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THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO LITERATURE AND CLASS

Edited by
Gloria McMillan

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This text is gratefully dedicated to my mother, Gloria Houck Ptacek, and our contributing essayist, Aaron Barlow.

requiring definite divisions between class identities. The upper class could be assured of this distance as long as the lower-class body might be fetishized for its longing, illustrated in Jude's quaint desire for Christminster baked and sold as consumable gingerbread towers. In another act of resisting the real, the simulacrum as portrait stood in for the real person, enabling and abetting the socially privileged Dorian to hide within his own fetishized ideal. Hardy and Wilde approach the dangerous arrogance of class pretense in commodifying all bodies. Without atoning their consumption, Woolf ends her novel by awakening the wealthy to the un-reality of commodifying another, for Modernity's realism is not hierarchy but autonomy: "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was" (190).

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25

ORAL STORYTELLING AS A TRANSNATIONAL AESTHETIC IN THE INDUSTRIAL NOVEL

Erin Cheslow

The waves in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) very clearly speak of eternity, a temporal link between life and death, but they also tell stories, relaying information in a way that imposes a spatial relationship to empire and nation based on the listener's social class. Oral forms, embedded in the novel as stories characters tell, construct space in terms of movement; the formal movement of the story, not tied to any one speaker or convention, moves speaker and listener into imagined colonial spaces and, in some cases, allows them to return by opening up liminal or possible spaces between home and "elsewhere." The waves, one such liminal space, speak to Paul, who then tells their story to Florence, mapping their structure of departure and return onto the siblings' relationship. When Paul dies, departing across the waves, he is always able to return to Florence, just as Walter and Florence are able to return after crossing the more literal waves that connect England to the rest of the world. The waves, touching the shores of the colonies and of England, tell stories that elide the distance between the two, making the strange familiar and accessible. The often-extreme difference of "elsewhere" is brought under the umbrella of the imagined national community to facilitate a sense of domestic unity for those who are able to return, namely the middle class. Using aesthetics to approach the novel as a classed and imperial literary space, I argue that oral storytelling—exemplified by the stories told in *Dombey and Son* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*—as literary form affords classed movement through the empire in the wake of industrialism and urban population growth in nineteenth-century England. The stories told bring the "social problem" presented by the industrial poor into conversation with the desire for imperial expansion, overcoming physical and social distances through the possibility of social mobility and return.

The waves do not tell their story to everyone though, and those who cannot hear it or cannot return develop very different relationships to space. Where the middle class has the means and the stories to build a life in England based on colonial wealth, the lower classes face only poverty and disappointment at home. Florence, firmly situated as a middle-class character, is able to hear and retell the stories the waves tell and return to a happy life in England after spending time abroad. The transported convict, Alice, on the other hand, never hears those stories and is unable to tell her own, returning only to die. The brief glimpses of other places provided by the waves reflect Edward Said's claim in *Culture and Imperialism* that the middle class is simultaneously reliant on the productivity of the colonies and on the ability to return home "and [be] at rest," while developing very different expectations for the working class (91). These classed relations to space are subdued in a novel that is primarily concerned with middle-class ideals of domesticity and mercantile success at home, but they are not absent or unexpected. Printed in nineteen installments from 1846 to

1848, *Dombey and Son* responds to the industrial problems of working-class labor and population growth that figured prominently in Victorian literature and politics during the preceding decades. It is in the possibilities of movement for the middle class and certain members of the working class that the limitations imposed on others, like Alice, become visible. As these storied relationships to space are developed, they order England as a bourgeois domestic space, to which the middle class can always return, and the empire as a heterogeneous space of possibility, where the middle class can support a home in England and the working class can create a new home abroad.

What emerges is a "transnational aesthetic," with oral forms supplying movement as a way to work through the class tensions introduced by industrialization and imperial expansion. In *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic*, Lauren Goodlad expands Frederic Jameson's "geopolitical aesthetic" "to describe how particular artistic forms suggest [an effort to figure out the] global situations that are at once lived and beyond individual experience" (9). Oral form as a transnational aesthetic builds on these aesthetic registers to better understand the specifically classed movement across national boundaries made necessary by the global situations Goodlad describes. Oral stories facilitate transnational movement between England and the empire by imposing a set of spatial relationships that extend the nation and subsume difference through trade. Which stories are told and which are not order space and people in terms of movements that bring the condition of England and the imperial mission into close conversation with one another. Additionally, the presence of transnational aesthetics in the novel suggests an attempt to story space specifically through engagement with oral forms. Oral storytelling as a form works within, while remaining distinct from, written narratives to construct and order the world, reframing class dynamics in terms of the future possibilities provided by movement through the empire.

