours later on 31 December 1885, just as the pair were due to return to England. Writing to Mrs Skirrow a week later, and clearly distressed, Sala said ‘All...my hopes in the future lie in that grave. The

¹ Letter from Sala to his cousin (unnamed) 9 July 1884 Sala Papers Box 5 Beinecke Library

² Letter from Sala to Mrs Skirrow 14 Feb 1885 Sala Papers Box 5 Beinecke Library

³ *ibid.*

⁴ P.D. Edwards p. 187

money I have made for her dear sake – of what good is it to me now?’⁵ Sala would spend the remaining ten years of his life working harder than he had ever done.

Although he failed to complete a book-length account from his Australian letters (or failed to find a publisher interested enough to take on the project), the last five years of his life, from 1890 to 1895, saw him produce no less than five books. *London Up To Date* (1894) was a spirited attempt to revive the metropolitan articles from *Household Words* forty years previously. Sala even managed to complain about the injustices of the working man still to be found on its streets: ‘I hold it, at the outset, to be simply monstrous that any class of working men, be they skilled or unskilled toilers, should be compelled to work sixteen – or even fourteen – hours a day, seven days a week. If it be a fact that such toil is imposed on omnibus drivers and conductors, I say that the fact is a scandal to this professedly humanitarian age...’⁶ *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known* (1894) was a chatty and light-hearted prequel to his autobiography, published the following year as *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* (1895). There was also the popular cookery book *The Thorough Good Cook* (1895) and a guide book to his second home away from London, *Brighton As I Have Known It* (1895). P.D. Edwards correctly remarks that ‘All give the impression of having been written too quickly, and none can compare, for interest and vitality, with the best of his early books.’⁷

This prolific output was inspired by his second wife, whom he married on January 25 1890. Bessie Stannard was only thirty-two years old, twenty-nine years his junior, when they married at St. Margaret’s Church in Westminster. Bessie was the daughter

⁵ *ibid.* p. 251

⁶ G.A Sala, *London Up To Date* (1894) cited in *Ancestors* October 2007 p. 73

⁷ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens’s Young Men* (1997) p. 190

of Robert Stannard, who just before his death on 3 October 1891 had been the sole survivor of the historical Liverpool to Manchester Railway, having helped George Stephenson with its construction. Bessie was also the sister-in-law of the novelist Mrs Arthur Stannard. Ambitious and driven, Bessie was determined that her husband would provide for her after his death. Along with the five books she was instrumental in setting up a weekly penny miscellany that was to have combined the best elements of *Household Words* and the *Welcome Guest*. The first number of *Sala's Journal* duly appeared on April 30 1892 with the epithet 'A Weekly Magazine For All.' In fact the contents of the first number of *Sala's Journal* are revealing as much for their difference to the format of Dickens's and Vizetelly's weeklies from the 1850s as for their similarities, which are in any case negligent. They reflect the radical changes that had occurred in journalism since Dickens's and Vizetelly's heyday, changes that Sala had been instrumental in bringing about.

The first number of *Sala's Journal* contained an 'Answers to Correspondents' section; a 'Sala-d of Anecdotes' in which Sala reminisced about old acquaintances and old tales; 'Our Cookery' with accompanying recipes from husband and wife; a 'New Books' section (the first book reviewed being Bessie Sala's *Famous People I Have Met*); a gossip column entitled 'You Don't Say So!', and reminiscences of the early days of the metropolis, 'My First Days in London' by T.P. O'Connor. Although initial circulation attained 200,000, Straus's view that the pervading 'atmosphere of self-advertisement...tainted the contents' resulted in the curtailment of production in April 1894.⁸ But the *Journal* was important, not only because the extra workload and pressure it entailed probably hastened Sala's death, but because it contained in

⁸ Straus (1942) p. 273

microcosm many of the innovations that came to be associated with the 'New Journalism.'

