EDITED BY

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An Anthology of London in Literature

'Flower of Cities All'

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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Geoffrey G. Hiller *(1942–2017),*
a scholar and a gentleman:

Of studie took he moost cure and moost hede,
And gladly wold he lerne, and gladly teche.

Preface

This anthology brings together extracts from some of the finest writing in English on the subject of that ancient and fascinating city, chosen from the period in which the London we now know was mainly created: the three-and-a-half centuries that separate the accession of Elizabeth I from the onset of the First World War, which transformed it from a large town still intimately connected to the neighbouring countryside to the sprawling metropolis of an empire that covered a quarter of the globe. London has always been more than a place to live and work: always the cultural heart of England, for example, and always larger by at least an order of magnitude than any other city in Britain—indeed, for much of this period the largest city in the world. But beyond this, London is a city of the mind, an imaginary space haunted by the great mythopoeic cities of Western culture: Rome, Athens, Babylon, Jerusalem. This is why it has kindled the imagination of some of the greatest writers of English, and why it forms the subject of this anthology.

The 142 extracts, which are in all but one case in modernised spelling and punctuation (though including traditional punctuational aids to scansion), are annotated (simple one-word glosses are incorporated into the text in square brackets) and grouped into four sections by historical period, being numbered within those sections: cross-references will take the form "[2.14]" or "(see [4.27])". Each extract has a brief head-note, and references to the head-note of an extract are indicated by "**HN**". References to footnotes will take the form "(see [2.20], n.107)".

Each of the four sections is introduced by an **Introduction**, an account of the various contexts from which the passages are drawn: historical, social, cultural, even geographic (London grew by 25 times and developed beyond recognition throughout the period covered by the anthology).

The **General Introduction** provides a broader context for the extracts as literature, exploring the mythological sources and literary forms and influences that lie behind them.

Glen Iris, Australia — Geoffrey G. Hiller
Melbourne, Australia — Peter L. Groves
Melbourne, Australia — Alan F. Dilnot

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About the Editors

Peter L. Groves, Alan F. Dilnot and the late Geoffrey G. Hiller earned their doctorates at Cambridge and Oxford, and became Senior Lecturers in English Literature at Monash University, Melbourne, where Groves is still employed (in the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics) and Dilnot holds an adjunct position. Hiller and Groves have between them published nine books, including four as co-authors.

General Introduction

The General Introduction addresses the unique role of London in English national consciousness and in English literature, given their tendency to represent London as somehow larger than life, as escaping the merely naturalistic and entering the realm of the symbolic or fantastic, with parallels in the great mythopoeic cities of Western culture—Rome, Jerusalem, Athens, Babylon, Troy. It looks at the idea of the City in Classical and Christian culture, as well as London's development, in the nineteenth-century, into that unprecedented phenomenon, a megalopolis (the Great Wen) that had begun not just to astonish visitors with its size and complexity but to seem alien to its own inhabitants.

"What a mortal big place this same London is!" cries the country squire Sapscull in Henry Carey's farce *The Honest Yorkshire-Man*: "ye mun ne'er see end on't; for sure; – housen upon housen, folk upon folk – one would admire where they did grow all of 'em" (Carey 1735, 9). Sapscull was not the first, or the last, to be drawn to what he praises in song as a "great and gallant city", where "all the streets are pav'd with gold, / And all the folks are witty" (1736, 10). But his first impression is of sheer bewildering size: London throughout our period (1558–1914) was vastly larger than any other town in Britain,[1] and for the last eight decades of it the greatest city in the world. For most of its history, it has been a magnet to draw in outsiders, people on the go, on the make (like William Shakespeare from Warwickshire and Charles Dickens from Kent), and visitors like Sapscull were struck by the

[1]In 1600, for example, there were seventeen times as many people in London as in the next biggest city, Norwich, and the disproportion has only grown since. It should be remembered, however, that prior to the first census in 1801, population figures for London can be no more than estimates and are complicated by the fact that the perimeter of London as an entity was for the most part not clearly fixed (even now the name can refer to a number of differently defined geographic and political areas).

noise, the bustle, the energy of the place. Some of the earliest literature to capture this stir and hustle, this frenetic (and not always entirely legitimate) pursuit of money, sex and status is found in Elizabethan satire (see, for example, [1.6]) and contemporary accounts of "coney-catching"[2] and other scams (see [1.21–1.23]). Jacobean city comedy continued this representation (see [1.22–1.23] for extracts) in plays like Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605) and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (c. 1604), which also record some of the moral anxiety that contemporaries felt about the transformative power of all the money flowing into the city from the huge expanse in overseas trade in the sixteenth century: the questions raised in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) about the legitimacy of lending money at interest (the lifeblood of capitalism) had more than a historical interest. As Jonson remarked in the prologue to *The Alchemist* (1610), a city comedy in which everyone is implicated in one mad (or cynical) get-rich-quick scheme or another:

> Our *Scene* is *London*, 'cause we would make known,
> No country's mirth is better than our own.
> No clime breeds better matter, for your whore,
> Bawd, squire, imposter, many persons more.

The undifferentiated listing of *whore,/Bawd, squire, imposter* seems to suggest a dissolution of traditional moral and social distinctions in the universal acid of obsessive urban greed.

The tradition of representing London as a kind of Vanity Fair, preoccupied with "getting and spending", continues in Restoration comedy and in Augustan satire (such as Pope's *Imitations of Horace*, 1737–1739 [Pope 1966, 327–424], and Johnson's *London*, 1738 [2.30]); it was also represented ironically in the form of pastoral and georgic, traditionally rustic or "bucolic" genres, by writers like Swift and Gay [2.18–2.20]. That new genre the novel, with its typically urban focus, took up the theme, from Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722 [2.27]) to Victorian classics like Dicken's *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865 [3.32]), and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875 [4.15]).

The outsiders who flocked to London during this period came from further afield than the British Isles. London has always been a cosmopolitan city: from the early sixteenth century, for example, the fact that the English were (relatively) reluctant to persecute people on purely religious grounds brought many immigrants from Europe, and Wordsworth in the 1790s could observe

[2]A *coney-catcher* was a confidence trickster (*coney* means "rabbit"). See Salgādo (1977).

> Among the crowd […] all specimens of Man,
> Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
> And every character of form and face:
> The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
> The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
> America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
> Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese,
> And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns. (*The Prelude* 1805, 7.235–43)[3]

For some newly arrived visitors to nineteenth-century London, like Charlotte Brontë's cloistered heroine Lucy Snowe in *Villette* (1853), what Wordsworth called "the shock / Of the huge town's first presence, and […] / Her endless streets' (*Prelude* 1850, 7.66–8; Wordsworth, 225) was a kind of awakening:

> Above my head, above the house tops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orbed mass, dark blue and dim – THE DOME.[4] While I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life. […] I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got – I know not how – I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure. [3.1]

To other new arrivals, like Pip in *Great Expectations* (1861), the experience was more oppressive:

> while I was scared by the immensity of London, I think I might have had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty. […] I came into Smithfield[5]; and the shameful place, being all asmear with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me. So, I rubbed it off with all possible speed by turning into a street where I saw the great black[6] dome of Saint Paul's bulging at me from behind a grim stone building which a bystander said was Newgate Prison. (Dickens 1999, ch. 22)

[3]Wordsworth (1959, 232); for information on *The Prelude*, see [3.5 **HN**].

[4]**THE DOME** of St Paul's Cathedral [2.13 **HN**], the second biggest in the world, topped by its imposing stone lantern and inspired by Michelangelo's cupola for St Peter's in Rome, was (at 112 feet wide and 278 feet tall) a prominent and impressive landmark: prior to the 1960s St Paul's was the largest church in Britain and the tallest building in London.

[5]Smithfield, a large open area just outside the City walls to the north-west, was (and still is) the site of the main meat-market for London (from C12th), notorious for its filth and disorder; cattle were slaughtered there, as were traitors and heretics in protracted gruesome executions (C14th to C17th). From 1783 to 1868 the public hanging of common criminals took place just to the south, outside Newgate Prison (see [2.28 **HN**]).

[6]**black**: in reality bluish-grey (leaden), but black then due to the sooty pollution caused by numberless coal-fires, a problem that persisted in London till the Clean Air Act of 1956.

We can see in both Brontë and Dickens a tendency to represent London as somehow larger than life, as escaping the merely naturalistic and entering the realm of the symbolic or fantastic. This tendency to personify and mythologise London, to find parallels in the great mythopoeic cities of Western culture—Rome, Jerusalem, Athens, Babylon, Troy—has a long history: according to the twelfth-century chronicler (and myth-maker) Geoffrey of Monmouth, London was initially founded in the twelfth century BCE as New Troy (or Troynovant) by Brutus, the imaginary first king of Britain.[7] New Troy represented (like Rome itself) a relocation or transplanting of the imperial authority of Troy. The city was (apparently) later re-founded as "Ludtown" (Welsh *Llud-din*) by Lud, one of the later mythical pre-Roman kings of Britain (like Lear and Cymbeline), who is supposed to have given his name to Ludgate, the westernmost gate in London Wall. Thus, in 1585, the dramatist George Peele devised a pageant[8] to celebrate the installation of the new Lord Mayor, in which the city is made to declare "*New Troye* I hight [*am called*] whom *Lud* my Lord surnam'd, / *London* the glory of the western side: / Throughout the world is lovely *London* fam'd" (1585, 2); a century later, recalling the execution of Charles I in Whitehall, Thomas Jordan characterised London and Westminster rather differently ("This pair of sinful cities, we, with sorrow, / May parallel with *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* […] pamper'd up with prosp'rous sins"), warning that the unregenerate Londoner "ne're shall be […] A Citizen of *New Hierusalem*"[9] (1685, 77). Wordsworth as a child in the Lake District conceived of distant London entirely as a mythic space of "wonder, and obscure delight" (*The Prelude* 1805, 7.77–87):

> There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned
> Of airy palaces, and gardens built
> By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
> Authentic history been set forth of Rome,
> Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis;
> Or given upon report by pilgrim-friars
> Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
> Among Tartarian wilds, fell short, far short,
> Of what my fond simplicity believed
> And thought of London. (Wordsworth 1959, 224)

[7]Brutus was, apparently, a great-grandson of the Trojan hero Aeneas and ancestor of Shakespeare's Lear. Geoffrey's popular *Historia Regum Britanniae* ("History of the Kings of Britain") is our main source of "information" about these mythical kings of Britain (including King Arthur). For Troynovant and Ludtown, see Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1590), 3.9.48–51 and 2.10.46 (Spenser 1966, 193; 122).

[8]Part of the traditional procession (since 1215) now known as the Lord Mayor's Show, in which the newly elected Mayor leaves the City of London and travels to Westminster to pledge loyalty to the Crown.

[9]For the wicked "cities of the plain" Sodom and Gomorrah, and their destruction, see Genesis, 18:20–19:28; for Heaven as the New Jerusalem, see Revelation, 21–22.

In general, however, the idea of the city has not fared well in Christian iconography, being a natural antithesis to the Garden (of Eden). The first city, Enoch, was built by the first murderer, Cain (Genesis 4:16), and for St Augustine, writing in the early fifth century CE, Cain was the first citizen of *civitas hominum*, the city of men, in bondage to sin and destined for destruction, while his brother Abel belonged to *civitas Dei*, the city of God, in a fellowship predestined *in aeternum regnare cum Deo* (to reign eternally with God).[10] The Old Testament is full of wicked and presumptuous cities doomed to fall before God's wrath—Babel, Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh—but chief among them is Babylon the Great, site of the Israelite Captivity, "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Revelations 17:4). Babylon was pictured as a place of godless magnificence given over to the world and the flesh, a playground for the proud and wicked, and a dungeon for the righteous. For sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant Englishmen, it was a prefiguring of papal Rome and a type of Hell. But from the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Britain emerged triumphant as the chief European imperial power, and what the poet William Cowper called "opulent, enlarged, and still / Increasing London" (Cowper 1995, 135) arose as a new Babylon, "dwelling upon many waters, abundant in treasures" (Jeremiah 51:13), such that "Babylon of old" was "Not more the glory of the earth, than she / A more accomplished world's chief glory now" (Cowper 135).[11] But Babylon was also a city under sentence of death: "thine end is come, and the measure [*limit*] of thy covetousness [Hebrew *betsa*, 'dishonest gain']", for "the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire," and "owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever" (Jeremiah 51:13, 5; 50:39). In 1768, Thomas Gray suggested such a melancholy Babylonic end for newly imperial London, through the imagined apocalyptic vision of a political enemy:

> "Purg'd by the sword, and purified by fire,
> Then had we seen proud London's hated walls:
> Owls should have hooted in St Peter's[12] choir,
> And foxes stunk and litter'd in St Paul's." (Lonsdale 1969, 264)

Lucy Snowe, newly arrived in London [3.1], finds it "a Babylon and a wilderness" in its "vastness and […] strangeness" (*Villette*, ch. 5). One of the more striking accounts of London as Babylon can be found in Wordsworth's

[10] See Augustine, *City of God*, Bk 15, ch. 1.

[11] *The Task* (1785, 1.721–24).

[12] **St Peter's**: Westminster Abbey, (The Collegiate Church of **St Peter**) [2.16 **HN**], has been since 1066 the traditional site of royal coronations and burials. By contrast, **St Paul's** Cathedral [2.13 **HN**] was for Gray a modern building, having been officially completed in 1711, though on the site of churches dating back to early Anglo-Saxon England.

description of Bartholomew Fair,[13] which paints it as a confusion of nightmarish activity: "a shock / For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din, / Barbarian and infernal, – a phantasma, / Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!" (Wordsworth 1959, 258–60), a hellish scene of "buffoons against buffoons / Grimacing, writhing, screaming" in which humans are reduced to mindless clockwork:

> The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
> The wax-work, clock-work, all the marvellous craft
> Of modern Merlins, wild beasts, puppet-shows,
> All out-o'-the-way, far-fetch'd, perverted things,
> All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
> Of man, his dullness, madness, and their feats
> All jumbled up together, to compose
> This Parliament of Monsters. (*The Prelude* 1805, 7.649–94)

Classical culture offered, of course, more positive models of the city, as Athens (devoted to light and learning, to elegant pleasures and the play of intellect) or as republican Rome (exemplar of civic virtue, *gravitas* and great public monuments). John Lyly in 1580 imagines his Athenian character Euphues praising London as "a place both for the beauty of building, infinite riches, variety of all things, that excelleth all the cities in the world […]. What can there be in any place under the heavens that is not in this noble city either to be bought or borrowed?" [1.1], a sentiment echoed two centuries later by Samuel Johnson: "you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford" [2.17]. Even Cowper admits that in "proud and gay / And gain-devoted cities", we find not only "Rank abundance breed[ing] / […] sloth and lust, / And wantonness and gluttonous excess", but also "nurseries of the arts, / In which they flourish most" (Cowper 1995, 134):

> Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd
> The fairest capital in all the world,
> By riot[14] and incontinence the worst.
> There, touch'd by Reynolds,[15] a dull blank becomes
> A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees

[13]A boisterous summer fair held annually in Smithfield (see n.5 above) from 1133 to 1855, when it was suppressed by the City for encouraging un-Victorian behaviour; see [1.23 **HN**] and [2.23].

[14]**riot**: noisy revelry; debauchery.

[15]Sir Joshua **Reynolds** RA FRS FRSA (1723–1792), one of the greatest of English portrait-painters, friend of Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke and others, was born in Devon but spent most of his life in London. He was the first president of the Royal Academy (see [4.22], n.52).

All her reflected features. […]
Where finds philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk[16]
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?[17]
In London: where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, computes, and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?[18] (Cowper 1995, 134)

Or as Johnson put it in 1769, "[t]he happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom" [2.17].

One of the finest evocations of London as Athens is, oddly enough, also from Wordsworth: it is his sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802" [3.12]. "Earth", he claims, "has not anything to show more fair": Earth (or Nature) is represented as owning the city, as showing it off like a proud mother, rather than rejecting it as a destructive invasion, a cancer, which would be the expected Romantic position. Paradoxically, though the "City now doth like a garment wear / The beauty of the morning", it is "bare": the morning sunlight, a kind of temporary clothing, reveals its true classical form as "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples", which are not closed off from Nature but "lie / Open unto the fields, and to the sky, – / All bright and glittering in the smokeless air". Smoke (in abeyance in the early morning) is a sign of the Fall into industrialisation from that "first splendour", the original Edenic perfection that persists in "valley, rock, or hill": Wordsworth is showing us a London redeemed precisely by being denatured, inactive, dead, with its "mighty heart […] lying still". London, like a typical sinner, can only recover its true nature by dying to its old self, shedding its apparent nature as Babylon for its true original one, as Athens.