As a form that moves, orality can be utilized both in and out of written narratives to move people and ideas in space and time and circumvent the classed constraints of life in England and of the written forms that represent it. While written descriptions afford a perception of permanence, oral forms have the ability to change, to adapt to the needs of the moment without the need for corroboration. They can create fantasies that allow for movement in space and time, imposing their own fluid form onto life. In other words, stories afford certain kinds of movement for the listener, and these affordances make oral forms distinguishable from and visible in print. Caroline Levine defines affordances as "the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs" in order to rethink the way forms "travel" across time and space, "moving back and forth across aesthetic and social materials" (5, 4). Although the reader does not experience oral storytelling as a vocal act, oral form remains recognizable, imposing its structures on the world for the reader just as it does for the characters who listen.

In this sense, the binary that divides oral from written, one that Walter Benjamin sets up in "The Storyteller," is merely a matter of difference, rather than opposition or incompatibility. Benjamin writes, "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself"; he recognizes storytelling as movement even if he does so only to idealize a supposedly extinct past (79–80). This same pastoralism relegates Indigenous and working-class communities to certain ways of knowing and being, but the movement of oral forms from person to person and into written texts reopens those possibilities by reorienting the temporal narrative of oral to written, "primitive" to modern, toward a spatial one. The empire becomes a repository for British fantasies that simultaneously preserve the past and imagine possible futures. Oral forms, then, afford aesthetic, spatial, and temporal fluidities that are not restricted by writing and are accessible to the working class.

These fluidities are specifically classed, as it is changing conceptions of bourgeois capitalism, working-class conditions, and criminality that invite, or even necessitate, the creation of the domestic ideal both at home and abroad through emigration and transport, as well as its maintenance through profitable global expansion. To imagine classed movement in the nineteenth century is

not to dismiss other kinds of global movement that occurred in other times and places. It is to recognize a moment when the confluence of free trade ideology with industrial urbanization introduces the "social problem" of rapid working-class population growth and an emphasis on domestic stability to reinforce imperial exploitation. *Dombey and Son* is situated in the midst of this transition, with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 opening up foreign markets and licensing an imperialist expansion. The economic concerns of trade that structure the novel cannot be separated from the empire that trade relied on, and issues of class underly both. The language of gendered and spatial *economies* that pervades scholarship on the mercantile world of the waves, particularly that of Suvendrini Perara on empire in the English novel, indicates the centrality of exchange value, and as such, the working class, to empire. Bourgeois capitalist interests, like the elder Dombey's, often elide other kinds of movement, but transportation and emigration remain integral to those interests, expanding the nation into the colonies and disposing of the excess population that threatened a sense of national prosperity and unity. The stories told make these movements possible by transferring experiences of "elsewhere" to the listener within descriptions of known conditions afforded by written forms.

The empire, both distant and different, provided spaces that could be filled with fantasies made impossible in England because of social conditions. Said identifies "the power to narrate" as crucial to an understanding of nation-building and empire. He writes, "stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (Said xii). In England, the stories told about colonial spaces constructed them in terms of bourgeois, English conceptions of reality, wherein the imagined unity of the English nation was threatened by Indigenous peoples and the working class alike. The stories that appear in novels like *Dombey and Son* attempt to overcome these divisions by ordering space in terms of classed movement.

Who Gets to Speak: Storytelling and Class

In a brief glimpse of somewhere outside of England in *Dombey and Son*, Florence sits on the deck of "a stately ship … out at sea, spreading its white wings to the favouring wind" (768). As they have so many times before, the waves speak to her as they once spoke to her brother, Paul. Her new husband, Walter, recalls the story as Paul told it with his dying breath, a story of a faraway land and a journey, and Paul's little voice seems to wash across the ship just as the waves do, repeating his final words to Florence: "How fast the river runs, between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But it's very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!" (218). Tears fill Florence's eyes, and Walter thinks they are tears for the death of the brother she has lost. He knows she thinks of Paul, but the expression on her face is one of joy. She thinks not of the land on the other side of the waves, one that Paul thought of as the land of the dead, but of her love for her childhood companion. Though dead, he returns to her every time she listens to the story the waves are telling. Just as Paul always knew, "elsewhere," or the invisible country beyond the sea, is only inaccessible if there is no one left at home to listen to the stories that float back on the waves.

Stories, "what it was that the waves were always saying," provide points of connection in the almost irretrievably atomized environment of mercantile, middle-class England, as embodied by Florence's father, the elder Dombey (Dickens 107). Mr. Dombey's world is a modern one. Trade and the imperial expansion on which it relies are of paramount importance, and money takes the place of human relationships. His insistence that "Money can do anything!" turns even his beloved Paul, the future of the firm, into a "presumptuous atom," no more than a fragment of the totalizing and omnipresent Dombey and Son (91). This atomization spreads through the novel as Dombey creates barriers between people, sending Walter to the colonies and rejecting Florence and the domestic ideal she embodies. Without the determinacy of a seemingly unified community, stories become necessary to fill the literal and figurative space between characters. Walter's return from the

Caribbean to marry Florence is only possible if the waves are spaces of literal and social movement and not the barriers Dombey perceives them to be.