First coined in 1887 by Sala's great nemesis, Matthew Arnold, the New Journalism was a series of innovations to the press in typography and layout, content and commercialisation.⁹ In May 1887 Arnold wrote, 'We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented...it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation...its one great fault is that it is *feather-brained*.'¹⁰ The 'clever man' Arnold was referring to was W.T. Stead, editor of the daily evening newspaper *Pall Mall Gazette*, and although Arnold had actually contributed many articles to the newspaper (including 'Friendship's Garland' in which he castigated Sala and his writing style) he protested against the sudden surge in circulation figures occasioned by the success of Stead's series of articles on 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' and his subsequent claim from prison for 'Government by Journalism.'¹¹ In the latter Stead had claimed that 'An editor must live among the people whose opinions he essays to express' and it was precisely these kinds of democratic sentiments that provoked Arnold's ire.¹² Joel Wiener notes how 'Arnold stood on one side of a great cultural divide. He was the traditionalist, the arbiter of culture, clinging to a view of life that gave away little to the emerging 'new democracy', of which journalism was a part.'¹³ Stead's belief that 'the function of the journalist was to give voice to the democratic culture of the people' was far removed from Arnold's idea of a cultural elite. The Balfour Education Act of 1870 had seen a

⁹ Joel H. Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?' in Joel Wiener (ed) *Papers For the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 50

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 47

¹¹ Laurel Brake, 'Old Journalism and New', in Wiener (1988) pp. 13-14

¹² *ibid.* p. 14

¹³ Wiener, (1988) p. xiii

huge rise in literacy rates and the New Journalism was unabashed in courting this new generation of readers, much to the chagrin of ‘arbiters of culture’ like Arnold, who worried about the political as well as cultural implications of a growing working-class readership. While Arnold worried about a ‘new’ democratisation inspired by the press, much of the content and style of the New Journalism had evolved in the previous decades.

In a three-part series for the *Pall Mall Gazette* which began on January 12 1866, James Greenwood disguised himself as a beggar, called himself ‘The Amateur Casual’, and provided detailed and graphic accounts of the filthy tramps and hardened criminals he encountered in his overnight stay in the casual ward of a London workhouse. Actually conceived by his brother Frederick, (who we met in Chapter 5 when he criticised the *Daily Telegraph* for its unscrupulous use of personal advertisements) then editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, ‘A Night in a Workhouse’ was, as Christopher Kent has stated, ‘immediately effective, the story invigorated sluggish sales, increasing circulation by 1,200 issues per day.’¹⁴ James Grant went so far as to declare it ‘a newspaper sensation, such as has seldom been known.’¹⁵ Although Frederick Greenwood was averse to describing the articles as sensational, B.I. Diamond notes that ‘the New Journalists defined sensationalism as something designed to ‘arrest the eyes of the public’ and it is clear that Greenwood had every intention of doing just that with his workhouse series.’¹⁶ As we have seen, Sala had been one of the most prominent advocates of sensational literature in that most

¹⁴ Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds) *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century-Journalism* (London: British Library, 2009) p. 259

¹⁵ James Grant, *The Newspaper Press; Its Origins, Its Progress and Present Position* (London, 1871-72), II, 118 cited in B.I. Diamond, ‘A Precursor of the New Journalism: Frederick Greenwood of the *Pall Mall Gazette*’ in Wiener (1988) p. 30

¹⁶ B.I. Diamond ‘A Precursor of the New Journalism: Frederick Greenwood of the *Pall Mall Gazette*’ in Wiener (1988) p. 27