We like to think that we would be at ease in Athens, and—as guilty creatures—we might feel uneasily at home in Babylon (indeed, the decadent poets of the 1890s like Oscar Wilde and Lionel Johnson—see [4.7] and [4.3]—were fond of imagining London as a particularly wicked sort of

[16]**yon burning disk**: the sun. According to Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) the eagle's eyes are so strong that it can gaze at the sun (*Natural History*, Bk 10, ch. 3); the claim was repeated in medieval bestiaries.

[17]Sun**spots** were first mentioned as early as C4th BCE, but the first recorded observation of them by projected telescopic image was not by Galileo but by Thomas Harriot in July 1609, in the grounds of Syon House, near Hounslow, now part of Greater London.

[18]*The Task*, 1.681–718. The London clockmaker John Harrison (1693–1776), an immigrant from Yorkshire, succeeded in creating an accurate marine chronometer that made possible for the first time the precise measurement of longitude at sea. It was used by Captain Cook on his second (1772–1775) and third (1776–1779) voyages.

Babylon). But early nineteenth-century London, transformed by industrialisation and swollen out of all proportion,[19] like some sprawling third-world megalopolis, "home" to a huge, anonymous, disaffected, estranged populace, brought something new in human experience: a city that seemed alien to its own inhabitants. For Cobbett, industrial London is the "Great Wen" (literally, a fatty tumour of the head), "produced by corruption and engendering crime and misery and slavery" [3.4]. Wordsworth again, a rustic outsider like Sapscull, describes the alienation he feels in the "overflowing streets" [3.5] in which "The face of every one / That passes by me is a mystery!", anticipating the phantasmagoria of Baudelaire's—and, later, T S Eliot's—*fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves*[20] as "A second-sight procession, such as glides / Over still mountains, or appears in dreams".

Eliot was to write similarly of London as an "Unreal City / Under the brown fog" in *The Waste Land* (1922, ll. 207–8), evoking the distorting and alienating potential of that London trademark, the "pea-souper" fog,[21] but in this he was anticipated by Dickens. The opening of *Bleak House* (1853 [3.3]) is written in a style as modernist as anything in Eliot: there is not a single sentence in the first three paragraphs, for example, and the heaped-up noun-phrases, not connected or related by conjunctions or pronoun reference, are dislocated in time and sequence by the lack of main tensed verbs, so that the action—or rather tableau—is curiously suspended, outside time, as in a dream, or a kind of paralysis. The "chance people" we glimpse through the fog are mere passive observers, or victims, and the only implied agent in those first three paragraphs is the fog itself, which advances in a sinister fashion from simply creeping and hovering to "cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of [the] shivering little 'prentice boy". Instead of sequence, causation and dependency, we have mere juxtaposition: we are presented with a series of random glimpses which we cannot

[19]London's already large population quadrupled between 1750 and 1850; from the 1830s to the mid-1920s, it was the most populous city on the planet. Interestingly, while the sheer size of London acquired its own meanings, what has been called "literary London", the range of places that supply meaning in literary texts, did not expand as fast. Erik Steiner, the director of Stanford University's Spatial History Project, charted historic references to London in literary texts against "the growing urban density in real-world 1682 London, when it was a small city huddled along the banks of the Thames, to 1896 London, when its population was heading toward 6.5 million people," and found that "even as real-world London grew, literature stayed put in the historic center of the city and in the wealthy West End. [… T]he places that authors used as touch points, to imbue their stories with meaning, stayed the same." (Laskow 2017).

[20]"Ant-swarming city, city full of dreams", a description of Paris from "Les Sept vieillards", Charles Baudelaire (*Les Fleurs du mal*, 2nd ed., 1861). Wordsworth had previously described London as a "monstrous ant-hill" (*Prelude* 1850, 7.149; Wordsworth 1959, 229).

[21]**"pea-souper" fog**: also known as a "London particular" (which originally referred to a kind of madeira), this was a dense dark yellow-green fog (or rather smog) in which the natural mist of the Thames basin was thickened by the sulphurous pollution and soot-laden air of "a great (and dirty) city" [3.3]. It could (and did) asphyxiate the infirm, and after a particularly lethal episode in 1952, the Clean Air Act of 1956 put an end to the problem by banning the domestic burning of coal in large parts of London (and other cities). See [4.7].

organise into a coherent whole. The fog stands, of course, for the obfuscations of legal process in the Court of Chancery, but more broadly the modernist form here points to a curiously modernist subject matter: human incomprehension and paralysis in the face of a randomly fragmented world.

Finally, inseparable from the mythos of London is that "famous river called the Thames" [1.1], the longest in England,[22] variously personified as Spenser's "Sweete *Themmes*" or "wealthy *Thamis* […] / Upon whose stubborn neck, […] / She [London] fastened hath her foote",[23] Peele's "sweet and daintye Nymphe" (1585, 1) and Herrick's "silver-footed[24] Thamesis" [1.3]. But if for the earlier poets the Thames is a kind of water-god or nymph, for the Romantics it represents a powerful intrusion of nature into the manmade world of the city, Wordsworth's "river [that] glideth at his own sweet will" (3.9). Of course, the Thames is only free (for the moment) in Wordsworth's sonnet because of the early morning suspension of waterborne traffic: more typically, unrestricted commerce and the river's convenience as a conduit for trade had turned it into Blake's "chartered" Thames [3.7], an ironic descriptor whether it means "privileged, made free" or "legally delimited for commercial purposes" (like the "chartered street" in the previous line). Nineteenth-century novelists were among the first writers to introduce the river as an object of naturalistic description (see, for example, [3.16] and [4.19–4.20]) but also drew upon its symbolic potential: Dickens makes it stand in *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) for the possibility of rebirth, renewal and moral regeneration, in allusion to Christian baptism. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the river, in resisting human modification, connects modern civilised London with its prehistoric past as "one of the dark places of the earth" [4.20].

If Rome is the Eternal City, London seems at least immortal[25]: it has survived social revolt and civil war, epidemics of plague and endemic cholera, wholesale conflagration and devastating aerial bombardment, and will probably even survive Brexit. In episodes of destruction, it has found renewal and regrowth (who would be without Wren's magnificent cathedral [2.13 **HN**], for example, or those beautiful Hawksmoor churches, all direct consequences of the Great Fire [2.9 **HN**]), and in its mythopoeic power, it has always served to inspire—and will always inspire—the imagination of poets, playwrights and novelists.

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[22]If we include the River Churn, which feeds it early in its course; otherwise, the Severn is a little longer.

[23]*Prothalamion* 18; *The Faerie Queene* 3.9.45 (Spenser 1966, 601; 193). For Spenser, see [1.14].

[24]"Silver-footed" was the epithet traditionally applied to the sea-nymph or demi-goddess Thetis, mother of the Greek hero Achilles.

[25]Though see [4.34] for a different view.

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CHAPTER 1

Period 1: London—Birth of a New Order (1558–1659)

INTRODUCTION

This Introduction looks at the growth of London and Westminster from the accession of Queen Elizabeth I (when it was already a busy port and a diverse and cosmopolitan city) to the Restoration of Charles II. It pays particular attention to the lay-out of Elizabethan London, and follows in detail an imaginary time-traveller on her journey from Bedlam, north of the City, down Bishopsgate, southwards past the Royal Exchange and Lombard St, and over London Bridge to Shakespeare's Globe, with some consequent consideration of Elizabethan theatre.

Though archaeological evidence suggests that parts of the Thames estuary may have been settled since the Bronze Age, London itself has a clear point of origin: it was founded (as 'Londinium') on the north bank of the Thames near the current City of London by the Romans, a few years after their invasion of Britain in 43 CE. This is perhaps not a surprising choice, given the site's strategic situation at a bridgeable location near the mouth of a navigable river, and facing the continent of Europe. London entered the historical record in 60 CE as one of the towns sacked by Queen Boudicca of the Iceni,[1] being characterized by the Roman historian Tacitus as "greatly frequented by merchants and their traffic",[2] a description that has remained apt for most of its subsequent history. Elizabethan London, "the storehouse and mart of all Europe" [**1.1**], was already a busy port, and contemporary views of the city show a great variety of merchantmen, including ocean-going ships, moored

[1] She led an uprising of her tribe, the Iceni, against the Romans after the local Roman commander, having annexed her husband's kingdom on his death, had her flogged for protesting, and her daughters raped.

[2] "copia negotiatorum et commeatuum maxime celebre", *Annales* 14.33.

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just downriver of the Bridge. Like other great trading cities, it was necessarily cosmopolitan, "framed to please / All Nations, Customs, Kindreds, Languages!" [**1.3**], since (as in the case of Shakespeare's Venice) "the trade and profit of the city / Consisteth of all nations".[3] Not everyone was happy, however, with this ethnic diversity, as suggested by Shakespeare's scene in the manuscript play *Sir Thomas More*, where More persuades a reluctant mob to accept Flemish refugees on humanitarian grounds; in 1596, indeed, Elizabeth complained to the Lord Mayor of London that "there are of […] blackmoors [*Africans*] […] already here too many" (Bartels 2006, 305).[4]

When Euphues observes that "the greatest wealth and substance of the whole realm is couched within the walls of London" [**1.1**] he is referring to the City of London, a compact square mile or so circumscribed by the remains of the Roman walls; outside those walls, about one mile to the west, was a second city, Westminster (then as now the seat of government), which included the sprawling 23-acre royal palace of Whitehall, with its many courts and gardens (see [**1.13**–**1.15**]). Northwards of these two there was yet little urban encroachment: just beyond the City walls were orchards and cow pastures, and Tottenham Court Rd and Oxford St were broad country lanes, just as the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, now off Trafalgar Square, really was in the fields between Westminster and the City. We should not be deceived, however, by the fact that most of what we now call Greater London was then rural: there was little open space of any kind within the City itself, and Londoners would have been only too familiar with the noise and smoke of iron-foundries, and industrial kilns for making bricks and quicklime.

The two cities together had a population of about 120,000 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, swelling to perhaps 400,000 at the restoration of Charles II in 1660. They were connected by that ever-fashionable street the Strand, "Whereon so many stately structures stand" [**1.3**]. These included many fine aristocratic residences, such as Leicester (later Essex) House, associated with the two men who were closest to Elizabeth: Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and (after his death in 1588) Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. The Strand also boasted Cecil House, from 1560 the grand residence of Lord Burghley (Elizabeth's closest political advisor), and Arundel House, from 1558 the home of Henry Fitz Alan, Earl of Arundel. Arundel House had been the medieval *pied-à-terre* of the Bishops of Bath and Wells, but was seized by Henry VIII, like so much Church property, in 1539 during the dissolution of the monasteries. Before the Reformation, much of London was owned by the Church and devoted to religious foundations; this land was

[3] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (ca. 1596), 3.3.29–30. London seems to have been cosmopolitan from its beginnings: see "DNA study finds London was ethnically diverse from start", http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-34809804, accessed 18 May 2018.

[4] Elizabeth's objections were not racist in the modern sense but concerned (like so much of her domestic policy) with preserving religious homogeneity. See Bartels (2006) for a fuller account; see [**2.15**] for a later and more recognizably modern display of xenophobia.

freed up and distributed among the king's cronies and his own estate, much of it now forming part of London's extensive parklands. In 1538, for example, the Dominican priory of Blackfriars (near modern Blackfriars station) was given to Lord Cobham, and eventually provided an indoor theatre for Shakespeare's company to stage plays in the winter, from 1608 onwards.

Not all London streets, however, were as commodious as the Strand. More commonly, and especially in the City, they were narrow and crowded laneways lined with wooden buildings, loud with the cries of hawkers, darkened by the 'jetties' or overhanging upper storeys of houses, and noisome with the stench of the kennels, gutters that ran down the middle of the streets and served as open sewers running with human faeces, urine, stinking offal and industrial waste. Milton in *Paradise Lost* (9.445–51) imagines Satan in Paradise as an escapee from his (Milton's) foetid native city:

> As one who long in populous city pent,
> Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
> Forth issuing on a summer's morn, to breathe
> Among the pleasant villages and farms
> Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
> The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,[5]
> Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound; (Milton 1971, 465)

It was easy for a visitor to get lost in the labyrinth of unlabelled laneways, guided only by occasional landmarks and the ubiquitous inn-signs: "Ay, sure 'tis in this lane; I turned on the right hand coming from the Stocks [*a meat- and fish-market in Cornhill*] […]. Sure, this is the lane: there's the Windmill, there's the Dog's Head in the Pot, and here's the Friar Whipping the Nun's Arse: 'tis hereabout, sure." (Heywood 1606, Sc. 4).

It was the Great Fire of London [**2.9 HN**] that gave us the broad streets and the brick and stone buildings we are familiar with today, and (along with the more recent attentions of Hitler's *Luftwaffe*) ensured that a modern Londoner transported back to 1598 would find (unlike a Venetian making the same time-jump) little to recognize in the Elizabethan city, beyond the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, the Inns of Court and the Guildhall.[6] Let us imagine that (having seen these familiar landmarks) curiosity takes our time-traveller to the famous asylum at Bedlam (see [**1.25 HN**]), at that time just north of the City on Bishopsgate St, requesting of the Warden to "see some of those wretched souls / That here are in your keeping" [**1.26**]; she would have been alarmed and distressed to hear the "cryings, screechings, roarings, brawlings, shaking of chains, swearings, frettings, chafings […] so many, so hideous" [**1.25**]. Her visit would not have surprised the Warden,

[5] **tedded grass … kine**: new-mown grass, spread out to dry; … cattle.

[6] Together with a handful of (partly restored) parish churches such as St Helen's in Bishopsgate, St Giles-without-Cripplegate, and St Andrew Undershaft in Aldgate.

however, given that the habit of observing the inmates of Bedlam as a form of recreation persisted into the eighteenth century: "they act / Such antic and such pretty lunacies, / That spite of sorrow they will make you smile" [**1.26**].

If our time-traveller were of a literary bent, there is one other secular building in late Elizabethan London that she might recognize, but she would have to cross the river to the more sparsely-populated south bank to find it. The simplest way for her to do this would be to walk south down Bishopsgate St (past green fields to her left) through Bishop's Gate itself into the City, and then past Gresham College [**2.12 HN**], established by the will of the rich Elizabethan merchant Sir Thomas Gresham, who also founded nearby in Threadneedle St that "glorious bourse, which they call the Royal Exchange, for the meeting of merchants of all countries where any traffic is to be had" [**1.1**]. The Exchange (lost in the Great Fire) was worth a visit: a character in a contemporary play observes that "all the world has not [its] fellow", and that the Rialto in Venice is

> […] but a bauble, if compar'd to this.
> The nearest, that which most resembles this,
> Is the great Bourse in Antwerp, yet not comparable
> Either in height or wideness, the fair cellarage,
> Or goodly shops above. Oh my Lord Mayor,
> This Gresham hath much grac'd your City of London;
> His fame will long outlive him. (Heywood 1606, Sc. 6)

Passing through the parish of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, she might drop in on the current London residence of Mr William Shakespeare (see Schoenbaum 1975, 161–4), whom she could quiz about textual difficulties and regale with assurances of the cultural immortality he may have hoped for ("Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme", *Sonnets* 55.1–2).

Having finished her chat with Shakespeare and continued her walk south down Gracechurch St toward the river, our explorer would cross Lombard St, then as now the home of bankers, and Eastcheap, where she might pop into the Boar's Head Tavern, Falstaff's favourite pub, for a cup of sack (dry white wine). Suitably refreshed, our traveller would continue south on New Fish St, past Pudding Lane (where the Great Fire was to originate in 1666 [**2.9 HN**]), to London Bridge [**1.2**], completed in 1209 where the modern bridge now stands, and built up along its length "in manner of a continual street, well replenished with large and stately houses on both sides" [**1.1**]. By the Elizabethan period, however, poorly regulated housing development had reduced the crowded thoroughfare—it was the only the bridge across the Thames in London—to a dark tunnel under the jetties, just twelve feet wide, shared by carts, horses and jostling pedestrians.[7] Emerging (relieved)

[7] Alternatively, she might have hired one of the many 'watermen' to row her across for a fee.

in Southwark at the southern end, looking up at the gatehouse as she left the bridge, she might shudder at the grisly silent warning conveyed by the impaled heads of traitors (a German visitor in the 1590s counted thirty of them).