Within this framework, I argue that the movement of stories, rumors, and reports of "elsewhere" and of people of certain classes back to England constructs the colonies as ideological extensions of the nation, which is itself reconstituted through the human connections made in the moment of storytelling. While novels and newspapers help to construct imagined communities for the reader, as Benedict Anderson famously argued, they also contain the stories that characters tell themselves and others. Unification becomes a doubled process, both global and interpersonal, folding distances between people and spaces in on themselves to reimagine connection through networks of communication rather than spatial proximity. In *Dombey and Son*, these networks are given form in the waves, which cross the physical distance between imperial spaces and tell the stories that connect Florence to Paul and Walter and eventually to Mr. Dombey, facilitating a sense of domestic unity through return. That same domestic unity is not available to the working class in England, however, requiring that it be reimagined elsewhere. As such, movement into an expanding empire as nation is notably absent from Dickens's arguably most middle-class novel. Dombey and his family have access to such domestic prosperity in England because they are middle class. It is in the silences, the continual deferral of Alice's story, and the marginality of other working-class characters, that class dynamics become apparent. When working-class voices are present, however, as in other social-condition novels of the mid-nineteenth century, a different kind of national unity is made available.

Published in two volumes only shortly after the final installment of *Dombey and Son* was issued, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* responds to many of the same issues of trade and industry but from the imagined perspective of the working class. Although the waves are not said to speak, stories are carried back on them and made the experiences of those who listen. Just as for Paul and Florence, oral forms afford a spatial and temporal fluidity that moves Mary and others to the colonies, but for them, the movement is permanent. They do not return, instead making a home abroad that fulfills fantasies of social mobility. This home remains distinctly English though, despite its physical distance from English soil. It extends the British nation by transplanting Englishness abroad, alleviating the tensions introduced by working-class population growth and reinvigorating the pastoral ideal of a rural English space. Settler colonies, as extensions of the nation, reinforce the nation as timeless or eternal, much like they do for Paul, and that eternity is distinctly spatial. The two novels, when placed in conversation with each other, develop a pattern of storytelling as movement that imagines national unity and continuity as necessarily imperial and classed. Eternity becomes spatial, just as movement through space becomes movement through time. Florence brings Dombey and Son into the future of free trade, while Mary brings England back into a rural, idyllic past that has been erased by urbanization. As stories move across the waves, they construct a seemingly global imagined community that will always support the nation and imaginatively resolve class tension.

The story that the waves do not tell is that of a third kind of movement, one that relies on silence and distance to sustain community at home. Alice never hears what the waves were saying, though she spends a great deal of time upon them, because she is not meant to return. As a transported convict and a woman, she is cut off from the prosperity that empire affords. The stories she does hear, like the ones of disappointment and hardship her mother tells throughout the novel, are those that distance her from England, transforming her into the failed commodity of a fallen woman. With her removal abroad, stories are shown to impose a spatial distance specific to both class and place.

The convict could be removed to an inhospitable, so-called *terra nullius*, storied as a waste land, to maintain the imagined unity and purity of England. The language of distance is maintained when Alice returns to England. She continually defers the moment when she will tell her story, saying only at first that she has been "far away," "where convicts go" (Dickens 460). Although she is no longer physically separated from English soil, her story imposes the distance necessary for transportation. If Paul can always return from death and Florence from abroad, then an ideological distance is necessary for the movement of criminals away from England. Alice's own story and the stories

she does and does not hear afford movement by preventing return. Alice's permanent removal from English society and the nation relies on her silence and the silence of the waves, whose stories of continuity might make return possible if heard. The movement of oral forms, only available to those who hear them, structures the nation through specific relationships between social class and the spaces of an expanding empire. The stories told in *Dombey and Son* and *Mary Barton*, and the ways in which they move formally and spatially, facilitate different kinds of classed movement through imperial spaces.

Paul and the Waves, Mary and the Mermaid

The waves begin to speak early in *Dombey and Son*, but, at first, Paul is the only one who hears them. Like Paul, whose death is framed as a response to "what it was the waves were always saying," the first Mrs. Dombey is said to drift out over a metaphorical sea when she dies, but the waves do not speak at the moment of her death. Perhaps because she is without her own story, present only to give birth to young Paul, or perhaps because Florence is not yet ready to let her mother go across the waves, she is unable to tell what the waves are saying, if she hears them at all. Even when Dombey's sister tries to rouse her, Mrs. Chick receives "No word or sound in answer" (Dickens 12). Her death is marked by silence, and her absence will continue to haunt the rest of the novel. Only once Paul hears the waves and tells their story is movement made possible. He acts as a translator and storyteller, speaking for the waves and telling his own story. His presence as a listener and a speaker opens up interpretations of the waves and of the imperial and personal connections they make possible. He provides a formal link to an otherwise elusive story that ebbs and flows with the tide.