sensational of decades, the 1860s. Reacting with dismay to the thought of a newspaper without sensation Sala had asked his readership, ‘how would you like a newspaper in which there were no police-reports, no law or assize intelligence, no leading articles on any other subject save missionary societies, governess institutions, the art of pickling onions, and the best means of obliterating freckles?’ (325-6) Another influence was highlighted by Seth Koven; ‘it was likely that the Greenwood brothers were influenced by Charles Dickens’s ‘night walks’ published in his *Uncommercial Traveller*.’¹⁷ In fact Dickens published many articles about the ‘A Night in a Workhouse’ series in *All The Year Round* and Koven describes how ‘commentators frequently described ‘a Night’ as Dickensian and invoked characters from various Dickens’s novels in their responses to it.’¹⁸ But it is just as credible to cite Sala as an influence for it was highly likely that the Greenwood brothers had read and remembered his ‘A Key of the Street’ article for *Household Words* in which he had fashioned himself as one of the first ‘urban investigators.’ Frederick Greenwood was professionally acquainted with Sala from their time on the staff of the *Illustrated Times*. But even if they hadn’t read Sala’s piece we have seen in Chapter 2 how Dickens himself had been influenced by Sala’s night-time perambulations in his ‘Night Walks’ piece for *All The Year Round*.¹⁹ Nigel Cross certainly made the link

¹⁷ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 35

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 35

¹⁹ It seems that Sala was unimpressed with the overly-emotional state of his rival and imitator, James Greenwood. In a letter to Shirley Brooks (a colleague of Sala’s on *Man In The Moon* and then for 23 years one of the chief contributors to *Punch*) from 1867, Sala in typically humorous fashion wrote; ‘I beg to state that James Greenwood is a gusher, and an offensively vulgar one, too. He seems to have made a hit with the ‘casual’ in the PMG [*Pall Mall Gazette*] (which I have never read: I was abroad at the time) but what do you think of his going down to Margate, and giving the ‘Casual’ as an ‘entertainment’ and dressing up as a Casual?’ Sala to Shirley Brooks 17 Feb 1867 Sala Papers Box 7 Beinecke Library. The OED defines ‘Gusher’ as ‘One who is over-effusive or sentimental in the expression of opinion or feeling’ and cites a work by Edmund Yates as an example - **1864 E. YATES** *Broken to Harness* vi, ‘The enthusiastic gusher who flings his or herself upon our necks, and insists upon sharing our sorrow’.

http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50100547?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=gusher&first=1&max_to_show=10 Accessed 19/07/10

between Sala and the Greenwood article. He explained that ‘A Night In a Workhouse’ was ‘exactly the kind of slumming investigative journalism that...Sala had popularised in *Household Words*.’²⁰ Linked to this was Sala’s interest in the poor and unhoused and his participation in a culture of social connectedness that might explain the obsession with the ‘new democracy’ of journalists like Stead. Sala summed up this life-long preoccupation with the disadvantaged during his first visit to America. He claimed that ‘although I did not by any means set myself up as a philanthropist or a redresser of grievances, I had always striven, to the best of my ability, to stand up for the Right, and to plead the cause of the poor and oppressed person, that the strong man might not spoil his goods, nor hale him to prison without a warrant.’²¹ Although Sala in his later life was hardly the ‘flaming Radical’ he had once been, as evidenced by a list of his correspondents in 1881, a list that that included Lord Rosebery, Lady Combermere, Col. Fred Burnaby, Sir Walter Besant, the Earl of Fife, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, G.F. Watts, Bernard Shaw, and Sir F. Burnard, we have seen how during his final visits to America and Australia he still demonstrated a curiosity and intellectual understanding of the workings of democracy in those countries, and still took a personal interest in the hardships endured by the working classes of London.²²

But it was Sala’s style as much as his content that influenced the New Journalism, and contemporaries like Frederick Greenwood were quick to identify this debt. Joel H. Wiener has noted how changes in style in the beginning of the 1880s included ‘a ‘brighter’ method of writing.’ Wiener states how ‘in the words of Frederick

²⁰ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 99

²¹ G.A. Sala, *My Diary in America in the Midst of War* Vol. 1 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865) p. 9

²² Lord Rosebery was, like Sala, a ‘bonapartomaniac and bibliomaniac’. (P.D. Edwards (1997) p. 161. As Prime Minister in 1895 Rosebery regretted Sala’s financial misfortunes and obtained for him a civil list pension.