Turning right along the river-bank, our time-traveller would pass the notorious Clink, a prison run by the Bishop of Winchester, whose London residence was next door (and whose diocese included Southwark). Elizabethan prisons, "the grave of the living, where they are shut up from the world and their friends" [**1.24**], were used less for punishment than for detention awaiting trial, and tended to be less (or more) uncomfortable depending on your ability to pay—or bribe—the gaolers [**1.24 HN**]. She would also pass the 'stews,' brothels leased from the same enterprising bishop, whose employees were known as 'Winchester geese'; consorting with them might leave one with a permanent memento, for (as Robert Greene put it) "Some fond [*foolish*] men are so far in with these detestable trugs [*sex-workers*] that they consume what they have upon them, and find nothing but a Neapolitan favour for their labour".[8] She would probably have declined to enter the stews, however, as likewise the nearby Bear Garden, an arena in which dogs were set on chained bears for the amusement of spectators; her interest would have led her past the Bear Garden to the largish polygonal wooden structure on Maiden Lane (now Park St) that she would recognize from illustrations as the Globe, the theatre in which Shakespeare had a profitable share and for which he wrote many plays in the second half of his career.

Today we associate Shakespeare with High Art and dutiful middle-class audiences (or bored schoolchildren), so it seems incongruous to find his theatre flourishing (among others) in what was clearly the *louche* part of town, among the brothels, the taverns and the bear-baiting arenas. But the Puritans who ran the City of London did the theatre the courtesy of recognizing it as a dangerous and subversive art-form, and effectively banished it beyond the city limits. Puritans objected in any case to fiction in itself, on the grounds that it was merely an elaborate lie (after all, there never was a man called Hamlet).[9] But the theatre went beyond simple lying: not only did it "nourish idleness" and "draw the people from hearing the word of God", but (in the eyes of one Puritan pamphleteer) treated religion "scoffingly, floutingly, and jibingly"; theatres, moreover, were notorious places to pick up sexual partners, and so playgoers who thought they were innocently watching a comedy were in fact flocking to "Venus' palace and Satan's synagogue to worship devils and betray Christ Jesus" [**1.8**].

[8]**Neapolitan favour**: syphilis, the 'Neapolitan bone-ache' (the disease was first recorded in Europe in the 1490s, in French troops besieging Naples).

[9]To which objection Sir Philip Sidney replied that the poet "nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth", never "conjure[s] you to believe for true what he writes" (*The Defence of Poesy*, 1580): he or she, that is, doesn't say "There was a man called Hamlet", but rather "Let's pretend there is a man called Hamlet in such and such a situation, and see what might happen".

Permanent professional theatres were still something of a novelty in 1600, dating only from 1576, when James Burbage built 'The Theatre' in Shoreditch, north of Bedlam and beyond the jurisdiction of the City Fathers. The very idea of popular secular drama was a novelty in itself: drama in the Middle Ages had been lively enough, but it was confined to religious and moral edification, to amateur actors, to makeshift arenas and to holidays and festivals. So professional secular theatre was still, in Shakespeare's time, an experimental form, working out its methods and conventions. Academic neo-classical theory on the continent held that the function of theatre was to produce the illusion of reality in a passive spectator, but Shakespeare mocks this idea in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (see [**1.10**]), where the amateur actors worry that a man in a crude lion costume will cause panic by being mistaken for the real thing. He proposes instead a form of co-operative and active imaginative engagement between actors and audience, exhorting his spectators to "On your imaginary forces work", and "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them / Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth" [**1.9**].

Elizabethan theatre was a highly popular form of entertainment, being one of the few non-sadistic forms of public spectacle available—as opposed, for example, to watching the slow strangulation of convicts hanged at Tyburn Tree [**2.29 HN**], or the live disemboweling of traitors at Smithfield (see **General Introduction**, n.5). But the business of theatre was frequently interrupted by outbreaks of bubonic plague, stemming (as they thought) from "th' infection of our London air" [**1.7**], which led to the repeated closing of the theatres, and the pathetic spectacle of "servants crying out for masters, wives for husbands, parents for children, children for their mothers" [**1.12**]. The outbreak of Civil War between King and Parliament in the 1640s, in which London stayed firmly on the Parliament side, gave the Puritan Long Parliament an excuse to shut the theatres down for good in 1642: public theatre was not to resume until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

Peter Groves (Monash University)

1.1 John Lyly: London the Ideal City

Euphues—an Athenian, a traveller, and lover—enthusiastically extols the wonders of London to the ladies of Italy. The writer ***John Lyly*** *(?1554–1606), wrote many plays for Elizabeth's court and two prose romances on the adventures of Euphues. The popularity of Lyly's two prose works partly depended on their decorative, mannered style (Euphuism).*

From "Euphues' Glass for Europe," in *Euphues and His England* (1580)

It [England] hath in it twenty and six cities, of the which the chiefest is named London, a place both for the beauty of building, infinite riches, variety of all things, that excelleth all the cities in the world insomuch that it may be called the storehouse and mart of all Europe. Close by this city runneth the famous river called the Thames, which from the head where it riseth named

Isis unto the fall Medway[10] it is thought to be an hundred and four score miles. What can there be in any place under the heavens that is not in this noble city either to be bought or borrowed?

It hath divers hospitals[11] for the relieving of the poor, six score fair churches for divine service, a glorious bourse, which they call the Royal Exchange for the meeting of merchants of all countries where any traffic is to be had. And among all the strange and beautiful shows, methinketh there is none so notable as the Bridge which crosseth the Thames, which is in manner of a continual street, well replenished with large and stately houses on both sides, and situate upon twenty arches, whereof each one is made of excellent free stone squared, every one of them being three score foot in height and full twenty in distance one from another.

To this place the whole realm hath his recourse, whereby it seemeth so populous that one would scarce think so many people to be in the whole island as he shall see sometimes in London.

This maketh gentlemen brave[12] and merchants rich, citizens to purchase, and sojourners to mortgage, so that it is to be thought that the greatest wealth and substance of the whole realm is couched within the walls of London, where they that be rich keep it from those that be riotous, not detaining it from the lusty youths of England by rigour, but increasing it until young men shall savour of reason, wherein they show themselves treasurers for others, not hoarders for themselves; yet although it be sure enough, would they had it (in my opinion): it were better to be in the gentleman's purse than in the merchant's hands.

1.2 Donald Lupton: London Bridge

The first London Bridge was built of wood, more or less in its current position, by the Romans. It was several times burnt down or otherwise destroyed until it was rebuilt in stone at the end of the twelfth century. Houses were built on it soon after. Heads of traitors were exhibited on it until the reign of Charles II. Old London Bridge was cleared of its houses by 1762 to increase the flow of traffic, and replaced by a new bridge in 1831.

"London Bridge" forms one of the Characters by ***Donald Lupton*** *(d. 1676). Character Books, comprising witty and lively sketches of social types and London topographical features, were popular in the early seventeenth century.* ***Lupton*** *was now living in London as a hack writer; this collection of Characters was his first publication.*

From "London Bridge," in *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartered* (1632), Part 1, No. 4

[10]**unto … Medway**: to the point near the English Channel where the River **Medway falls** into it; the Medway rises in Sussex and flows through Maidstone in Kent to the Thames Estuary near Sheerness.

[11]**hospitals**: not dedicated medical establishments but "charitable institutions for the housing and maintenance of the needy" (*OED*).

[12]**brave**: fine.

It is almost Art's wonder for strength, length, beauty, wideness, height. It may be said to be Polypus[13] because it is so well furnished with legs. Every mouth is four times filled in eight and forty hours, and then, as a child, it is still; but as soon as they be empty, like a lion it roars and is wondrous impatient.[14] It is made of iron, wood, and stone, and therefore it is a wondrous hardy fellow. It hath changed the form,[15] but as few do nowadays, from worse to better. Certainly it is full of patience because it bears so much, and continually. It's no prison, for anyone goes through it. It is something addicted to pride, for many a great man goes under it, and yet it seems something humble too, for the poorest peasant tread upon it. It hath more wonders than arches: the houses here built are wondrous strong, yet they neither stand on land or water. It is some prejudice to the waterman's gains: many go over here, which otherwise should row or sail. It helps many a penniless purse to pass the water without danger or charges. Nothing affrights it more than spring tides or violent inundations. It is chargeable to keep,[16] for it must be continually repaired. It is the only chief crosser of the water; his arches outface [*defy*] the water and like judges in the Parliament are placed upon wool sacks.[17] One that lives here need not buy strong water, for here is enough for nothing; it seems to hinder the water bearers profit, for the inhabitants easily supply their wants by buckets. He is a settled fellow, and a main upholder of houses. He is meanly placed[18] for there are diverse above him and many under him, and his houses may well be called *Nonesuch*[19] for there is none like them. And to conclude he partakes of two elements: his nether parts are all for water, his upper for land; in a word, it is without compare, being a dainty [*handsome*] street and a strong and most stately bridge.

1.3 Robert Herrick Laments Leaving His Native London

Robert Herrick *(1591–1674) was the son of a London goldsmith. After his father's death, when he was a year old, he lived under the guardianship of his uncle William Herike. He had a great fondness for London, its beauties, and the intellectual stimulus his literary companions provided. However, in 1629 he secured a*

[13]**Polypus**: (Gk., 'many-foot') a cephalopod with tentacles (e.g. an octopus, squid, or cuttlefish).

[14]**Every mouth [...impatient**: The tides added to the very strong currents in each archway **(mouth)** of the bridge.

[15]**changed the form**: i.e. from its earlier wooden structure.

[16]**chargeable to keep**: expensive to maintain.

[17]**like judges ... sacks**: Judges when summoned to the House of Lords sat upon wool sacks. The rebuilding of the Bridge with stone (1176–1209) was subsidized by a duty on wool, after which it was popularly said to have been built on wool packs.

[18]**meanly placed**: situated in the middle rank.

[19]***Nonesuch***: A house on the southern end of the Bridge was called **Nonesuch** House but there is an allusion to the magnificent royal palace in Surrey (begun by Henry VIII in 1538).

living at Dean Prior in Devon, which necessitated his departure. This he keenly regretted, referring to it as "irksome banishment."

"His Tears to Thamesis," in *Hesperides* (1648) (written 1629)

I send, I send here my supremest kiss
To thee my silver-footed Thamesis. [*the Thames*]
No more shall I reiterate[20] thy Strand,[21]
Whereon so many stately structures stand;
Nor in the summer's sweeter evenings go
To bathe in thee, as thousand others do.
No more shall I along thy crystal glide
In barge with boughs and rushes beautified,
With soft-smooth virgins (for our chaste disport)
To Richmond, Kingston, and to Hampton Court.
Never again shall I with finny oar[22]
Put from, or draw unto the faithful shore;
And landing here, or safely landing there,
Make way to my beloved Westminster,[23]
Or to the golden Cheapside,[24] where the earth
Of Julia Herrick gave to me my birth.[25]
May all clean nymphs and curious water dames,
With swan-like state, float up and down thy streams;
No drought upon thy wanton waters fall
To make them lean and languishing at all.
No ruffling winds come hither to disease[26]
Thy pure and silver-wristed Naiades.
Keep up your state, ye streams; and as ye spring,
Never make sick your banks by surfeiting.
Grow young with tides, and though I see ye never,
Receive this vow: "so fare-ye-well forever."

1.4 Herrick's Joyful Return to London

***Herrick,** a staunch Royalist, was compelled to surrender his vicarage in Dean Prior in 1647. He was only too pleased to return from what he regarded as tedious exile and greeted London rapturously as his homeland.*

[20] **reiterate**: go up and down.

[21] **Strand**: the river shores; the street known as the **Strand**, joining London and Westminster.

[22] **finny oar**: fin-shaped oar.

[23] **Westminster**: Herrick probably lived here before his departure.

[24] **golden Cheapside**: **Cheapside** was the goldsmith's district.

[25] **the earth … birth**: Herrick's mother died shortly before he left for Devon; hence the mention of the **earth** of her grave.

[26] **disease**: disturb, make uneasy; infect.

"His Return to London," in *Hesperides* (1648)

From the dull cónfines of the drooping west,
To see the day spring from the pregnant east,
Ravish'd in spirit, I come, nay more, I fly
To thee, blest place of my nativity!
Thus, thus with hallow'd foot I touch the ground,
With thousand blessings by thy fortune crown'd.
O fruitful Genius! that bestowest here
An everlasting plenty, year by year.
O Place! O People! Manners! framed to please
All Nations, Customs, Kindreds, Languages!
I am a freeborn Roman[27]; suffer then,
That I amongst you live a Citizen.
London my home is, though by hard fate sent
Into a long and irksome banishment;
Yet since call'd back, henceforward let me be,
O native country, repossess'd by thee!
For, rather than I'll to the west return,[28]
I'll beg of thee first here to have mine urn.
Weak I am grown, and must in short time fall;
Give thou my sacred relics burial.[29]

1.5 John Webster: The Decrepitude of Some London Buildings

While many writers lavished praise on London's edifices, others were more sceptical. In Westward Ho, *a comedy by* ***John Webster*** *(c. 1578–c. 1632) and* ***Thomas Dekker*** *(?1570–1632), two characters Justiniano and Honeysuckle agree on the grave disrepair of some of the buildings. In fact, in the sixteenth century many interior features of old St Paul's Cathedral were demolished and its nave became a popular meeting place for all social classes from courtiers to pickpockets, no doubt to the detriment of its architecture (see* [**1.15**], 106*). Charing Cross, by then somewhat battered, was one of twelve stone monuments erected by Edward I in 1290 in memory of his wife Eleanor of Castile (they marked the nightly resting-places of her coffin's procession); it was not demolished until 1647.*

From *Westward Ho* (1607), Act 2, Sc. 1

[27] Alluding to Acts 22:28.

[28] **to the west return**: Herrick's parish was of course in the **west**, but so is the setting sun, traditionally associated with death.

[29] **Weak … burial**: Herrick was in fact only 56; he did not die in London. He returned to Dean Prior when his living was restored in 1662 and was buried there on his death in 1674.

Honeysuckle. […W]hat news flutters abroad? Do jackdaws dung the top of Paul's steeple still?[30]

Justiniano. The more is the pity if any daws do come into the temple, as I fear they do.

Honeysuckle. They say Charing Cross is fallen down since I went to Rochelle[31]; but that's no such wonder: 'twas old, and stood awry, as most part of the world can tell. And though it lack under-propping, yet, like great fellows at a wrestling, when their heels are once flying up no man will save 'em: down they fall, and there let them lie, though they were bigger than the Guard. Charing Cross was old, and old things must shrink as well as new Northern cloth.[32]

Justiniano. Your worship is in the right way verily: they must so, but a number of better things between Westminster and TempleBar,[33] both of a worshipful and honourable erection, are fallen to decay and have suffered putrefaction since Charing fell that were not of half so long-standing as the poor wry-necked monument.

1.6 John Donne: The Lively Streets of London

John Donne *(1572–1631) depicts how easily the contemplative scholar may be lured from his study by the attractions offered by the follies, vanities, and sins of the London streets. He warns his companion, the "changeling motley humourist" in advance of such temptations; however, he allows his weak instincts to overcome his better judgement and allows himself to be led forth, sardonically commenting on the behaviour of the humourist and those they meet.*

Satire I, in *Poems*. 2nd ed. (1635) (first pub. 1633; written c. 1593–1594)

Away, thou changeling motley humourist![34]
Leave me, and in this standing wooden chest,[35]
Consorted with these few books, let me lie
In prison, and here be coffin'd when I die.
Here are God's conduits, grave divines[36]; and here
Nature's secretary, the Philosopher[37];

[30] **Paul's steeple**: old St Paul's Cathedral lost its steeple to lightning in 1561.

[31] **Rochelle**: La Rochelle, a prosperous Huguenot (Protestant) city in SW France.

[32] **new … cloth**: Cheating tailors stretched their **cloth** tightly on its frame so that it shrank when it became wet.

[33] **Westminster** … **Temple Bar**: the area between **Westminster** Hall and the Inns of Court [**3.28**, n.93] near **Temple Bar** frequented by those of the legal profession.

[34] **changeling**: foolish; inconstant; **motley**: incongruous, ill-sorted; dressed like a court jester; **humourist**: whimsical, unstable person.