Because the waves cannot speak for themselves in a way that readers or characters can understand, their story cannot be formally represented in the novel. This formal silencing allows more nuanced readings of empire and death as symbolically represented by the waves and the class movement they afford, but in so doing, it also limits the text to these more symbolic readings. John M. Picker summarizes this limitation well in *Victorian Soundscapes*:

> Scholars have debated whether the ocean in Dombey might represent the mystery of life, or a transcendent voice of both death and communal reconciliation, or a force for human feeling, or (as one critic has proposed) merely a gross sentimentalism … Yet … the waves never precisely disclose or clarify themselves: they never say what they mean.
>
> *(21)*

Florence and the reader can only hope to understand them through Paul as an engaged listener and medium for their story. He is willing and able to listen where others are not and imaginatively retells the stories that he hears.

Paul's stories explore what it is the waves are saying—not simply what they represent in their relationship to death but the stories they tell middle-class characters in life. Unlike Dombey, who sees Paul as part of the workings of the firm, the novel frames Paul primarily as a brother and a child wise beyond his years. He is a storied creature, described early on as having

> a strange, old-fashioned, thoughtful way … of sitting brooding in his miniature arm-chair, when he looked (and talked) like one of those terrible little Beings in the Fairy tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted.
>
> *(Dickens 92)*

Paul's fantastical world separates him from the "worldly schemes and plans" of his father, reframing the novel in terms of transcendent human connection.

Yet, his voice, ever present in itself or in Florence's memories, is rarely heard in more symbolic readings of the waves. His death seems to relegate him to an absence in the text, ignoring his presence throughout it. Picker starts to reclaim Paul's presence as listener when he writes, "Such a struggle to understand the waves is indeed what Little Paul attempts[;] he possesses the animating force of the artist, who imaginatively receives and attempts to convey the sensory details of sound and sight," but he reads Paul's relationship to the waves as one of "failed reception," ignoring what Paul himself says (22). The waves do fail to convey their message fully in the novel, but the failure is one of form, not of reception. What Paul hears cannot be made formally available to the reader, so it is inaccessible without Paul as storyteller. The novel might fail to convey what it is the waves are saying directly, but Paul as intermediary overcomes this formal failure precisely because he receives their story and conveys it to others. On his death bed, he exclaims, "I hear the waves! They always said so!" (Dickens 218). He has not failed to receive what the waves are saying at all. Like the free indirect discourse through which Florence is shown to communicate, the story told by the waves is given voice through Paul. Paul's stories double those of the waves, making visible what is formally invisible.

It is through this storied relationship to the waves that Florence is able to repair the broken domestic space of her childhood, one framed as distinctly middle class. There is no evidence that Florence hears the story the waves are telling when she walks or sits on the seashore with Paul, but Paul often shares what he hears with her. When Florence later understands their story to be one of love as she sits on the deck of a ship at sea, "elsewhere" is made visible as structurally supportive of middle-class life in England through stories—Paul's stories. In two brief glimpses of what the waves are saying, both heard and retold by Paul, he creates a direct relationship between empire and the waves. The "far away" that Florence will later recognize is made spatial, as well as temporal; it is a land that evokes eternity through the ever-present possibility of return.

When Paul has only just begun listening to the waves, he learns that India is a long distance off, somewhere across the sea. He responds to Florence, "If you were in India, I should die, Floy[,]" producing a morbid parallel between spatial and temporal distance (Dickens 106). Florence only magnifies the parallel when she replies that "so would she … if he were there. But he would be better soon" (107). She conflates his illness, which ultimately kills him, with a distant "elsewhere," in this case India. As Paul continues to listen, however, the distance begins to close.

On a different day, Paul makes the same connection. This time, he makes it clear that it is the waves telling the story, but it is a story he does not yet understand. When Florence says that the sea does not speak, that it is only the rolling of the waves, he replies, "Yes, yes … But I know that [the waves] are always saying something. Always the same thing. What place is over there?" (Dickens 107). Florence tells him that there is another country across the sea, but Paul is thinking of somewhere farther away. Once more, "elsewhere" is associated with death, but it is also complicated. Where Paul expressed dismay at the distance between England and India, he now associates the waves with curiosity and excitement. The more he listens to the waves and interprets the stories, the more he recognizes the possibility in movement, whether it be movement to faraway places, the movement of stories across different speakers and places, or the movement of the waves themselves. In this second conversation, Florence's words are not shared with the reader, nor is her actual response to Paul's claim that he would die if she were in India. The narrator takes over in these moments, granting speech only to Paul and the waves and emphasizing spatial continuity over separation. The lack of direct speech from other characters in this scene, and in the novel as a whole, causes the speech that is present, Paul's speech, to stand out.

Elizabeth Gaskell also weaves oral stories with written narrative throughout *Mary Barton*, but her characters are factory workers in Manchester, so they are not granted the kind of life in England that would prompt return. The descriptive work of Gaskell's written narration works alongside the stories characters tell just as in *Dombey and Son*, but it precludes working-class movement in England, requiring a different kind of movement from oral stories. For Carolyn Betensky

in the work aptly titled *Feeling for the Poor*, descriptions of daily life do not afford social mobility; they give agency to middle-class citizens who "feel for the poor." As a result, possibility for the working class exists in the unknown, other people and other places constructed as unrestricted by immediate material need. Oral storytelling provides a formal space in the novel in which to construct working-class fantasies and transfer them to the colonies.