Greenwood a “formal”, artificial and hackneyed style of journalism gave way to a ‘good English of common life.’²³ He cites Kennedy Jones, manager of the *Evening News* and the *Daily Mail*, who remarked that “‘Journalese’, a lifeless, mechanical style of writing was replaced by ‘Telegraphese’ a method of writing pioneered in the 1860s by George Augusts Sala...’²⁴ The editor of the *Star*, T.P. O’Connor, likened this style to a street piano in that it was ‘not classical, nor very melodious, and perhaps there is a certain absence of soul, but the notes should come out clear, crisp, sharp.’²⁵ The ‘streetiness’ of this hypothetical piano certainly echoes the urban preoccupations of Sala and he would no doubt have appreciated this description of what was essentially his own model of writing. It was T.P. O’Connor, along with Stead, who demanded from their journalists that they tell a good story and tell it well.²⁶ Wiener makes the point that it was O’Connor who urged his writers to ‘narrate the events of a day in a “story line” fashion to its readers.’²⁷ Sala’s novelistic style in his first piece of travel reportage from Russia, his subsequent engagement with novel-writing and the way in which he took news stories and inserted them in his narratives are all examples of how this ‘story line fashion’ evolved. When Wiener asks whether there was a connection with the bohemianism of journalists like Sala, Yates and Greenwood and the New Journalism his reply is;

Almost certainly. What Greenwood, Yates, Sala...and other writers...possessed in common was a quality that contemporaries referred to as ‘vagabondage of character.’ They were willing to try anything once, provided it was new, especially in their capacity as

²³ Wiener p. 52

²⁴ Cited in Wiener p. 53

²⁵ T.P. O’Connor, ‘The New Journalism’ *New Review* I (1889) p. 434, cited in Wiener p. 53

²⁶ Wiener p. 64

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 64

struggling newspapermen. And in this experimental, bohemian mood, they made significant breakthroughs that anticipated new journalistic forms and in turn inspired journalists such as Henry Lucy and Henry Labouchere to become central participants in the New Journalism.²⁸

Wiener connects this experimentalism with the bohemians' turn to novel writing and goes on to illustrate how W.T. Stead was also keen to emphasise the importance of the narrative element in journalism.

When asked his thoughts at the end of his career about the New Journalism Sala typically distanced himself from any association with it; 'What the new journalism may be like, I neither know nor care, but most assuredly it is not the journalism to which I have served my apprenticeship, and in which I have been for many years a skilled workman.'²⁹ But the evidence belies Sala's claims. His long-running column in the *Illustrated London News*, 'Echoes of the Week', was light, gossipy and undemanding for its readers and gossip columns went on to become a staple of the New Journalism.³⁰ Sala had been well aware of the hazards relating to the kind of gossip columns that Edmund Yates had developed from the 1850s; 'The Lounger at the Clubs' in the *Illustrated Times*, 'Le Flaneur' in the *Morning Star* and 'What the World Says' in the *World*. Yates had fallen foul of Thackeray and been expelled from the Garrick Club for his comments on the novelist in 1858 and had been sent to Holloway jail in 1885 for criminal libel involving aristocratic gossip. Less than

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 64

²⁹ Sala *Life and Adventures* vol. 1 p. ix

³⁰ 'Echoes of the Week' ran from 1860-1865, 1874-1887 in the *ILN*, 18 June – 1 October 1887 in the *Entertainment Gazette*, and 2 March 1890 – 15 Sep 1895 in the *Sunday Times*, Edwards (1997) p. 189