[35] **standing wooden chest**: (1) study; (2) coffin.

[36] **God's … divines**: theologians, who convey (like a **conduit**) knowledge of God to men.

[37] **Nature's secretary, the philosopher**: two epithets commonly applied to Aristotle.

And wily statesmen, which teach how to tie
The sinews of a city's mystic body[38];
Here gath'ring[39] chroniclers, and by them stand
Giddy fantastic poets of each land.
Shall I leave all this constant company,
And follow headlong wild uncertain thee?
First, swear by thy best love, here, in earnest
(If thou which lov'st all, canst love any best)
Thou wilt not leave me in the middle street,
Though some more spruce companion thou dost meet;
Not though a captain do come in thy way,
Bright parcel gilt,[40] with forty dead men's pay;
Not though a brisk, perfum'd, pert courtier
Deign with a nod thy courtesy to answer;
Nor come a velvet Justice with a long
Great train of blue-coats [*servants*], twelve or fourteen strong,
Wilt thou grin or fawn on him, or prepare
A speech to court his beauteous son and heir.
For better or worse take me, or leave me:
To take and leave me is adultery.
Oh, monstrous, superstitious puritan [*purist*],
Of refin'd manners, yet ceremonial man,
That when thou meet'st one, with enquiring eyes
Dost search, and like a needy broker, 'prise [*appraise*]
The silk and gold he wears, and to that rate
So high or low, dost raise thy formal hat;
That wilt consort none until thou have known
What lands he hath in hope, or of his own,
As though all thy companions should make thee
Jointures,[41] and marry thy dear company.
Why shouldst thou (that dost not only approve,
But in rank[42] itchy lust, desire and love
The nakedness and bareness to enjoy,
Of thy plump muddy[43] whore, prostitute boy).
Hate virtue, though she be naked and bare?
At birth and death our bodies naked are;
And till our souls be unapparellèd

[38]**wily … body**: Donne is referring to writers like Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Jean Bodin (1530–1596), **wily** politicians who wrote about statecraft and the maintenance of civil cohesion in the **mystic** (invisible) '**body** politic' of the state.

[39]**gath'ring**: collecting facts.

[40]**parcel gilt**: partly gilded; **dead men's pay**: pay due to dead soldiers, which was fraudulently taken by their officers.

[41]j**ointures**: estates held jointly by spouses.

[42]**rank**: (1) rampant; (2) loathsome.

[43]**muddy**: (1) sinful, corrupt; (2) fleshy, carnal.

Of bodies, they from bliss are banishèd.
Man's first blest state was naked; when by sin
He lost that, he was cloth'd but in beasts' skin[44];
And in this coarse attire which I now wear,
With God, and with the muses I confer.
But since thou, like a contrite penitent,
Charitably warn'd of thy sins, dost repent[45]
These vanities and giddinesses, lo,
I shut my chamber door, and come, let's go!
But sooner may a cheap whore, who hath been
Worn by as many several men in sin
As are black feathers, or musk-colour hose,[46]
Name her child's right true father, 'mongst all those;
Sooner may one guess who shall bear away
Th' Infant[47] of London, heir t' an India[48];
And sooner may a gulling weather spy[49]
By drawing forth heaven's scheme [*a horoscope*] tell certainly
What fashion'd hats, or ruffs, or suits next year
Our subtle-witted antic youths will wear,
Than thou, when thou depart'st from me, can show
Whither, why, when, or with whom thou wouldst go.
But how shall I be pardon'd my offence,
That thus have sinn'd against my conscience?
Now we are in the street; he first of all,
Improvidently proud, creeps to the wall,[50]
And so imprison'd and hemm'd in by me,
Sells for a little state [*status*] his liberty;
Yet though he cannot skip forth now to greet
Every fine silken painted fool we meet,
He them to him with amorous smiles allures,
And grins, smacks, shrugs, and such an itch endures
As 'prentices, or schoolboys, which do know
Of some gay sport abroad, yet dare not go.
And as fiddlers stop lowest[51] at highest sound,
So to the most brave[52] stoops he nigh'st the ground.

[44] See Genesis 2:25; 3:21.

[45] **Charitably … repent**: this line is unmetrical, one of those that Ben Jonson thought Donne "deserved hanging" for.

[46] **black … hose**: These were fashionable; **musk-colour**: reddish brown.

[47] **Infant**: playing on the Spanish Infanta, the prince(ss) of Spain and its heir(ess).

[48] **to an India**: to vast wealth (India was a source of fabled riches).

[49] **gulling weather spy**: deceitful astrologer who purports to foretell the weather.

[50] **to the wall**: to the side of the pavement furthest from the muddy road. The position is **improvidently proud** because he gains in status what he loses in liberty.

[51] **lowest**: furthest from the neck and nearest the bottom of the viol.

[52] **brave**: finely dressed.

But to a grave man he doth move no more
Than the wise politic horse would heretofore,
Or thou, O elephant or ape, wilt do
When any names the King of Spain to you.[53]
Now leaps he upright, jogs me, and cries, "do you see
Yonder well-favour'd youth"? "Which"? "Oh, 'tis he
That dances so divinely"; "Oh," said I,
"Stand still, must you dance here for company"?
He droop'd, we went, till one which did excel
Th'Indians in drinking [*inhaling*] his tobacco well
Met us; they talk'd; I whisper'd, "Let us go,
"'T may be you smell him not, truly I do."
He hears not me, but on the other side
A many-colour'd peacock [*dandy*] having spied,
Leaves him and me; I for my lost sheep stay;
He follows, overtakes, goes on the way,
Saying, "Him whom I last left, all repute [*judge*]
For his device [*expertise*] in handsoming [*adorning*] a suit,
To judge of lace, pink, panes, print, cut,[54] and pleat,
Of all the court to have the best conceit [*judgement*]."
"Our dull comedians want him[55]: let him go;
But oh, God strengthen thee, why stop'st thou so"?
"Why? He hath travell'd," "Long"? "No, but to me
Which understand none, he doth seem to be
Perfect French, and Italian." I replied,
"So is the pox."[56] He answer'd not, but spied
More men of sort, of parts, and qualities.
At last his love he in a window spies,
And like light dew exhal'd,[57] he flings from me,
Violently ravish'd to his lechery.
Many were there, he could command[58] no more;
He quarrell'd, fought, bled; and turn'd out of door,
Directly came to me, hanging the head,[59]
And constantly a while must keep his bed.

[53]**wise politic horse … to you**: These fair-ground animals were trained to respond to key-words in audience requests, and to show apparent loyalty to Elizabeth and disapproval of the **King of Spain**.

[54]**pink**: decorative eyelet; **panes**: ornamental strips; **print**: crimping of pleats as in a ruff; **cut**: slash.

[55]**Our dull comedians want him**: i.e. they need his gaudy clothes to enhance their wardrobe of costumes.

[56]**the pox**: syphilis, blamed as a foreign ailment (see **Introduction 1**, n.8).

[57]**like light dew exhaled**: he is drawn to his mistress as **dew** is drawn up to the sun.

[58]**command**: be in sole possession of her.

[59]**hanging the head**: also, detumescent.

1.7 William Habington: In Praise of London in the Long Vacation

William Habington *(1605–1654) was educated in France but thereafter lived in London in the society of fellow-poets, dramatists, and historians. He was occasionally at court, where his play* The Queen of Aragon *(1640) was performed. He married Lucy Herbert (1633), who was probably the inspiration for his love poems to Castara (1634, 1635, 1640). There is no record of* ***Habington*** *being associated with the Inns of Court but it is likely that his cousin Mr E. C., to whom the poem is addressed, had some affiliation with the London legal community.*

From "To My Worthy Cousin Mr E.C.[60]*: In Praise of the City Life in the Long Vacation," in* Castara *(1634)*

[…] But now it's Long Vacation[61] you will say
The town is empty and who ever may
To th' pleasure of his country home repair,
Fly from th' infection of our London air.[62]
In this your error. Now's the time alone
To live here, when the city dame is gone
T' her house at Brandford,[63] for beyond that she
Imagines there's no land but Barbary,[64]
Where lies her husband's factor [*agent*]. When from hence
Rid is the country Justice, whose nonsénse
Corrupted had the language of the Inn,[65]
Where he and his horse litter'd [*lodged*]. We begin
To live in silence, when the noise o'th' Bench
Not deafens Westminster, nor corrupt French[66]
Walks Fleet Street in her gown.[67] Ruffs of the Bar
By the vacation's pow'r translated are
To cutwork bands.[68] And who were busy here
Are gone to sow sedition in the shire.
The air by this is purg'd, and the Term's strife

[60] **Mr E.C.** has not been identified.

[61] **Long Vacation**: the period when the London law courts were closed, from late July to early October.

[62] **th' infection … air**: before the development of the germ theory of disease transmission in C19th, contagion was thought to be carried by noxious vapour or 'bad air' (miasma).

[63] **Brandford**: an alternative name for Brentford in Essex, a town eight miles from Charing Cross, which was popular among Londoners for rural outings.

[64] **Barbary**: the coast of North Africa, regarded as alien land; there is a pun on 'barbarism.'

[65] **Inn**: one of the Inns of Court, where barristers practised.

[66] **corrupt French**: legal jargon inherited from the (French-speaking) Normans.

[67] **Walks … gown**: taints what is published. (**Fleet Street** had long been the domain of publishers and printers.)

[68] **Ruffs of the Bar … cutwork bands**: Barristers' formal starched and pleated neckwear (**ruffs)** give place in the vacation to everyday collars with openwork embroidery or lace.

Thus fled the city. We the civil life
Lead happily. When in the gentle way
Of noble mirth, I have the long-liv'd day
Contracted to a moment, I retire
To my Castara, and meet such a fire
Of mutual love, that if the city were
Infected, that[69] would purify the air.

DRAMA AND THE THEATRE

1.8 Philip Stubbes: Puritan Objections to Stage Plays

From its inception in the 1570s on there was growing opposition to professional theatre from Puritans, who wrote scathing pamphlets attacking plays, actors, and the theatre-going public. They fiercely maintained that plays were blasphemous, promoted every imaginable vice, encouraged idleness, and emptied churches. The Anatomy of Abuses *by* ***Philip Stubbes*** *(fl. 1583–1591) was one such diatribe.*

From "Of Stage Plays and Interludes with Their Wickedness," in The Anatomy of Abuses *(1583)*

All stage plays, interludes, and comedies are either of divine or profane matter. If they be of divine matter, then are they most intolerable, or rather sacrilegious, for that the blessed word of God is to be handled reverently, gravely, and sagely, with veneration to the glorious majesty of God, which shineth therein, and not scoffingly, floutingly, and jibingly,[70] as it is upon stages in plays and interludes, without any reverence, worship, or veneration to the same […]

[…] But if there were no evil in them save this, namely, that the arguments of tragedies is anger, wrath, immunity,[71] cruelty, injury, incest, murder and such like; the persons or actors are gods, goddesses, Furies, fiends, hags, kings, queens, or potentates; of comedies the matter and ground is love, bawdry, cozenage,[72] flattery, whoredom, adultery; the persons or agents, whores, queans,[73] bawds, scullions, knaves, courtesans, lecherous old men, amorous young men, with such like of infinite variety; if I say there were nothing else but this, it were sufficient to withdraw a good Christian from the using of them. For so often as they go to those houses where players frequent, they go to Venus' palace and Satan's synagogue to worship devils and betray Christ Jesus […]

[69] **that**: i.e. their **fire/Of mutual love**.

[70] **jibingly**: i.e. making fun of it.

[71] **immunity**: freedom from restraint; licence.

[72] **cozenage**: cheating, deceiving.

[73] **quean**: 'a bold or impudent woman; a hussy' (*OED*). The word was originally pronounced differently from *queen* (and still is in parts of Scotland) but they fell together at the end of the Great Vowel Shift, as did *meat* and *meet*.

[…] Besides this, there is no mischief which these plays maintain not, for do they not nourish idleness? and *otia dant vitia*,[74] idleness is the mother of vice. Do they not draw the people from hearing the word of God, from godly lectures and sermons? For you shall have them flock thither thick and threefold when the church of God shall be bare and empty, and those that will never come at sermons will flow thither apace.

1.9 Shakespeare: "On Your Imaginary Forces Work"

Neo-classical theorists of drama like Sir Philip Sidney, for whom theatre was essentially an art of illusion, thought that to preserve this supposed illusion a play should represent just one place and no more than 24 hours. They were consequently scornful of Elizabethan public theatres with their bare stages and their frequent shifts in represented place and time: "Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. […] *While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy, he is lost, grows a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child, – and all this in two hours' space." (Sidney* 1973*, 134)*

In his Prologue to Henry V *(first acted in 1599, probably in the newly-built Globe theatre), a play set in two countries and spanning six years,* ***William Shakespeare*** *(1564–1616) offers (despite his rhetorical invocation of the humility* topos*) a spirited defence of his art as not less but more sophisticated than naïve illusionism, calling as it does upon the active and co-operative imaginative engagement of the audience, "jumping o'er times, / Turning th' accomplishment of many years / Into an hourglass". For Shakespeare, the imagination offers a more effectual* mise-en-scène *than mere stage properties, such as "four or five most vile and ragged foils": "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them / Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth".*

From Henry V, *Prologue to Act 1 (perf. 1599)*

O, for a Muse of fire,[75] that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention;
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
And monarchs to behold the swelling [*magnificent*] scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port [*stateliness*] of Mars, and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire
Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,

[74] ***otia dant vitia***: literally, 'idleness engenders vices.' A Latin proverb.

[75] **fire**: Of the four elements **fire** was most closely associated with poetry because, according to the Ptolemaic system, it was the lightest of the elements and rose upwards towards the empyrean (heaven), to which poetry, also regarded as divine, belonged.

The flat unraisèd spirits[76] that hath dar'd
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object. Can this cockpit[77] hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O[78] the very casques [*helmets*]
That did affright the air at Agincourt?[79]
O, pardon! Since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million[80];
And let us, ciphers to this great account,
On your imaginary forces[81] work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies,
Whose high uprearèd and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puïssance[82];
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck[83] our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hourglass: for the which supply [*assistance*],
Admit me Chorus to this history;
Who, prologue-like, your humble patience pray,
Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.

1.10 Shakespeare: The Best Actors Are but Shadows

*In **Shakespeare's** A Midsummer Night's Dream a group of Athenian craftsmen, the "mechanicals," prepare a play to celebrate the wedding of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta. The Duke persuades his fiancée to watch the performance and forgive*

[76] **flat unraisèd spirits**: dull actors (and playwright) lacking inspiration; a singular verb (**hath**) with a plural subject is not unusual in Elizabethan grammar.

[77] **cockpit**: circular pit for cock-fighting, absurdly inadequate for the representation of a great battle like Agincourt.

[78] **wooden O**: the polygonal wooden Globe theatre.

[79] **Agincourt**: Henry V's great victory in Northern France (25 October 1415), in which the English army defeated a French host perhaps four times its size. In the play the only direct representation of the battle is parodic, through the predatory exploits of the cowardly braggart Pistol.

[80] **a crooked figure … a million**: i.e. the addition of a single **crooked cipher** (curved zero; also **the wooden O**) will multiply a number by ten, turning 100,000 into a **million**.

[81] **imaginary forces**: powers of imagination.

[82] **puissance**: power, strength, force; an army (three syllables here: *pyu-i-ssance*).

[83] **deck**: array (though costume was one physical form of staging that Elizabethan theatre fully embraced).

the artlessness of the actors, since their efforts are well-intentioned and sincere. ***Shakespeare*** *doubtless knew instances of similar graciousness shown by Queen Elizabeth, to whom tributes were paid with timorousness and ineptitude. Very likely the attitude of Theseus was meant as a compliment to Elizabeth's gentle tact* in *responding to similar situations.*

From A Midsummer Night's Dream, *Act 5, Sc. 1 (perf. 1595/96)*

Theseus. I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness [*honesty*] and duty tender it.
Go bring them in; and take your places, ladies.
Hippolyta. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd,
And duty in his service perishing.
Theseus. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.
Hippolyta. He[84] says they can do nothing in this kind.
Theseus. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take [*appreciate*] what they *mis*take;
And what poor duty cannot do,
Noble respect [*attitude*] takes it in might,[85] not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks [*scholars*] have purposèd
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods[86] in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears,
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome,
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.[87]
[…] The best in this kind are but shadows,[88] and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.[89]

[84] **He**: Philostrate, Theseus' Master of the Revels.