Shortly after social mobility proves impossible for Mary in England, when John Barton returns from London unheard by Parliament and Mary transfers her feelings from the factory owner's son, Harry Carson, to her working-class peer, Jem Wilson, a sailor named Will comes to visit his aunt with stories of his many travels. Fantastic and firsthand, Will's stories move through foreign spaces, setting the foundation for Mary's future immigration to Canada. They provide a stark contrast to the hardship experienced at home, an imaginative space where social mobility is conceived as spatial mobility. It is through the fantastical images he presents that Mary slowly replaces her fantasies of life in England with fantasies of elsewhere. Her own movement from England as national center to Canada is embedded in the formal movement of Will's stories. Where Paul's stories ebb and flow with the waves, Will's radiate out from one thought into multiple narratives. When Will and Mary visit Job Leigh, a family friend and amateur naturalist, Job questions him endlessly about his adventures and the specimens he has brought back from the furthest reaches of the globe. Will starts in Sierra Leone, where the ubiquity of what are otherwise uninteresting insects makes them desirable as specimens, and branches out into the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The insects, which he describes as "queer things" that "folk at home" like to hear of, bring him to the real marvel, a mermaid a fellow sailor saw off the coast of the Chatham Islands (Gaskell 202). According to Jack, she beckoned to them, only to dive back into the sea, never to be seen again.

Job expresses only skepticism at this tale, as mermaids are but myth, unrecognized by the natural sciences, but Mary reacts quite differently. As Will finishes this piece of a narrative, she muses, "I wish they had caught her" (Gaskell 204). The wonders of the deep have caught her imagination, allowing her to remain deaf to Job's incredulity and believe in the mermaid as specimen, a reality that can be caught and observed scientifically, as well as imaginatively. Her believability is only confirmed by the comb left on the rock, which Will says is "a sure proof of the truth of their story" (204). Fantasy is conflated with experiences of elsewhere, and Mary's imagination runs on the possibilities, "on coral combs, studded with pearls" (205). Even when Will describes the comb as entirely commonplace, she continues to trust in what it represents. She begs for more stories, and Will takes the opportunity to vindicate Jack Harris with a description of a flying fish, moving the story again, this time from the Pacific to Madeira, off the coast of Africa. With the introduction of another fantastic, though not mythological, creature, Will's stories give substance to possibilities through movement. They impose an outward movement without return and imagine elsewhere as an unformed space that can be claimed for the nation by those who do not have a place in the imagined domestic, middle-class unity of England.

Will's many radiating stories of African insects, Pacific mermaids, and flying fish are only possible outside of England, yet they support a sense of unity at home by simultaneously locating difference elsewhere and cataloguing that difference in order to bring it within the imaginative space of the nation. Before Will leaves Job's home, he offers to bring back a Manx cat for Margaret, Job's granddaughter. The Isle of Man, where the cats are found and where Will's family lives, is just off the coast of England, yet Job has never heard of such animals. As Will describes them, "They look as queer and out o' nature as flying fish," even though they are found within the British Isles (Gaskell 208). The island, which will not obtain home rule until 1866, is made both distant and English, exotic yet domestic. Later, Mary thinks of Glasgow in much the same way, identifying it as "mysteriously distant" from Manchester (263). These extensions of the nation are still marked by their difference. When Mary transfers her fantasies to the empire, she imposes her own sense of Englishness, what Job identifies as "British liberty" to peace, work, and food, on that space while maintaining its difference from England (Gaskell 259). As a result, her movement, like that of Will's

stories, is only one way, outward from England. The difference that allows for possibility also precludes those same possibilities at home. A new life must be built abroad, where none is possible for the working class in England. The sea, once again, connects the many parts of the world in an imagined web of stories, which impose movement on the listener through classed relationships to space. For working-class Mary, English domesticity is made possible through emigration, while for middle-class Florence, it is made possible by return.

For both Mary and Florence, elsewhere must be constructed by stories to make movement possible. Imperial spaces, much like the waves, are not immediately accessible to those who remain in England. They remain invisible, although, as Adam Grener points out, the atmosphere of *Dombey and Son*, including the waves, keeps the empire in view if only as a possibility. The view is a limited one "that reflects the individual's limited capacity to conceptualize a global system that remains … inaccessible to lived experience" (127). In this framework, Grener writes, a "combination of particularity and abstraction [is] required to represent systemic interconnection" (123). What the waves are saying and the empire itself are inaccessible within the form of the novel and the social structures of the British nation respectively. They cannot be represented directly, so they require formal abstraction to become visible. Paul's and Will's oral stories, which rely on fantasy rather than representation, create a link between empire and nation, death and life, imagining "elsewhere" not for what it actually was but for its classed possibilities. Like the waves themselves, that which "can be imagined but not fully experienced" is an ever-present (eternal) potential, a fluid space that is constructed by oral stories.