impressed with the way Yates publicly aired private conversations, Sala's 'Echoes of the Week' were 'blander and better-natured than Yates's gossip columns' and occasioned a series of spoofs in *Punch*.³¹ Entitled 'Egoes of the Week' they good-naturedly highlighted Sala's obsession with himself and in the August 28 1880 number *Punch* wrote, 'There will be no egoes next week as I am going to have my hair cut.'³² The pun on 'Egoes' reflected the way that Sala had as long ago as 1860 signed off each instalment with the letters 'GAS', even when anonymity was still the norm. James Mussell notes how 'the foundation of the *Fortnightly Review* (1865) and the *Nineteenth Century* (1877) marked a move from the editorial "we" to a recognition of the star quality of named authorities.'³³ Star names like Stead and O'Connor thus owed a debt of gratitude to Sala who had blazed the trail for authorial recognition many decades before it became an accepted practice. The gossip column in *Sala's Journal*, 'You Don't Say So' (that sounds like a second-rate comedian's catchphrase), was largely the responsibility of Bessie and signed 'Self and Partner'. Full of triviality and light gossip it demonstrated the Salas' ability to keep abreast of the times and to give the public what they wanted, something that Sala had been doing for most of his professional life.

One of the innovations of the New Journalism was the expansion of the correspondence column. John Stokes believes it was 'one of the consciously 'democratic' policies adopted by the liberal editors of the self-styled New Journalism.'³⁴ The first press venture of the youthful Alfred Harmsworth (who was to become the press baron Lord Northcliffe) was a weekly journal entitled *Answers to*

³¹ P.D. Edwards (1997) p. 153

³² *Punch* 28 August 1880 pp. 94-5

³³ James Mussell, in Brake, Laurel and Demoor, Marysa (eds) *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (London: British Library, 2009) p. 443

³⁴ John Stokes, *In The Nineties* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989) p.10

Correspondents (1888-1955). Harmsworth stated that in the journal that ‘we are a sort of Universal Information Provider’³⁵ and Anne Humpherys notes that the ‘short lively articles were on every subject imaginable about the far-flung colonies to how to ride a bicycle.’³⁶ They were the forerunner to today’s Advice Columns and the inclusion in *Sala’s Journal* of a series with the same name as Harmsworth’s weekly again demonstrates the Sala’s participation in the New Journalism. Cookery was also becoming a popular feature of newspapers and magazines, the awful pun of a ‘Sala-d of Anecdotes’ was evidence of this in *Sala’s Journal*, as was ‘Our Cookery’, a series of recipes devised by the Salas. They were also astute enough to include a leading ‘New Journalist’ on their staff and T.P. O’Connor, who became editor of the *Star* in 1888, certainly fitted the bill.

Another ‘innovation’ of the New Journalism was the interview. Interviews became popular in newspapers in America in the 1860s but it wasn’t until the 1880s in England, with Edmund Yates’s ‘Celebrities at Home’ series for the *World*, that it became a staple of the New Journalism. W.T. Stead interviewed public figures for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, most famously in 1884 interview with General Gordon that led to the Khartoum expedition.³⁷ Matthew Rubery claims that ‘The first published interviews were discomforting for readers not accustomed to such personal forms of news.’³⁸ We have seen how Sala’s personal accounts of royalty in the 1850s, in particular his impression of Queen Victoria’s meeting with Napoleon III in Paris, was prepared for his readers by the editor of the *Illustrated Times*, Henry Vizetelly, who worried about the offence that may be caused by such intrusive private detail. Sala

³⁵ John Goodbody, ‘The Star: Its Role in the Rise of the New Journalism’ in Wiener (ed) (1988) p. 158

³⁶ Anne Humphreys, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (2009) p. 19

³⁷ Rubery pp. 112-3

³⁸ *ibid* p. 112-3

had also interviewed celebrities like Garibaldi, the Pope and Abraham Lincoln. His famous ‘interview’ with Mrs Abraham Lincoln in 1864, although suppressed in the book of his American visit, enabled readers of his *Telegraph* letters to snigger as he exposed the shallowness and lack of intellect of an important American public figure. Mrs Lincoln begins by asking Sala, ‘Do you keep your health, sir?’ Sala replied that, yes, he kept in tolerable health. Mrs Lincoln then asked how long he had been in the country and how long he expected to remain there. She asked him if he liked the country, Sala replied that ‘it was a very large and wonderful country’ after which followed an embarrassing silence, broken by Mrs Lincoln’s final question, ‘And you keep your health, sir?’³⁹ It was Sala’s early experimentations with the form that saw the interview grow from ‘a controversial technique to an integrated facet of journalistic practice.’⁴⁰ In *Sala’s Journal* one of the books reviewed is Bessie Sala’s *Famous People I Have Met*, a series of interviews with contemporary celebrities, including one with her husband that must have contributed to the ‘atmosphere of self-advertisement’ that pervaded the periodical. Sala was also interviewed for the *Strand* magazine in July 1892 from his flat in 125 Victoria St., London. Importantly, it was an illustrated interview.