[85] **takes it in might**: appreciates it with respect to the powers of those who offer it.

[86] **periods**: pauses, full stops (as Quince does in the immediately following prologue).

[87] **to my capacity**: by my judgement.

[88] **in … kind**: i.e. actors; **but shadows**: (1) merely actors; (2) no more than inadequate representations of some ideal Platonic truth.

[89] **imagination** … **them**: see [**1.9**].

THE PLAGUE

1.11 Thomas Nashe: "Adieu, Farewell, Earth's Bliss"

This song was written by ***Thomas Nashe*** *(1567–c. 1601), a dramatist, pamphleteer, and satirist, who lived in London, though he periodically retired to the country to escape the plague. The song appeared in his play* Summers' Last Will and Testament *(1600). Will Summers (or Somers) was Henry VIII's court jester; in the play he asks for "some doleful ditty to the lute / That may complain my near-approaching death." The play was written in one of the many years when the bubonic plague was rife in London (see also* [**1.25**]*).*

"Song," in *Summers' Last Will and Testament* (1600) (written 1592)

Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss,
This world uncertain is;
Fond [*foolish*] are life's lustful joys,
Death proves them all but toys,
None from his darts can fly.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us![90]

Rich men, trust not in wealth,
Gold cannot buy you health;
Physic [*medicine*] himself must fade,
All things to end are made.
The plague full swift goes by.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Beauty is but a flower
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air,
Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Strength stoops unto the grave,
Worms feed on Hector brave,
Swords may not fight with fate,
Earth still holds ope her gate;
"Come! Come!" the bells do cry.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

[90] **Lord … on us**: It was required that these words should be written on the door of any plague-infected house.

Wit with his wantonness
Tasteth death's bitterness;
Hell's executioner
Hath no ears for to hear
What vain art can reply.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Haste, therefore, each degree,
To welcome destiny:
Heaven is our heritage,
Earth but a player's stage;
Mount we unto the sky.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

1.12 Thomas Dekker: The Plague and Its Victims in 1603

There were frequent outbreaks of the bubonic plague in the second half of the sixteenth century, necessitating the closure of playhouses and other public meeting places. A particularly severe outbreak occurred in 1603 when over 33,000 people died (a sixth of the population of London). In this year James I was crowned, but the plague meant that his ceremonial procession through London streets had to be postponed. The physical effects of the plague were described with gruesome journalistic detail by ***Thomas Dekker*** *(?1570–1632), the London playwright and pamphleteer.*

From The Wonderful Year *(1603)*

[…] And even such a formidable shape did the diseased city appear in: for he that durst, in the dead hour of gloomy midnight, have been so valiant as to have walked through the still and melancholy streets, what think you should have been his music? Surely the loud groans of raving sick men; the struggling pangs of souls departing. In every house grief striking up an alarum: servants crying out for masters, wives for husbands, parents for children, children for their mothers. Here, he should have met some frantically running to knock up sextons; there, others fearfully sweating with coffins, to steal forth dead bodies, lest the fatal handwriting of death should seal up their doors.[91] And to make this dismal consort more full, round about him bells heavily tolling in one place, and ringing out[92] in another […]

[91] **fatal … doors**: It was obligatory when a person had died in one's house to **seal** the door and put a cross on it as a warning to visitors not to enter.

[92] **tolling**: striking [a bell] repeatedly on one side, in a muffled way; **ringing out**: swinging it wide and sounding it loudly and clearly.

[… H]ow often hath the amazed husband waking found the comfort of his bed lying breathless by his side! his children at the same instant gasping for life! and his servants mortally wounded at the heart by sickness! The distracted creature beats at death's doors, exclaims at windows; his cries are sharp enough to pierce heaven, but on earth no ear is opened to receive them.

And in this manner do the tedious minutes of the night stretch out the sorrows of ten thousand. It is now day: let us look forth and try what consolation rises with the sun. Not any, not any; for before the jewel of the morning be fully set in silver, a hundred hungry graves stand gaping, and every one of them (as at a breakfast) hath swallowed down ten or eleven lifeless carcasses. Before dinner in the same gulf are twice so many more devoured; and before the sun takes his rest, those numbers are doubled. Three score that not many hours before had every one several lodgings very delicately furnished, are now thrust all together into one close room—a little little noisome room not fully ten foot square. Doth not this strike coldly to the heart of a worldly miser?[93] To some, the very sound of death's name is instead of a passing-bell. What shall become of such a coward, being told that the self-same body of his, which now is so pampered with superfluous fare, so perfumed and bathed in odoriferous waters, and so gaily apparelled in variety of fashions, must one day be thrown, like stinking carrion, into a rank and rotten grave, where his goodly eyes that did once shoot forth such amorous glances, must be eaten out of his head; his locks that hang wantonly dangling, trodden in dirt underfoot—this doubtless (like thunder) must needs strike him into the earth. But (wretched man!) when thou shalt see, and be assured by tokens sent thee from heaven, that tomorrow thou must be fumbled into a muck-pit and suffer thy body to be bruised and pressed with three score dead men, lying slovenly upon thee, and thou to be undermost of all—yea, and perhaps half of that number were thine enemies, and see how they may be revenged, for the worms that breed out of their putrefying carcasses shall crawl in huge swarms from them and quite devour thee—what agonies will this strange news drive thee into? If thou art in love with thyself, this cannot choose but possess thee with frenzy.

THE COURT AND COURTIERS

1.13 Sir John Davies: "Our Glorious English Court's Divine Image"

Orchestra: A Poem of Dancing *was written by* ***Sir John Davies*** *(1569–1626), probably when he was studying law at the Middle Temple* [**3.28**, n.93] *in 1594. Davies enjoyed court patronage, and the poem pays elaborate compliment to Queen Elizabeth.*

[93] **miser**: among the recognised impediments to making a good Christian end was avarice, the attachment to possessions in this world.

Orchestra *relates the courtship paid by Alcinous to Penelope, which (**Davies** writes) the aged Homer forgot to mention. Alcinous attempts to persuade Penelope to dance by arguing that dancing is an embodiment of universal order. The poem is unfinished but in what was probably to be its climax Love gives Antinous a crystal mirror in which Penelope may see the stately ceremonial revels of Elizabeth*'s *court.*

Orchestra: A Poem of Dancing (1622) (written c. 1594)

Her brighter dazzling beams of majesty
Were laid aside, for she vouchsaf'd awhile
With gracious, cheerful, and familiar eye
Upon the revels of her court to smile,
For so Time's journeys she doth oft beguile,
    Like sight no mortal eye might elsewhere see
    So full of state, art, and variety.

For of her barons brave and ladies fair,
Who had they been elsewhere most fair had been,
Many an incomparable lovely pair
With hand in hand were interlinkèd seen,
Making fair honour to their sov'reign Queen;
    Forward they pac'd, and did their pace apply
    To a most sweet and solemn melody.

So subtle and so curious[94] was the measure,
With such unlook'd-for change in every strain,
As that Penelope, rapt with sweet pleasure,
Ween'd[95] she beheld the true proportion plain
Of her own web, weav'd and unweav'd again,[96]
    But that her art was somewhat less, she thought,
    And on a mere ignoble subject wrought.

For here, like to the silkworm's industry,
Beauty itself out of itself did weave
So rare a work and of such subtlety

[94] **curious**: exquisite.

[95] **ween'd**: believed.

[96] **her own web … again**: When Penelope, faithful to her absent husband Odysseus, is importuned by many suitors, she refuses to re-marry until she has woven a shroud for her dead father-in-law. She weaves it during the day but unravels her work every night so that her task is never completed.

As did all eyes entangle and deceive,
And in all minds a strange impression leave:
In this sweet labyrinth did Cupid stray,
And never had the power to pass away.

1.14 Edmund Spenser: Another View of Love at Court

Edmund Spenser *(?1552–1599) was born in London and knew many in the literary world, including the Earl of Leicester and Sir Walter Ralegh. From 1580 he was Secretary to Lord Grey in Ireland, where he lived near Cork. In 1589 Ralegh invited him to visit the English court. In his pastoral poem* Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, *in the guise of the shepherd Colin, he recounts his adventures, lavishly praising Elizabeth (Cynthia), her noble ladies, and the poets she fosters. However, eulogy turns to satire on the vices of the courtiers themselves—their ostentatious gallantry, pride, and selfish desire for self-advancement. Colin's strongest criticism, to the wonderment of his shepherd friends, is of love at court and how it is debased by its devotees.* ***Spenser****'s deliberately archaic spelling has been retained.*

From Colin Clout's Come Home Again *(1595) (written 1590–1591), 771–94 (Spenser* 1966*, 544)*

And is love then (said Corylas) once knowne
In Court, and his sweet lore professèd there?
I weenèd sure he was our God alone:
And only woon'd [*dwelt*] in fields and forests here.

Not so (quoth he): love most aboundeth there.
For all the walls and windows there are writ,
All full of love, and love, and love, my deare,
And all their talke and studie is of it.
Ne any there doth brave or valiant seeme,
Unlesse that some gay Mistresse' badge he beares:
Ne any one himselfe doth ought esteeme,
Unlesse he swim in love up to the eares.
But they of love and of his sacred lere, [*lore*]
(As it should be) all otherwise devise, [*conceive*]
Then we poore shepheards are accustom'd here,
And him do sue and serve all otherwise.
For with lewd speeches and licentious deeds,
His mightie mysteries they do prophane,
And use his ydle name to other needs,
But as a complement [*ceremoniousness*] for courting vaine.
So him they do not serve as they professe,
But make him serve to them for sordid uses,
Ah my dread Lord, that doest liege hearts possesse,
Avenge thy selfe on them for their abuses.

1.15 Anon.: A Courtier

This sketch was a contribution to the charactery tradition (see [**1.2 HN**]*). It has been attributed to* ***Sir Thomas Overbury*** *but was almost certainly* not *written by him and the writer remains anonymous*[97] *It portrays succinctly the shallowness, pretentiousness, and vanity of what the writer sees as the typical courtier.*

From "A Courtier," in Sir Thomas Overbury, Characters, or, Witty Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons *(1614), No. [5] (attrib.)*

A courtier to all men's thinking is a man, and to most men the finest. All things else are defined by the understanding, but this is by the senses[98]: but his surest mark is that he is to be found only about princes. He smells,[99] and putteth away [*expends*] much of his judgement about the situation [of] his clothes. He knows no man that is not generally known. His wit, like the marigold, openeth with the sun, and therefore he riseth not before ten of the clock. He puts more confidence in his words than meaning, and more in his pronunciation than his words. Occasion is his Cupid,[100] and he hath but one receipt [*formula*] of making love. He follows nothing but inconstancy, admires nothing but beauty, honours nothing but fortune. Loves nothing. The sustenance of his discourse is news, and his censure like a shot depends upon the charging.[101] He is not[102] if he be out of court, but fish-like breathes destruction[103] if out of his own element. Neither his motion or aspect are regular, but he moves by the upper spheres, and is the reflection of higher substances.[104]

If you find him not here,[105] you shall in Paul's,[106] with a picktooth[107] in his hat, a cape cloak, and a long stocking.

[97] See "The Ghost Writers of Lawrence Lisle," in *Sir Thomas Overbury (and Others)*, ed. Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2003), 73–4.

[98] **all things … senses**: i.e. this (**A Courtier**) cannot be identified by the intellect (**understanding**) but only by the **senses** (his perfume, his bright clothing); also, men are defined by their possession of **understanding**, but courtiers, like animals, only by their possession of **senses**.

[99] **smells**: i.e. is scented himself and scents others.

[100] **Occasion … Cupid**: he courts women at every opportunity.

[101] **charging**: (1) loading of a gun; (2) prompting of **princes**.

[102] **is not**: does not exist.

[103] **breathes destruction**: i.e. he cannot survive, like a fish breathing air.

[104] **Neither his motion … substances**: **A Courtier** is compared to a comet or meteor, seemingly erratic both in heavenly **motion** (with a pun on the sense of 'inward prompting, desire') and in **aspect** or relative position in the sky (with a pun on the sense of 'appearance, demeanour'); and the apparent lustre of both is merely a **reflection** of higher realities (the sun, the sovereign).

[105] **here**: (1) at court; (2) in this description.

[106] **Paul's**: Paul's Walk, the main isle of old St Paul's Cathedral, a site of assignation, promenading, gossip and business (see [**1.21**]).

[107] **picktooth**: The toothpick, recently introduced from Italy and France, was regarded as a fashionable accessory, as were the **cape** and the **long stocking**. A character in *Henry VIII* (1613) dismisses "tall stockings" as a Frenchified affectation.

1.16 Thomas Dekker: "How a Young Gallant Should Behave Himself in an Ordinary"

This satire on gallants and courtiers, a parody of Renaissance courtesy-books like The Courtier, *was written by* ***Thomas Dekker*** *(?1570–1632), a prolific writer of plays and pamphlets, who lived almost all his life in London. An 'ordinary' is a tavern "where meals are provided at a fixed price."* (OED)

From The Gull's Hornbook [*dupe's primer*] *(1609), ch. 5*

First, having diligently enquired out an ordinary of the largest reckoning[108] whither most of your courtly gallants do resort, let it be your use to repair thither some half hour after eleven, for then you shall find most of your fashion-mongers planted in the room waiting for meat [*food*]. Ride thither upon your Galloway nag[109] or your Spanish jennet[110] a swift ambling pace in your hose and doublet, gilt rapier and poniard bestowed in their places, and your French lackey carrying your cloak and running before you; or rather in a coach, for that will both hide you from the basilisk[111] eyes of your creditors and outrun a whole kennel of bitter-mouthed sergeants.[112]

Being arrived in the room, salute not any but those of your acquaintance. Walk up and down by the rest as scornfully and as carelessly as a gentleman-usher. Select some friend, having first thrown off your cloak, to walk up and down the room with you. Let him be suited, if you can, worse by far than yourself: he will be a foil to you, and this will be a means to publish your clothes better than Paul's,[113] a tennis court, or a playhouse. Discourse as loud as you can, no matter to what purpose; if you but make a noise and laugh in fashion, and have a good sour face to promise quarrelling, you shall be much observed […]

If you be a courtier, discourse of the obtaining of suits, of your mistress's favours, etc. Make enquiry if any gentleman at board have any suit, to get which he would use the good means of a great man's interest[114] with the King; and withal (if you have not so much grace left in you as to blush) that you are, thanks to your stars, in mighty credit (though in your own conscience you know and are guilty to yourself that you dare not, but only upon the privileges of handsome clothes, presume to peep into the Presence). Demand if there be any gentleman whom any there is acquainted with that is troubled with two offices, or any vicar with two church livings: which will

[108] **an ordinary** … **reckoning**: one of the most expensive places to eat.

[109] **Galloway nag**: small strong Scottish horse.

[110] **Spanish jennet**: small **Spanish** horse.

[111] **basilisk**: fabled reptile which killed with its looks.

[112] **sergeants**: officers charged with arresting or summoning offenders or debtors.

[113] **Paul's**: old St Paul's Cathedral (see [**1.15**], n.106).

[114] **great man's interest**: i.e. his own.

politicly insinuate that your enquiry after them is because you have good means to obtain them. Yea, and rather than your tongue should not be heard in the room but that you should sit like an ass with your finger in your mouth and speak nothing, discourse how often this lady hath sent her coach for you and how often you have sweat in the tennis court with that great lord—for indeed the sweating together in France (I mean the society of tennis)[115] is a great argument of most dear affection even between noblemen and peasants.

WHO SHOULD 'SCAPE WHIPPING?

1.17 John Earle: A Shopkeeper

In this period shopkeepers were a favourite target of satire both for their dishonesty and for their gullibility. This is a character sketch by ***John Earle*** *(?1601–1665), who (like Donald Lupton—see* [**1.2**] *and* [**1.25**]*), was a characterist, writing witty sketches of London characters and landmarks. He was a courtier and became a tutor to Prince Charles. In later life he had a distinguished career in the Church.*

From "A Shopkeeper," in Micro-cosmography, or, a Piece of the World Discovered. *5th ed. (1629), No. 70*

His shop is his well-stuffed book, and himself the title-page of it, or index.[116] He utters much to all men, though he sells but to a few, and entreats for his own necessities by asking others what they lack.[117] No man speaks more and no more,[118] for his words are like his wares—twenty of one sort—and he goes over them alike to all comers. He is an arrogant commender of his own things, for whatsoever he shows you is the best in the town, though the worst in his shop. His conscience was a thing that would have laid upon his hands[119] and he was forced to put it off,[120] and makes great use of honesty to profess upon. He tells you lies by rote, and not minding,[121] as the phrase to sell in, and the language he spent most of his years to learn. He never speaks so truly as when he says he would use you as his brother, for he would abuse his brother, and in his shop thinks it lawful. His religion is much in the nature of his customers, and indeed the pander to it; and by a misinterpreted sense of scripture "makes

[115] **the sweating … tennis)**: The game of **tennis** was associated with **France** and effeminacy; **sweating together** alludes here to gay sex between the gull and the **great lord**.