A (Trans)National Aesthetic

The temporality of the storied relationship that the waves create is well established. The "invisible country far away" to which Florence alludes when she looks back on Paul's death can be read as heaven and the waves as the passage of time that eventually brings everyone to that same far-off place (Dickens 769). Such a temporal framing links Paul's imagined immortality with the imagined timelessness of the nation, which is specifically rooted in the firm and the bourgeois ideal it represents. Paul's ability to return "across the waves" through his relationship with Florence works to alleviate the finality of death and its implications. Though Paul himself dies, the death of the firm as stand-in for the nation can be put off eternally, made possible by the birth of Florence's son, another Paul, who extends the family line into a limitless future. It is not only Paul's return through time in the next generation, however, that supports middle-class national continuity, but also Florence's return across the waves with the child. The waves extend the continuity of the nation to include space, as well as time.

When the waves speak, producing a fantastical elsewhere in the middle-class imagination, they implicate both nation and empire in death, specifically Paul's death. Mortality is inescapable, but it can be reimagined in terms of continuity when it is linked in both time and space to other people and other places. Paul's death is tragic, not only for the loss of a beloved individual, but also because that loss occurred when he was too young to reinvigorate the firm or the family through reproduction. Benedict Anderson calls for "a consideration of the cultural roots of nationalism with death, as the last of a whole gamut of fatalities" (10). The nation is essentially a continual struggle to contend with death, in terms of both individual mortality and communal survival. Paul's death provides one possible alternative in the spatial continuity made possible by imperial expansion. When Paul conflates India with the eternal "farther away" to which he will eventually depart, the empire is engaged to bolster the continuity of a middle-class nation built on trade. The idea of the nation, like the stories of the waves, counteracts the arbitrariness of life and death by imagining an immemorable past and a limitless future that, as Anderson puts it, "turn[s] chance into destiny" (12). Paul's and the waves' stories of elsewhere rely heavily on eternity as a model for continuity, but they also augment a temporal framework with the more material possibilities of other places.

Through return, more specifically Florence's return from China with her son, Paul's continued temporal relationship with England, Florence, and the firm are merged with a physical one in the tangible body of the newborn child. The empire makes Paul's birth possible as Florence can only marry Walter, who is not of her social class, if they then leave the country. When Walter tells Florence she cannot marry him because he is "but a wanderer," too poor to make a life in England, she responds,

> If you will take me for your wife, Walter, I will love you dearly. If you will let me go with you, Walter, I will go to the world's end without fear … and with my last breath I will breathe your name to God if I have sense and memory left.
>
> *(Dickens 676–677)*

Like Paul, Florence reimagines a limitless future embedded in the eternal bond of marriage, one that will not end even in death, in terms of the "limitless" space where she and Walter can be together. Walter can only support the wealth of the nation and, as such, produce children who embody the continuity of the middle-class community if he leaves and returns with new wealth and resources. Continuity of space, with the empire becoming a new, if temporary, home, merges the temporal and physical in the body of Florence's child and transforms fatality into national continuity through domesticity.

Like Walter, Mary gains social mobility through movement in both time and space. Where Walter is already of the merchant class, a clerk in Dombey's firm, however, Jem is a laborer. For him, the empire is a return to a pastoral past that is no longer possible in England because of rapid urbanization. Jem's labor, transferred to the colonies, reclaims the idyllic laborer who civilizes foreign spaces while producing resources for others, like Walter, to bring back to England. For Ivan Kreilkamp, this dual movement is inherently tied to storytelling; the "lost" storyteller comes to stand in for the idyllic, rural laborer over the course of the nineteenth century. By recreating the ideal laborer abroad, the idyllic, rural England that has been lost along with that laborer and her voice is constructed in colonized spaces, reflecting the English nation's imagined self back onto the metropole. Orality and the pastoral are reclaimed for the present through working-class movement. Gaskell sets up this connection rather explicitly with the first and last chapters of the novel. Opening on charming fields just half an hour from Manchester, where the working class of the manufacturing city can take a holiday on rare occasions, the novel closes on much the same scene in Canada. Both are described in the same language, with the occasional tree overshadowing neat cottages surrounded by neat gardens. The only difference is that one does not reflect the historical conditions of the 1830s. As D. S. Bland explains in a short monograph on the rural England of *Mary Barton*, contemporary evidence largely shows that rural spaces were rarely, if ever, accessible to the citizens of Manchester, as the city's expansion made them much further than half an hour's walk away (58). Gaskell's own language reflects the imaginative qualities of the opening lines. The field "speaks of other ties and other occupations than those which now absorb the population of the neighborhood" and her descriptions read more like the lines of the Romantic poets than the realist descriptions that will follow (Gaskell 33). The closing scene is much the same, only it locates the pastoral firmly in the present, even switching to present tense to describe "the old primeval trees" and "the glory of an Indian summer [that] is over all" (Gaskell 481). To reclaim the idyllic laborer, that root of English culture, the industrial laborer must be moved elsewhere.