Looking back at newspapers like the *Telegraph* and the *Times* from the 1860s and 1870s the first thing that strikes the modern reader is the lack of visual material. Although *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* were still selling in large numbers, newspapers had eschewed the lure of illustration and as Wiener states ‘there were few traces of the ‘bright’ paraphernalia of modern journalism, designed to attract the

³⁹ Straus (1942) p. 172. In a letter to Hepworth Dixon the following year Sala stated that ‘the good lady herself was not in the least offended, and two months afterwards while I was in Mexico sent an envoy to the Brevoort to ask me to breakfast with her at the Metropolitan Hotel during one of her visits to new York. 24 Jan 1865 Sala Papers Box 7 Beinecke Library.

⁴⁰ Rubery p. 308

eye.’⁴¹ But the introduction of ‘process’ reprographic techniques and the use of half-tone engraving gave newspapers at the end of the century an ‘increasingly naturalistic and photographic look.’⁴² Both Stead and O’Connor made frequent use of pictures based on line drawings in their papers, while in the 1890s the *Daily Graphic* and the weekly *Sketch*, became ‘the first newspapers to employ half-tone blocks to reproduce the tones of a photograph.’⁴³ It soon became accepted practice to use news photographs in daily journalism and in 1904 the *Daily Mirror* was the first British paper to ‘make extensive use of photographic images as an integral component of editorial content.’⁴⁴ In a way that the engravings and pictorial work of artists like Phiz, Thackeray and Sala in the 1840s had added an extra dimension to the text, Wiener notes how, ‘by the early twentieth century the textual and visual aspects of the popular press began therefore to complement each other. The way was clear for the increasing dominance of the visual in much of modern popular journalism.’⁴⁵ Illustration had truly come full circle, and we have observed how Sala had been right there at the beginning, pioneering the visual and verbal style of writing due to his apprenticeship in the visual.

One of Matthew Arnold’s chief objections to the New Journalism was something that T.H. Huxley claimed was one of its most positive attributes. Huxley commented on Stead that ‘the chief good is, in brief, freedom to say what he pleases.’⁴⁶ It was precisely this attribute that Sala had mentioned to his friend Charles G. Leland in a

⁴¹ Wiener (1988) p. 51

⁴² Brake and Demoor (2009) pp. 305-6

⁴³ Wiener p. 52

⁴⁴ Brake and Demoor (2009) p. 306

⁴⁵ Wiener p. 52

⁴⁶ Matthew Arnold, ‘Up to Easter’, *Nineteenth Century* XXI (1887) p. 629, cited in Brake (1988) p. 14

letter from 1874. Commenting on the much maligned style of the *Daily Telegraph*, Sala approves of the paper because it lets writers ‘say what they dam please.’⁴⁷

Building on his background in the visual, we have seen how Sala had worked through a variety of writing styles and forms and had been under the control of editors like Dickens and, to a lesser extent, Vizetelly, until finally becoming a Special Correspondent and arriving at the style that enabled him to say exactly what he ‘damn pleased.’ Summing up this style, Charles Pebody commented in 1882 that ‘his [Sala’s] readiness, his picturesque sensibility, his aptitude for vivid and graphic writing, his great powers of expression, and his still greater powers of illustration, constitute him the beau-ideal of a journalist.’⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Letter to Charles G. Leland 2 March 1874 Beinecke Library Box 7

⁴⁸ Charles Pebody, *English Journalism and the Men who Made It* (London: Cassell, 1882) pp. 143-4

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