[116] **title-page … index**: i.e. he proclaims his wares and points to them.

[117] **what they lack**: "What do ye lack"? was the equivalent of the modern shop-keeper's "Can I help you?".

[118] **no more**: i.e. no more than the sales pitch he gives **to all comers.**

[119] **laid … hands**: (1) been a burden to him; (2) cluttered his shop as an unsaleable commodity.

[120] **put it off**: (1) divest himself of it; (2) sell it off cheaply.

[121] **not minding**: without any compunction.

a gain of his godliness."[122] He is your slave while you pay him ready money, but if he once befriend you,[123] your tyrant, and you had better deserve his hate than his trust.

1.18 Thomas Middleton: A Goldsmith Gulled

Thomas Middleton *(1580–1627) was born in London and was a prolific playwright, collaborating with many other dramatists. He also wrote pageants and masques.*

A Chaste Maid in Cheapside *is commonly regarded as his best comedy. In this scene a young gallant, Touchwood Junior, who is in love with Moll, the daughter of the goldsmith Yellowhammer, buys a wedding ring for her from her unwitting father as she looks on. Sexual innuendo adds to the comedy of the scene.*

From A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, *Act 1, Sc. 1 (1630) (perf. 1613)*

Yellowhammer [. . .]. What is't you lack?[124]
Touchwood Junior. [*aside*] O nothing now, all that I wish[125] is present.
[*To Yellowhammer*]. I'd have a wedding ring made for a gentlewoman,
With all speed that may be.
Yellowhammer. Of what weight, sir?
Touchwood Junior. Of some half ounce, stand[126] fair and comely, with
The spark of a diamond. Sir, it were pity
To lose the least grace.
Yellowhammer. Pray, let's see it; [*takes stone*]
Indeed, sir, 'tis a pure one.
Touchwood Junior. So is the mistress.
Yellowhammer. Have you the wideness of her finger, sir?
Touchwood Junior. Yes, sure I think I have her measure 'bout me.
Good faith, 'tis down.[127] I cannot show it you.
I must pull too many things out to be certain.
Let me see: long and slender, and neatly jointed;
Just such another gentlewoman that's [*as*] your daughter, sir.
Yellowhammer. And therefore, sir, no gentlewoman.
Touchwood Junior. I protest
I ne'er saw two maids handed[128] more alike;
I'll ne'er seek farther, if you'll give me leave, sir.

[122] **by a misinterpreted … godliness**: See 1 Timothy 4:8: "godliness is profitable unto all things."

[123] **befriend you**: i.e. by offering you credit.

[124] **What is't you lack?** See [**1.17**], n.117.

[125] **all that I wish**: i.e. Moll.

[126] **stand**: be, appear, but allowing a joke about erections. The syntax is elliptical: "**I'd have a wedding ring made** [… *and I'd have it*] **stand fair and comely**."

[127] **down**: deep in his pocket (with another reference to a [lack of] erection).

[128] **handed**: furnished with hands; dealt with, handled; handed over.

Yellowhammer. If you dare venture by her finger, sir.
Touchwood Junior. Ay, and I'll bide all loss,[129] sir.
Yellowhammer. Say you so, sir,
Let's see: hither, girl.
Touchwood Junior. Shall I make bold with your finger,[130] gentlewoman?
Moll. Your pleasure, sir.[131]
Touchwood Junior. That fits her to a hair, sir.
Yellowhammer. What's your posy[132] now, sir?
Touchwood Junior. Mass, that's true, posy, i'faith, e'en thus, sir:
"Love that's wise, blinds parents' eyes."
Yellowhammer. How, how? If I may speak without offence, sir,
I hold my life –
Touchwood Junior. What, sir?
Yellowhammer. Go to, you'll pardon me?
Touchwood Junior. Pardon you? Ay, sir.
Yellowhammer. Will you, i'faith?
Touchwood Junior. Yes, faith, I will.
Yellowhammer. You'll steal away some man's daughter, am I near you?[133]
Do you turn aside? You gentlemen are mad wags;
I wonder things can be so warily carried,
And parents blinded so, but they're served right
That have two eyes, and wear so dull a sight.
Touchwood Junior. [*aside*] Thy doom take hold of thee.[134]

1.19 Barnabe Rich: Vanity Fair

Barnabe Rich *(?1540–1617), after an army career abroad, settled temporarily in London, where he wrote many romances in the style of Lyly's* Euphues *(see* [**1.1**]*) and popular tracts denouncing the vices of the age.* The Honesty of the Age *is an exposure of corruption in all official and social spheres of London, the "brothel house of sin."*

From The Honesty of the Age *(1614)*

Will you now go visit the shopkeepers, that are so busy with their "What lack you, sir"? [**1.17**, n.117] or "What is it you would have bought"? and let us take a good survey what the commodities be that would thus set forth to sale, and we shall find that as Diogenes passing through a fair cried out,

[129] **bide all loss**: stand any loss arising from my error.

[130] **make … finger**: i.e. be so familiar as to grasp it.

[131] **Your pleasure**: (1) if you please; (2) it gives you pleasure to touch me (the second meaning is concealed from her father).

[132] **posy**: a line of verse inscribed inside a ring.

[133] **am I near you?** do I guess rightly what you are about?

[134] **Thy doom take hold of thee**: may the judgment you have pronounced on unobservant parents fall on you.

"O how many things are here to be vented that nature hath no need of,"[135] so we may likewise say, "O how many gaudy trifles are here to be sold that are good for nothing but to maintain pride and vanity."

If sometimes we happen to hit upon such necessaries as are (indeed) behoveful for the use of man, let the buyer yet look to himself that he be not overreached [*overcome*] by deceit and subtlety.

1.20 Thomas Harman: An Abraham Man

Thomas Harman *(fl. 1567) was one of the earliest and most influential writers of rogue literature. He lived principally in Kent but visited London frequently. His tracts on vagabonds, thieves, and beggars were purportedly based on interviews of vagrants with whom he became familiar. The term 'Abraham man' is of obscure origin.*[136]

From A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds *(1573), ch. 9 (first known publication 1567)*

These Abraham men be those that feign themselves to have been mad, and have been kept either in Bethelem[137] or in some other prison a good time, and not one amongst twenty that ever came in prison for any such cause. Yet will they say how piteously and most extremely they have been beaten and dealt withal. Some of these be merry and very pleasant; they will dance and sing. Some others be as cold and reasonable to talk withal. These beg money. Either when they come at farmers' houses, they will demand bacon, either cheese, or wool, or anything that is worth money. And if they espy small company within, they will with fierce countenance demand somewhat; where for fear the maids will give them largely, to be rid of them.

If they may conveniently come by any cheat, they will pick and steal, as the upright man or rogue, poultry or linen. And all women that wander be at their commandment.

1.21 Robert Greene: Beware of Pickpockets

Robert Greene *(1558–1592) attended Cambridge and after about 1585 lived in London as a professional writer, one of the 'University Wits'. He was a prolific dramatist and writer of romances and pamphlets. He is probably best known for his three 'coney-catching'* [138] *pamphlets in the tradition of rogue literature. The title of this extract ('A Kind Conceit of a Foist Performed in Paul's') can be translated as the instinctive ruse of a pickpocket in St Paul's Cathedral. For Paul's see* [**1.15**]*, n.13.*

[135] **Diogenes … need of**: the source of this anecdote of Diogenes, the C4th BCE Cynic philosopher, has not been traced. **vented**: poured forth.

[136] *OED* suggests an allusion to the parable of the beggar Lazarus who at his death was carried to Abraham's bosom while the rich man was consigned to hell (Luke 16:19–23 [*OED* wrongly cites Luke 8]).

[137] **Bethelem**: Bedlam (see [**1.25 HN**]).

[138] **cony-catching**: see **General Introduction**, n.2.

From The Second and Last Part of Coney-Catching *(1591)*

[…]There walked in the middle walk[139] a plain country farmer, a man of good wealth, who had a well-lined purse, only barely thrust up in a round slop,[140] which a crew of foists [*pickpockets*] having perceived, their hearts were set on fire to have it, and every one had a fling at him, but all in vain, for he kept his hand close in his pocket, and his purse fast in his fist like a subtle churl, that either had been forewarned of Paul's or else had aforetime smoked [*detected*] some of that faculty. Well, howsoever it was impossible to do any good with him, he was so wary. The foists spying this, strained their wits to the highest string how to compass this bung,[141] yet could not all their politic conceits fetch the farmer over, for jostle him, chat with him, offer to shake him by the hand, all would not serve to get his hand out of his pocket. At last one of the crew, that for his skill might have been doctorate in his mystery, amongst them all chose out a good foist, one of a nimble hand and great agility, and said to the rest thus:

"Masters, it shall not be said such a base peasant shall slip away from such a crew of gentlemen-foists as we are, and not have his purse drawn, and therefore this time I'll play the stall [*decoy*] myself, and if I hit him not home, count me for a bungler for ever"; and so left them and went to the farmer and walked directly before him and next him three or four turns. At last, standing still, he cried, "Alas, honest man, help me. I am not well"; and with that sunk down suddenly in a swoon. The poor farmer, seeing a proper young gentleman, as he thought, fall dead afore him, stepped to him, held him in his arms, rubbed him and chafed him.

At this, there gathered a great multitude of people about him, and the whilst the foist drew the farmer's purse and away. By that the other thought the feat was done, he began to come something to himself again, and so half staggering, stumbled out of Paul's, and went after the crew where they had appointed to meet, and there boasted of his wit and experience.

The farmer, little suspecting this villainy, thrust his hand into his pocket and missed his purse, searched for it, but lining and shells [*money*] and all was gone, which made the countryman in a great maze, that he stood still in a dump so long that a gentleman, perceiving it, asked what he ailed.

"What ail I, sir"? quoth he. "Truly I am thinking how men may long as well as women."

"Why dost thou conjecture that, honest man"? quoth he.

"Marry, sir," answers the farmer. "The gentleman even now that swooned here, I warrant him breeds his wife's child, for the cause of his sudden qualm, that he fell down dead, grew of longing."

[139] **middle walk**: central aisle [of old St Paul's].

[140] **slop**: loose breeches covering the thigh.

[141] **compass this bung**: obtain this purse.

The gentleman demanded how he knew that.

"Well enough, sir," quoth he, "and he hath his longing too, for the poor man longed for my purse, and thanks be to God he hath it with him."

At this all the hearers laughed, but not so merrily as the foist and his fellows, that then were sharing his money.

1.22 Middleton: Roaring Girls

Roaring-girls were the female counterparts of roaring-boys—drunken, riotous, and quarrelsome youths and street bullies (Kastril in Ben Jonson's The Alchemist [*1610*] *comes to London to learn how to be one). The comedy* The Roaring Girl *by* ***Thomas Middleton*** *and* ***Thomas Dekker*** *is based on the life of Mary Frith (alias Moll Cutpurse* [*c. 1584–1659*]*), who (scandalously) wore men's clothes, smoked a pipe, and was well known as a petty criminal and fence. In the play, however, she is unlike other roaring girls: she is courageous, virtuous, honest and a kind of proto-feminist (she chastises a man with her sword for disrespecting women: "Thou'rt one of those / That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore." Act 3, scene 1). The Prologue creates some suspense by hinting that she is different from the "many" others of her kind, whom it describes.*

From The Roaring Girl, or, Moll Cutpurse, *Prologue (1611) (perf. ?1604–1608)*

A roaring girl, whose notes till now never were,
Shall fill with laughter our vast theatre[142];
That's all which I dare promise; tragic passion,
And such grave stuff is this day out of fashion.
I see attention sets wide ope her gates
Of hearing, and with covetous listening waits
To know what girl this roaring girl should be –
For of that tribe are many. One is she
That roars at midnight in deep tavern bowls,
That beats the watch,[143] and constable controls[144];
Another roars i'th'daytime, swears, stabs, gives braves [*defiance*],
Yet sells her soul to the lust of fools and slaves;
Both these are suburb-roarers.[145] Then there's (besides)
A civil city-roaring girl, whose pride,
Feasting, and riding, shakes her husband's state,
And leaves him roaring through an iron grate.[146]

[142] **our vast theatre**: the Fortune theatre, built 1600.

[143] **beats the watch**: i.e. she beats up the parish officers charged with keeping the peace at night, no doubt relishing the irony.

[144] **controls**: (1) challenges; (2) dominates.

[145] **suburb-roarers**: The suburbs, beyond the jurisdiction of the Puritan city fathers, were seen as licentious and ungoverned.

[146] **roaring … grate**: begging for food or money from a **grate** of a debtors' prison.

None of these roaring girls is ours: she flies
With wings more lofty. Thus her character lies –
Yet what need characters, when to give a guess
Is better than the person to express?
But would you know who 'tis? Would you hear her name?
She's called Mad Moll; her life our acts[147] proclaim.

1.23 Ben Jonson: Pickpockets at Bartholomew Fair

Bartholomew Fair in Smithfield (see **General Introduction**, n.5) *was instituted in the twelfth century and became an important cloth fair. It was held on the eve of the Feast of St Bartholomew (24 August). In the time of* ***Ben Jonson*** *(1572/3–1637) it had become more of a carnival than a trade fair. Entertainers and vendors of all descriptions—puppeteers, wrestlers, horse dealers, sellers of roast pork, apples, and other goods—frequented it; and so did thieves, pickpockets, and bawds.* ***Jonson****'s comedy* Bartholomew Fair *is a colourful depiction of the vitality of the fair, particularly of the rogues who hoodwink the fairgoers. Watched by the gallants Winwife and Quarlous, the simpleton Bartholomew Cokes is robbed of his purse by Edgeworth, who works as a partner with Nightingale the ballad singer—the one picks the pocket of Cokes while his victim is distracted by the singer. The two rogues divide the spoils between them.*

From Bartholomew Fair, *Act 3, Sc. 5 (1640) (perf. 1614)*

Cokes. Sister, I am an ass, I cannot keep my purse. [*He shows it again*]. On, on; I pray thee, friend.
Winwife. Will you see sport? Look, there's a fellow gathers up to him, mark. [*Edgeworth gets up to him and tickles him in the ear with a straw twice to draw his hand out of his pocket.*]
Quarlous. Good, i'faith! O, he has lighted on the wrong pocket.
Winwife. He has it, 'fore God, he is a brave fellow; pity he should be detected.
Nightingale.But O, you vile nation of cutpurses all,
Relent and repent, and amend and be sound,
And know that you ought not, by honest men's fall,
Advance your own fortunes, to die above ground,
And though you go gay,
In silks as you may,
It is not the high way to heaven (as they say).
Repent then, repent you, for better, for worse:
And kiss not the gallows for cutting a purse.
Youth, youth, thou hadst better been starved by thy nurse,
Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.

[147] **acts:** (1) deeds onstage; (2) parts of the play.

All. An excellent ballad! An excellent ballad!
Edgeworth. Friend, let me ha' the first, let me ha' the first, I pray you.
Cokes. Pardon me, sir. First come, first served; and I'll buy the whole bundle too.
Winwife. That conveyance was better than all, did you see't? He has given the purse to the ballad singer.
Quarlous. Has he?
Edgeworth. Sir, I cry you mercy; I'll not hinder the poor man's profit: I pray you, mistake me not.
Cokes. Sir, I take you for an honest gentleman, if that be mistaking. I met you today afore: ha! Hum'h! O God! my purse is gone, my purse, my purse, etc.

1.24 John Earle: A Prison

There were six major prisons in London at the time – Bridewell, the Clink, the Fleet, Ludgate, the Marshalsea, and Newgate (see [**2.28 HN**]*). Some, like Bridewell, were mainly for petty criminals; others, like Newgate, were chiefly for serious crimes such as treason and rebellion. Almost all housed prisoners for debt or bankruptcy.*

***Earle**'s delineation of prisons is a composite one, since in all of them conditions were as deplorable as he describes them. For **Earle** see* [**1.17 HN**].