Working-class movement, like that of Mary and Jem, attempts to overcome the paradox of pastoral nostalgia and the push for progress. England remains eternal by extending simultaneously into the future and into the rural spaces of the empire. As such, movement in the novel follows very specific trajectories. Walter and Florence frame their own movement in terms of return. When they visit little Paul's grave before their wedding, Florence exclaims, "Dear Walter, thank you! I can go away, now, happy." Walter quickly corrects her, however, responding, "And *when we come back*,

Florence, we will come and see his grave again" (Dickens 763; my emphasis). They leave in order to return. By contrast, Jem and Mary only speak of leaving England behind them. As *Mary Barton* draws to a close, Jem, who has been falsely accused and acquitted of murder, cannot find work because of the stigma of his arrest. His sympathetic former supervisor offers him a position "as instrument maker to the Agricultural College they are establishing at Toronto, in Canada" (Gaskell 461). Though he offers to let Jem think on it, Jem immediately accepts: "Thank you, sir. No need for seeing the letter to say I'll accept it. I must leave Manchester; and I'd as lief quite England at once when I'm about it" (ibid). Mary echoes him as they plan to leave, saying, "I've never had no opinion of England, ever since they could be such fools as to take up a quiet chap like thee, and clap thee in prison" (477). The movement that is available to them, originally set up by Will's stories, requires them to reject England to recreate it elsewhere. Gaskell and Dickens have their characters confirm the movement afforded by oral stories as transnational aesthetic, with working-class characters rejecting England to leave it and middle-class characters leaving to return. The temporal shifts at the heart of each set of movements are made spatial by oral stories that project fantasies of national continuity and pastoral reclamation on imperial spaces.

A Note on Alice

The story that remains silent is that of the convict. While transportation is its own kind of transnational movement, the stories surrounding it rely on the silence of the people who are moved. Their stories are continually deferred, often to the moment of death or even interminably, confirming the removal of the convict from English society and the imagined space of the nation. Unlike Paul and Florence, who return, or Mary, who remains part of the English nation as imperial nucleus, the convict Alice remains removed from the nation even when she returns to England. Jem almost falls to the same fate, as it is his trial as a convict that removes him from England, but his acquittal and subsequent choice to emigrate allow him to remain within the imagined community. It is important that Jem has a choice both in leaving and in his destination. As Diana C. Archibald writes,

> If he immigrated to New South Wales, it would be an implicit acknowledgement that he had done something wrong, for the stereotype of the Australian colonies being the last resort of thieves and rogues remained strong in nineteenth century fiction … Of the other outposts of empire then thriving under British control, none seemed so able to reproduce English comforts, and thus English domesticity, as the Neo-Europe Canada.
>
> *(36)*

Jem is not able to return, but he is able to "reproduce English domesticity" and, as such, retain his Englishness. Even the convict who builds a life and works to support the nation once he has been transported might be able to return, as Abel Magwitch does in his support of Pip in *Great Expectations*, but Alice is not afforded any of those opportunities.

Alice does not tell her story, except briefly to her mother who presumably already knows it, until just before her death, when she repents for her attempts at revenge. Even what she tells her mother is disjointed, three short stories of one life, all of which predict her fall from grace in the conditions of her life: "What came to that girl comes to thousands every year. It was only ruin, and she was born to it" (Dickens 466). Her stories, those she heard as a child and those she tells now, map a very specific kind of movement on her. As a working-class woman whose mother does not contribute her labor to the nation, she can only move downward, away from England and Englishness. The form of the story is separated, imagining three different Alices who cannot be reconciled with one another except in their separation from England. They all seem to have a different beginning, but all end in ruin. Her language continually distances her from England, though she has physically returned, as when she says,

> And Alice Marwood is come back a woman. Such a woman as she out to be, after all this. In good time, there will be more solemnity, and more fine talk, and more strong arm, most likely, and there will be an end of her.
>
> *(467)*

All that is clear is her conviction, which solidifies the stories told about and to her, or convicts more generally, but defers her own story.

When Alice does tell her story, she does not do so in order to return to the English community. She makes clear that she does not wish to be forgiven, only believed (Dickens 713). Her story does not allow her to be reintegrated into the imagined community but confirms her separation from it. The fallen woman, no matter the cause of her fall, cannot be reclaimed. Alice tells her story as one who was already dead when she went to trial:

> I was concerned in a robbery … Though I was but a girl, I would have gone to Death, sooner than ask him for a word, if a word of his could have saved me. I would! [But] who was it do you think, who … left me without even his poor sign of remembrance; well satisfied that I should be sent abroad, beyond the reach of further trouble to him, and should die, and rot there?
>
> *(714)*

Though transportation was meant to reform the system of capital punishment, providing an alternative to death, it proves just as permanent as death for Alice. She is removed from England, "beyond the reach of further trouble to him," and does not recover even in her return. The stories she is told, the stories told about her, her story of herself, and her movement from England to Australia all mark her as separate. Even when she dies, she will not be permitted to return as Paul does. Her death is simple, and when the light has left her eyes, "Nothing lay there, any longer, but the ruin of the mortal house on which the rain had beaten, and the black hair that had fluttered in the wind" (784). There is no mention of the waves or their stories, only ruin and loss.

Alice takes up very little of the novel, but she performs many roles within it. Her very absence reveals the ways in which national unity relies on her erasure. The domestic tranquility that Florence and Walter find on their return is dependent on a system that removes industrial waste, including the excess population made waste by those, like Carker, who exploit the lower classes for their labor and then dispose of them. Though Carker does ultimately die for his misdeeds, Florence's rise in her father's esteem, her ability to rehabilitate the firm and the domestic spaces of her childhood, is only possible with his fall and the resultant fall of the firm. The domestic space Florence creates and the revival of the firm rely on Alice's transportation and her resultant revenge on Carker. Yet, Alice does not have a place in the imagined community of the nation, so she never hears the stories of the waves. The stories she hears and tells are of her own sexual exploitation and ruin, imposing a kind of movement that removes her entirely from the British imagination. Both she and Florence end up "far away," but the stories they hear limit Alice, where they open up possibilities for Florence. The eternal elsewhere full of love to which Florence sails holds only death for Alice.

Oral storytelling as a transnational aesthetic links time and space, class and empire. As Florence sits on the deck of the ship on her way to China, she begins to understand the story that Paul attempted to tell. Because he shared his stories with her, she now thinks of the waves in relation to him and is willing to listen.

> The voices in the waves are always whispering to Florence, in their ceaseless murmuring, of love … not bounded by the confines of this world, or by the end of time, but ranging still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away!
>
> *(Dickens 769)*

Florence is part of growing middle-class trade networks, so "the invisible country far away" becomes real in this moment in the form of the imperial space on the other end of their journey. The message she hears is one of interconnection embodied in the waves that supports the nation through the return of resources and wealth, as well as fantasies of renewal. Mary hears similar stories through Will, allowing her to transfer working-class fantasies of social mobility elsewhere. As Alice shows, however, that web is closed to many, who must be disposed of in order to make a national community possible. The endings of both novels carefully erase Alice and others of the disposable classes to make room for the middle-class, domestic ideals they imagine. The industrial novel, and the distinctly classed stories its characters tell, come to serve the empire, producing and reproducing classed relations to space that facilitate imperial expansion and an idea of national unity. *Dombey and Son* ends by the sea, looking in on a scene of domestic bliss that parallels that at the end of *Mary Barton*. In both, the waves continue to tell their story, returning again and again to wash upon the shores of the empire.

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26

CLASS, RACE, AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN BRITISH THEATRE BETWEEN THE 1950S AND 2000S

Önder Çakırtaş

In Britain's historical, literary, and sociological perspective, the concept of class has been transformed around ideological conflicts and rejection policies in economy-oriented, race-oriented, and culture-oriented differentiation, respectively. In his essay, "Muslim Minorities in Britain: Integration, Multiculturalism, and Radicalism in the Post-7/7 Period," Tahir Abbas paraphrases Ceri Peach that "British discourse on racialised minorities has shifted its focus from 'colour' in the 1950s and 1960s, 'race' in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, 'ethnicity' in the 1990s, to 'religion' in the present climate [2000s]" (288). While my assessment relates to racial stratification in British society, when I adapt this to the class hierarchy in the British social stratification, I contend that the scope and activity of the concept of "class" are quite large and comprehensive. This transformation in the concept of class has become the complementary element of prevailing ideology and culture moderated as "grand narratives" of artistic and cultural products. British theatre's mission includes being carrier of these narratives. British political theatre is alive with works from the 1920s Theatre Workers Movement to the twenty-first century, with the works of "leftist" playwrights focusing on class divisions. I assess new, post-1920s playwriting under the umbrella terms of "agitprop" and "epic," especially those describing the battles of the working class with the bourgeoisie. In the 1950s, the theatrical works of a group of playwrights (some call them "Angry Young Men") repeatedly weave around the subject of class separations. Affected by the 1968 global student unrests, the 1970s open the epoch of new leftist, idealistic theatre, while in the 1980s, women's political writing rises against the masculinist upheaval in playwriting. The 1990s, with rare examples of political theatre, is the age of "in-yer-face" in which violence, sexuality, and murder predominate. Since 2000, theatre has dealt with identity conflicts, while multicultural and postcolonial identities have been marginalized.

I have tracked the social transformation specifically in terms of the shift of social stratification from class to race and culture. This shift in Britain followed in the second half of the twentieth century. However, I do not argue that this chronological and historical transformation caused class to disappear completely. Classes undergo structural changes with the emergence of new and different factors throughout history. Here, the concept of class has not disappeared but has undergone some intersectional transformations with race. I have selected plays of three playwrights, John Osborne, David Edgar, and David Hare, whose social and political themes typify the conversion of "social stratification" from solely a class hierarchy to a racial pyramid and cultural cluster in British public spheres. Considering that the economic system, the backbone of the class struggle,