From "A Prison," in Micro-cosmography, or, A Piece of the World Discovered. *5th ed. (1629), No. [12]*

A prison is the grave of the living, where they are shut up from the world and their friends; and the worms that gnaw upon them, their own thoughts, and the jailer.[148] A house of meagre looks and ill smells, for lice, drink, tobacco are the compound. Pluto's court[149] was expressed from this fancy, and the persons are much about the same parity that is there. You may ask as Menippus in Lucian, which is Nireus, which Thersites, which the beggar, which the knight,[150] for they are all suited in the same form of a kind of nasty [*filthy*] poverty. Only to be out at elbows is in fashion here, and a great indecorum not to be threadbare. Every man shows here like so many wrecks upon the sea: here the ribs of a thousand pound, here the relic of so many

[148] **the worms … jailer**: a witty zeugma: their own thoughts **gnaw upon them**, and (with a different metaphor) **the jailer** feeds on them (jailers derived most of their income from prisoners and their families).

[149] **Pluto's court**: Hades the Underworld, ruled by Pluto.

[150] **as Menippus … knight**: In *Menippus or the Descent into Hades* (15), by **Lucian**, the Greek satirist (AD c. 125–c. 200), **Menippus,** the C3rd Cynic philosopher, visits Hell and is unable to distinguish between the skeletons of **Nireus** (one of the most handsome Greeks in the Trojan War) and **Thersites** (the ugliest), or between those of **the beggar** (the impudent Irus in Homer's *Odyssey* 18) and **the Knight** (Alcinous, the hospitable king of Phaeacia in *Odysssey* 7–8) (Lucian 4.96–9).

manors, a doublet without buttons.[151] And tis a spectacle of more pity than executions are. The company, one with other, is but a vying of complaints and the causes they have to rail on fortune, and fool themselves; and there is a great deal of good fellowship in this. They are commonly, next their creditors, most bitter against the lawyers as men that have had a great stroke in assisting them hither. Mirth here is stupidity or hardheartedness, yet they feign it sometimes to slip melancholy and keep off themselves from themselves, and the torment of thinking what they have been. Men huddle up[152] their life here as a thing of no use, and wear it out like an old suit, the faster the better; and he that deceives [*whiles away*] the time best, best spends it. It is the place where newcomers are most welcomed, and next them ill news, as that which extends their fellowship in misery and leaves few to insult. And they breathe their discontents more securely here, and have their tongues at more liberty than abroad. Men see here much sin and much calamity, and where the last does not mortify,[153] the other hardens, and those that are worse here are desperately[154] worse, as those from whom the horror of sin is taken off, and the punishment familiar. And commonly a hard thought passes on[155] all that come from this school, which though it teach much wisdom, it is too late, and with danger, and it is better be a fool than come here to learn it.

1.25 Donald Lupton: Bedlam

The Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem (later corrupted into 'Bedlam') was founded just north of Bishopsgate as a priory in 1247. In the fifteenth century it became an infirmary for those 'not in their perfect mind' (as Lear puts it), which moved to Moorfields in the seventeenth and Southwark in *the nineteenth. Bedlam was primarily a place of sequestration, but like the asylum in Middleton and Rowley's* The Changeling *(1622) it also professed cure, though the 'treatment' was brutal. Something of the ambivalent contemporary attitude to mental disorder as simultaneously an affliction and a sign of sin can be seen in Rosalind's recommendation that it be both "punished and cured" by means of "a dark house and a whip" (*As You Like It, *3.2.347–8). Cured or not (but certainly punished), 'patients' were discharged after a year, when (as now) they often became homeless beggars, like Tom o'Bedlam, the disguise adopted by Edgar in* King Lear *(see 2.3.9–20). For a biographical note on the author,* ***Donald Lupton****, see* [**1.2 HN**].

[151] **the relic … buttons**: i.e. all that remains of so many **manors** is a dilapidated **doublet**. The prodigal dandy who wastes his patrimony on extravagant apparel was a common target of satire.

[152] **huddle up**: (1) crowd up confusedly; (2) hush up.

[153] **mortify**: (1) bring to subjection through penance; (2) render insensible; and (3) kill.

[154] **desperately**: in despair and therefore insensible to hope of redemption.

[155] **passes on**: gains credit with.

From "Bedlam," in London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartered *(1632), Part 1, No. 19*

Here live many that are called men but seldom at home, for they are gone out of themselves: Nature hath been a stepmother[156] to some, and misery and crosses have caused this strange change in others: they seem to live here either to rectify nature or forget miseries. They are put to learn that lesson which many, nay, all that will be happy, must learn to know, and be acquainted with themselves.[157] This house would be too little if all that are beside themselves should be put in here. It seems strange that anyone should recover here: the cryings. screechings, roarings, brawlings, shaking of chains, swearings, frettings, chafings are so many, so hideous, so great that they are more able to drive a man that hath his wits rather out of them than to help one that never had them, or hath lost them, to find them again. A drunkard is mad for the present, but a mad man is drunk always. You shall scarce find a place that hath so many men and women so strangely altered either from what they once were, or should have been. The men are all like a ship that either wants a stern [*rudder*], or a steersman, or ballast. They are all heteroclites [*deviants*] from nature, either having too much wildness or being defective in judgement. Here art strives to mend or cure nature's imperfections and defects. Certainly, he that keeps the house may be said to live among wild creatures. It's thought many are kept here, not so much in hope of recovery, as to keep them from further and more desperate inconveniences,[158] their faculties and powers of their souls and bodies being by an ill cause vitiated and depraved, or defective. The men may be said to be fair instruments of music, but either they want strings, or else though being strung are out of tune, or otherwise want an expert artist to order them.[159] Many live here that know not where they are, or how they got in, never think of getting out. There's many that are so well or ill in their wits that they can say they have been out of them, and gain much by dissembling in this kind: desperate caitiffs that dare make a mock of judgement.[160] Well, if the Devil was not so strong to delude, and men so easily to be drawn, this house would stand empty, and for my part, I am sorry it hath any in it.

[156]**stepmother**: Stepmothers were proverbially cruel and stingy.

[157]**must learn … themselves**: "Know yourself" and "Nothing in excess" were inscribed over the oracle at Delph1. See Gonzalo's pronouncement that his companions have found themselves after being enchanted, "When no man was his own" (*The Tempest* 5.1.205–13).

[158]**desperate inconveniences**: dangerously irrational and destructive behaviour.

[159]**fair instruments … order them**: It was a Renaissance commonplace that the person in physical and mental health was like a well-tuned instrument: Hamlet, rejecting the idea that he is mad, tells his mother that "My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time, / And makes as healthful music" (3.4.140–1).

[160]**There's many … judgement**: Many beggars would (as now) feign imbecility or mild derangement to excite pity in potential donors.

1.26 Dekker and Middleton: Entertainment Provided by the Inmates of Bedlam

While some writers, like Lupton [**1.25**], *expressed sympathy for the inmates of Bedlam, from the beginning of the 17th century until 1770 it was customary to visit the them on weekends and holidays to be entertained by their bizarre antics.* The Honest Whore, *co-written by* ***Thomas Dekker*** *(?1570–1632) and* ***Thomas Middleton*** *(1580–1627) and performed in 1604, is set in Milan but Bedlam (here referred to as Bethlem Monastery) has been transported from England. Some gentlemen ask Friar Anselmo to view the madmen.*

From The Honest Whore, *Part I, [Act 5, Sc. 2] (1604)*

Castruchio. Pray, may we see some of those wretched souls
That here are in your keeping?
Anselmo. Yes, you shall.
But gentlemen, I must disarm you then:
There are of mad men, as there are of tame,
All humour'd not alike: we have here some,
So apish and fantastic, play with a feather,
And though 'twould grieve a soul to see God's image
So blemish'd and defac'd, yet do they act
Such antic [*absurd*] and such pretty [*pleasing*] lunacies,
That spite of sorrow they will make you smile.
Others again we have like hungry lions,
Fierce as wild bulls, untameable as flies,
And these have oftentimes from strangers' sides
Snatch'd rapiers suddenly, and done much harm,
Whom if you'll see, you must be weaponless.

THE COMING OF THE COMMONWEALTH

1.27 Andrew Marvell: The Execution of Charles I

Andrew Marvell *(1621–1678), who later became a civil servant in the government of Cromwell's Protectorate, wrote "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" in commemoration of the Protector's victories there. However, while he praises Cromwell's leadership, valour and "wiser art," his eulogy is far from unqualified. His description of the execution of Charles I, whose death warrant Cromwell had signed, is sympathetic to the "royal actor," and his performance of nobility on the scaffold.* ***Marvell****'s political leanings are a matter of debate, but it would seem from the poem that whatever the justness of one's cause, one must accept one's fate with equanimity "where greater spirits," like Cromwell's, predominate.*

"An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," in Miscellaneous Poems *(1681) (written 1650).*

[…] That thence[161] the royal actor borne
The tragic scaffold[162] might adorn,
While round the armèd bands
Did clap their bloody hands.[163]

He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable scene:
But with his keener eye
The axe's edge did try;

Nor called the gods with vulgar spite
To vindicate his helpless right,
But bowed his comely head
Down as upon a bed.

This was that memorable hour
Which first assur'd the forcèd[164] power:
So when they did design
The Capitol's first line,

A Bleeding Head, where they begun,
Did fright the architects to run;
And yet in that the State
Foresaw its happy fate![165]

1.28 John Evelyn: "The Funeral Sermon of Preaching"

John Evelyn *(1620–1706), the famous diarist, was a prolific writer on many subjects, including the arts, horticulture, education, politics, and commerce. After 1652 he lived at Sayes Court, Deptford and then at Wotton, Surrey. He was a co-founder of the Royal Society in 1660. He was a Royalist and after the Restoration received favour at court, though he disapproved of its relaxed lifestyle (see* [**2.5**–**2.6**]). ***Evelyn****'s detailed diary entries show that he was a staunch member of the Church of England and a regular churchgoer. His* Diary *(or* Kalendarium*) was not published until 1818. Abbreviations in the original text have here been expanded.*

[*30 December 1655*] I went to London where Dr Wild[166] preached the funeral sermon of preaching, this being the last day, after which Cromwell's

[161] **thence**: from Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, where Charles had been imprisoned.

[162] **scaffold**: (1) a platform for executions (in this case erected for Charles outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall Palace, a fine Palladian building with its Rubens ceiling, commissioned by Charles, celebrating his father's rule); (2) stage.

[163] **Did clap their … hands**: not in applause, but in an attempt to drown out his speech from the scaffold.

[164] **forcèd**: gained and maintained by force.

[165] **The Capitol's … fate**: the **Capitol** was the great temple of Jupiter in Rome, so called because digging its foundations unearthed a human head (Latin *caput*), which was interpreted as a good omen for Rome's destiny.

[166] **Dr Wild**: Dr George Wild (or Wilde) (1610–1665), whose sermons Evelyn often attended He later became Bishop of Derry.

proclamation was to take place, that none of the Church of England should dare either to preach or administer sacraments, teach school etc. on pain of imprisonment or exile; so this was the mournfullest day that in my life I had seen, or the Church of England herself since the Reformation, to the great rejoicing of both Papist and Presbyter. The text was 2 Corinthians 13:9.[167] That however persecution dealt with the ministers of God's word, they were still to pray for the flock and wish their perfection, as it was the flock['s duty] to pray for and assist their pastors, by the example of St Paul.[168] So pathetic was his discourse that it drew many tears from the auditory. Myself, wife, and some of our family received the Communion. God make me thankful, who hath hitherto provided for us the food of our souls as well as bodies. The Lord Jesus pity our distressed Church and bring back the captivity of Zion.[169]

1.29 Evelyn: Persecution of Royalist Churchgoers

***Evelyn** describes the disruption to a Church of England service on Christmas Day by the Parliamentarians, who maintain the Royalist congregation are breaking the law.*

[*25 December 1657*] I went to London with my wife to celebrate Christmas Day, Mr Gunning[170] preaching in Exeter Chapel on Micah 7:2.[171] Sermon ended, as he was giving us the holy sacrament the chapel was surrounded with soldiers and all the communicants and assembly surprised and kept prisoners by them, some in the house, others carried away. It fell to my share to be confined to a room in the house, where yet I was permitted to dine with the master of it, the Countess of Dorset,[172] Lady Hatton,[173] and some others of quality who invited me. In the afternoon came Colonel Whalley,[174] Goffe,[175] and others from Whitehall to examine us one by one; some they committed to the Marshal,[176] some to prison. When I came before them

[167] **2 Corinthians 13:9**: "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection."

[168] **The text … St Paul**: appears in a footnote (see previous footnote).

[169] **bring back**: undo. The C6th BCE **captivity** of the Isrealites under Nebuchadnezzar ended when the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon and freed them.

[170] **Mr Gunning**: Peter Gunning (1614–1684), a Royalist Church leader. He preached to congregations at the **Exeter Chapel** in Exeter House in the Strand during the Commonwealth. He became Bishop of Chichester and of Ely in the Restoration.

[171] **Micah 7:2**: "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."

[172] **Countess of Dorset**: Lady Frances Sackville, **Countess of Dorset** (d. 1687).

[173] **Lady Hatton**: Baroness Elizabeth **Hatton** (d. 1672)

[174] **Colonel Whalley**: (d. ?1675), Col. Edward **Whalley** fought for Parliament in the Civil Wars and signed Charles's death warrant.

[175] **Goffe**: Major-General William **Goffe** (d. ?1679), son-in-law of Col. Whalley; politician, soldier, and regicide (like Whalley he signed Charles's death warrant).

[176] **Marshal**: "officer of a court of law responsible for the custody of prisoners" (*OED*).

they took my name and abode, examined me: why contrary to an ordinance made that none should any longer observe the superstitious time of the Nativity (so esteemed [*considered*] by them), I durst offend, and particularly be at Common Prayers, which they told me was but the Mass in English, and particularly pray for Charles Stuart, for which we had no Scripture. I told them we did not pray for Charles Stuart but for all Christian Kings, Princes, and Governors. They replied, in so doing we prayed for the King of Spain too, who was their enemy and a Papist, with other frivolous and ensnaring questions and much threatening; and finding no colour [*plausible reason*] to detain me, they dismissed me with much pity of my ignorance. These were men of high flight, and above ordinances,[177] and spake spiteful things of our Lord's Nativity. As we went up to receive the sacrament the miscreants held their muskets against us as if they would have shot us at the altar, but yet suffering us to finish the office of Communion, as perhaps not having instructions what to do in case they found us in that action. So I got home late the next day, blessed be God.

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[177] **of high flight, and above ordinances**: overweening, and superior to mere religious observances such as the sacrament of Communion.

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CHAPTER 2

Period 2: London in the Enlightenment (1660–1780)

INTRODUCTION

This Introduction, dealing inevitably with the Restoration, the Great Plague and the Great Fire (and the subsequent rebuilding of the City), considers this period as the beginning of the transformation of London into the great commercial, financial and imperial capital it became in the nineteenth century, with the development of great public buildings like new St Paul's Cathedral and the rebuilt Royal Exchange, the establishment of broad thoroughfares, public parks and fashionable districts such as Mayfair, and the foundation of the Royal Society and (later) the British Museum. It was the new Royal Exchange and the unprecedented founding of the Bank of England that marked the emergence of London as the hub of global capitalism that it still is, generating a flood of money into the economy that seemed to some contemporaries to be a channel of moral corruption, as exemplified by the South Sea Bubble, an early manifestation of what has recently been termed "irrational exuberance" in the stock market. It is no coincidence that this period saw a rapid growth in legislative concern with crimes of property, and the introduction ends with a consideration of crime and punishment in Georgian London, and its somewhat ambivalent treatment in the literature of the time.

In the spring of 1660, after eleven grey years of the Puritan Commonwealth, King Charles II re-entered London in triumph: he was greeted, according to the diarist John Evelyn, by the army "brandishing their swords and shouting with inexpressible joy; the ways strewed with flowers, the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, fountains running with wine; the mayor, aldermen, and all the companies in their liveries, chains of gold, and banners; lords and nobles clad in cloth of silver, gold, and velvet; the windows and balconies well set with ladies; trumpets, music, and myriads of

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people" [**2.3**]. Charles and his new court brought with them a relaxation of the puritanical rigour of the Commonwealth [**2.5**–**2.6**] and a return of theatre to London, with a new kind of elegant, witty, sophisticated prose comedy, influenced by Molière, in the work of writers like Wycherley and Congreve, and a (more regrettable) taste for bombastic tragedies in heroic couplets.

If Shakespeare had somehow lived to see the Restoration, he would have noticed great changes in the London he knew, which had doubled in size since 1600, spilling north and east over the Roman walls and westward into the space between the City and Westminster, "now with building so joined it makes up but one vast building [*conurbation*] with all its suburbs" [**2.1**]. A map of 1667 shows the city as a solid mass stretching from Whitechapel in the east to beyond Gray's Inn in the west and up to Clerkenwell and Shoreditch in the north (all of them open country for Shakespeare). This relentless growth continued throughout the period: Defoe observed in 1724 that "We see several villages, formerly standing, as it were, in the country, and at a great distance, now joined to the streets by continued buildings, and more making haste to meet in the like manner; for example, Deptford" [**2.2**]. After the centuries-long monopoly of London Bridge (itself widened in 1758–1762 by the demolition of its houses) it was found necessary to build three new bridges across the Thames in this period, which encouraged the development of the city south of the river: the wooden Putney Bridge[1] in 1729, and stone bridges at Westminster in 1750 and Blackfriars in 1760.

It was in this period, indeed, that London began to turn into the great commercial, financial and imperial capital it became in the nineteenth century, though its streets remained ill-lit at night till the end of the eighteenth (see [**2.25**]). The 1660s, for example, saw the first development of ever-fashionable Mayfair, which by the mid-eighteenth century had filled most of the space bounded by Regent St, Oxford St, Piccadilly and Park Lane with elegant Georgian houses and such coveted addresses as Berkeley Square, Hanover Square, Grosvenor Square and Burlington Gardens. Similarly, Charles II began the process of establishing one of the glories of modern central London, its public parks. At the restoration, Hyde Park,[2] which had been sold off by the Puritan government, was re-appropriated as a royal demesne, and became a hugely fashionable place to be seen walking or riding in fine weather. Charles also laid out the smaller nearby Green Park and (almost adjacent to Green Park) St James's Park, both just north of Westminster; the latter was, like the Strand [**2.26**], well-known nocturnally as a place to pick up sex-workers. In the following century the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew were also laid out, with elegant classical temples, an Orangery and a Great

[1] **Putney Bridge**: replaced by the current stone bridge in the 1880s; since 1845 it has represented the start of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race.

[2] **Hyde Park**: 340 acres of open land to the north-west of Westminster, seized by Henry VIII from the monks of Westminster at the dissolution of the monasteries; it was originally used as a royal hunting-ground, and opened to the public in the early seventeenth century.

Pagoda, as were the fashionable pleasure gardens at Ranelagh, in Chelsea [**2.21**]; Wordsworth recalled hearing of

> […] green groves, and wilderness of lamps
> Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
> And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
> Floating in dance, or warbling high in air
> The songs of spirits! (*The Prelude* 1850, 7.122–6; Wordsworth, 227)

Another harbinger of modernity was the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660, the first institution in the world devoted to experimental science [**2.12 HN**]; a hundred years later, in 1759, the British Museum and its library were opened to the public (though by application only) in Montagu House,[3] Bloomsbury. The museum was founded on the proceeds of a public lottery (*plus ça change* …), and its first exhibits comprised the large legacy of the collector Sir Hans Sloane and the purchased library of Robert Harley, 1st earl of Oxford.

In 1660, however, the swollen city was about to face a drastic—though temporary—reduction in its population. Because it was now so crowded, sanitation was even worse that it had been in Shakespeare's day: Swift, some decades later, describes the foul refuse swept through the streets by a shower of rain, when "you'll find the sink [*open sewer*] / Strike your offended sense with double stink" because "Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood, / Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud, / Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood" [**2.20**]. This foetid squalor was a paradise for rats, and consequently for their fleas, which transmit through their bites the bacterium that causes bubonic plague (*Yersinia pestis*). In 1665–1666 a huge epidemic killed about 100,000 Londoners, or one in every four (see [**2.7 HN**]). The diarist Samuel Pepys chronicles something of the melancholy strangeness of the times, describing his "meeting dead corpses of the plague, carried to be buried close to me at noonday, through the City in Fenchurch Street" [**2.7**]. The rich and powerful fled the city, and Defoe recounts the way in which those who were left adapted to the everyday horror: "Sometimes a man or woman dropped down dead in the very markets; for many people that had the plague upon them knew nothing of it till the inward gangrene had affected their vitals and they died in a few moments. This caused that many died frequently in that manner in the streets suddenly, without any warning. [… and] though at first the people would stop as they went along and call to the neighbours to come out on such an occasion, yet afterward no notice was taken of them" [**2.8**].[4]

[3] **Montagu House**: eventually proved too cramped for the expanding collection, and was gradually replaced during the first half of the C19th by the building we know, with its imposing classical portico.

[4] Defoe was a child in 1666, but he had access to first-hand accounts from his own family and others.

But the population, constantly reinforced by immigration both from the countryside and from the continent, soon recovered: less than ten years later it had climbed to half-a-million, and by the end of our period had doubled to some 800,000. The plague, however, was immediately followed by a calamity much less lethal but more radically transformative for the city: the Great Fire [**2.9 HN**]. Though only half-a-dozen deaths were officially recorded,[5] among the great landmarks lost were old St Paul's Cathedral (a huge, somewhat run-down Gothic church—see [**1.5**]), dozens of city churches, and Gresham's Royal Exchange.

Though the more grandiose plans of completely redesigning the city on a grid pattern were never implemented, and something of the old labyrinth of laneways survived (see [**2.18**]), London arose from the ashes as in many ways a more modern city of brick and stone, with many broad streets and elegant squares: "before the Fire of London the streets were narrow and public edifices, as well as private, were more crowded, and built closer to one another" [**2.11**], although "so many great houses were converted into streets and courts, alleys and buildings, that there are, by estimation, almost 4000 houses now standing on the ground which the Fire left desolate, more than stood on the same ground before" (Defoe, *A Tour*; see [**2.2 HN**]). Fifty or so city churches were rebuilt in the modern grand style, the greatest of them being what Defoe called "a building exceeding beautiful and magnificent" (*A Tour*), St Paul's Cathedral [**2.13 HN**], with its splendid baroque west front and interior and its majestic lantern-topped dome [**General Introduction**, n.4]; it was the tallest building in London from its official completion in 1711 until the erection of the Post Office (now BT) Tower in the 1960s.

Most profound in their effects were the changes in the governance of England. One of the issues contested in the Civil War was the question of whether authority in the State came from God, through the King, or from the consent of the governed, mediated by Parliament, and despite the restoration of the monarchy, it was Parliament that finally won the day. Charles II had considerably less power than his father, and at the Glorious Revolution of 1688, his brother the Catholic James II was expelled and his niece, the Protestant Mary (together with her husband, William of Orange) was invited to take the throne as a limited monarch, explicitly subject to the law, in accordance with the Bill of Rights (1689). The Bill of Rights became the foundation of the constitutional monarchy that the United Kingdom still enjoys; it restricted the powers and prerogatives of the monarch and established certain freedoms for Parliament, including parliamentary privilege (the right to free speech within Parliament) and the right to determine all taxation and expenditure (previous Stuart monarchs had tried to govern without parliamentary involvement).

[5] It is probable, as historians have pointed out, that rather more deaths occurred than were recorded, given the likelihood that many elderly and infirm people may have been surprised and trapped in their homes by the conflagration, whose fierce wind-fanned temperatures (high enough to melt iron) would have annihilated their bodies.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) in his mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1714; Pope 1966, 86–109) pokes zeugmatic fun at the merely ceremonial function of the new kind of monarch: "Here Thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey, / Dost sometimes counsel take – and sometimes tea" (*RL* 3.7–8; 96). At her court (as Pope depicts it) the aristocrats who under Elizabeth would have been involved in serious public duties now spend their time playing cards, drinking tea and gossiping, while "Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat, / With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that" (*RL* 3.17–8; 96).

The poem also offers a glimpse of the true source of power in this brave new world: as his heroine Belinda finishes her elaborate make-up routine in the late afternoon, "The Merchant from th'Exchange returns in peace" (*RL* 3.23; 96). He has spent the day profitably at the "sumptuous" newly rebuilt Royal Exchange (see [**2.14 HN**]), "a large space of ground enclosed round with cloisters and open arches on which are built many walks of shops of all trades. The middle space below was designed and is used for the merchants to meet to concert their business and trade and bills" [**2.1**]. This new Exchange marks the emergence of London as the hub of global capitalism that it still is, "making this metropolis a kind of emporium for the whole earth" where you may "hear disputes adjusted between an inhabitant of Japan and an alderman of London, or […] see a subject of the Great Mogul entering into a league with one of the Czar of Muscovy" [**2.14**].[6] Belinda's dressing-table is furnished with the spoils of these exotic markets:

> This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
> And all Arabia[7] breathes from yonder box.
> The tortoise here and elephant unite,
> Transform'd to combs, the speckled and the white. (*RL* 1.133–6; 91)

The source of this confident new prosperity was, oddly enough, a series of naval defeats in the 1690s that had forced the government to overhaul and expand the Royal Navy. This was a massive task estimated to cost £1.2 million, perhaps £2.5 billion in 2018 money.[8] Having neither the cash nor the market credit to raise this monstrous sum, the government authorized the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 as a joint-stock company to raise capital and lend to the government, and the huge expense of constructing, furnishing, supplying and victualling the new navy kickstarted the British economy (as it became in 1707, with the union of England and Scotland) and turned London into the financial hub it has been ever since.

[6] The satirist Ned Ward takes a more sardonic and xenophobic view of this cosmopolitan crowd in [**2.15**].

[7] **Arabia**: famous for its perfumes.

[8] **2018 money**: this comparison, together with all later ones, is derived from https://www.measuringworth.com, and is broadly indicative only, given the huge complexity (see website) of comparing different kinds of monetary value between widely separated periods.

This flood of money into the economy seemed to some contemporaries to be a channel of moral corruption, as exemplified by the South Sea Bubble, an early manifestation of what has recently been termed "irrational exuberance" in the stock market.[9] The South Sea Company, founded in 1711 with a monopoly on trade with South America, was always more about romantic promise than likely performance, since that continent was under hostile Spanish rule at the time. Lack of actual profit did nothing to discourage starry-eyed investors, however, who created a demand that pushed up the price of the company's stock, which in turn attracted even more investors, further inflating the share-price, in an accelerating feedback loop independent of reality or common sense: stock worth £100 at the end of 1719 was worth £1000 just six months later. In 1720 the company took over the newly-acquired National Debt, allowing its directors to make huge profits through insider trading which in turn financed enormous bribes to politicians. But in late 1720 the bubble burst, as bubbles must, and thousands were ruined by collapsing share prices as panicked investors sold their stock for whatever they could get. For Pope, already alarmed at the insidious corrupting power of "Blest paper-credit" (1966, 302), the episode was symptomatic of a deeper malaise, and he sketched, in a dystopic—and only half-joking—prophecy, an England in which "Corruption, like a general flood, / […] Shall deluge all", and, in a disintegrating of social distinctions by the universal solvent of avarice,

> Statesman and patriot ply alike the stocks,
> Peeress and butler share alike the box[10];
> And judges job, and bishops bite[11] the town,
> And mighty Dukes pack cards[12] for half-a-crown. (Pope 1966, 306)

It is no coincidence that this period saw a rapid growth in legislative concern with crimes of property, and those crimes attracted savage penalties: the number of capital offences increased from just over 50 in 1688 to 160 in 1765 and 225 by 1815, and they included poaching, burglary, criminal damage, picking pockets and shoplifting (though the goods had to be worth more than five shillings; see [**2.27**]). But as brutal as the laws were, they had less of a deterrent effect than one might imagine, in part because the very ferocity of the code inhibited its application: juries were understandably reluctant to kill someone for stealing a pocket-handkerchief. For this reason, many people charged with capital crimes were acquitted, allowed to plead benefit

[9] As exemplified by the surprisingly favourable response (£2000–ca £285,000 in 2018—invested in one day) to the floating of a company in 1720 "for carrying on an undertaking of Great Advantage, but no one to know what it is" (Cowles 1960, 126).

[10] **box**: i.e. of dice.

[11] **job**, **and** … **bite**: buy and sell stock, and … swindle.

[12] **pack cards**: cheat in a card-game by fraudulent shuffling; **half-a-crown**: two shillings and sixpence, about £15 in 2018.

of clergy,[13] or received a lesser sentence. Defoe's Moll Flanders, sentenced to death for shoplifting [**2.28**], simulates repentance and has her sentence reduced to transportation to the colonies.

Another reason for the failure of the law to prevent a huge upsurge in crime in this period was the sheer size and physical intricacy of Georgian London (recall that there was no professional London police force until 1829). As Henry Fielding, who had been a Justice of the Peace in Westminster, observed, "one great encouragement to theft of all kinds is the ease and safety with which stolen goods may be disposed of" (1967, 76), a relatively easy task in the anonymity of a vast city, which also promised "the probability of escaping punishment" (82):

> Whoever indeed considers the cities of London and Westminster, with the late vast addition of their suburbs, the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense number of lanes, alleys, courts and by-places [*odd corners*], must think that, had they been intended for the very purpose of concealment, they could scarce have been better contrived. Upon such a view, the whole appears as a vast wood, or forest, in which a thief may harbour with as great security, as wild beasts do in the deserts of Africa or Arabia. (Fielding 1967, 83)

But many criminals were nonetheless caught, convicted of capital crimes, and held (pending execution) at Newgate, with all "the hellish noise, the roaring, swearing, and clamour, the stench, and nastiness" [**2.28**] that characterized it. They would eventually be carted off to be hanged at Tyburn Tree [**2.29 HN**], among crowds who were generally in a holiday mood, "as if the spectacle […] afforded pleasure instead of pain" [**2.29**]. All sorts of people could be found in the crowd at executions, including ladies and gentlemen. James Boswell explained how even a refined aristocrat could become inured to such scenes:

> I must confess that I myself am never absent from them. When I first attended them I was shocked to the greatest degree. I was in a manner convulsed with pity and terror, and for several days, but especially the night after, I was in a very dismal situation. Still, however I persisted in attending them and by degrees my sensibility abated; so that I can now see one with great composure […] (1951, 345)

But Boswell's active pursuit of the spectacle of suffering seemed to him to require explanation: he managed to convince himself that it was no morbid or sadistic impulse that drew people like him to executions, but (apparently) a

[13] **benefit of clergy**: originally a medieval ruling that excluded clerics from the judgment of secular courts, it became a way of mitigating the savagery of the laws for first-time offenders. If such offenders could recite part of Psalm 51 in Latin, they were deemed to be **clergy** through a legal fiction, and branded on the thumb to obviate a second claim. By means of this so-called 'neck-verse' Ben Jonson escaped the noose for manslaughter in 1598.

thoughtful reverence in the face of death: "the curiosity which impels people to be present at such affecting scenes is certainly a proof of sensibility, not of callousness. For it is observed that the greatest proportion of spectators is composed of women; and I do not apprehend that my readers will impute a barbarous severity to the fair sex" (346–7).

But not everyone in the crowd was there to contemplate the solemn spectacle of death, or rejoice in the triumph of justice: not all criminals, indeed, were perceived by everyone as transgressors. Several kinds of property crime—smuggling, for example, or poaching—were seen by many as the exercise of customary rights, and their punishment as a form of oppression. Moreover, the execution of a celebrity criminal such as a debonair highwayman, often dressed in his finest clothes, could become a celebration of dash, *sprezzatura* and rebellious courage, particularly in a period where the corrupt activities of the South Sea Company directors and Sir Robert Walpole's cabinet had blurred the distinction between business practice and simple theft.[14] Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), with its gallant highwayman hero Macheath, explores this strange confusion of values, in which Peachum, who profits from both sides of the law as corrupt thief-taker and receiver of stolen goods, sings "The statesman, because he's so great, / Thinks his trade as honest as mine" (Gay 1983, 4).

Of course, the enormous crowds that turned out for executions represented in theory a dangerous source of possible sedition. Yet the potential for urban mob fury that in Paris brought about the overthrow of a political system, in London issued only in the futile xenophobic tantrum of the Gordon Riots [**2.31**].

Peter Groves (Monash University)

2.1 Celia Fiennes: Some Topographical Features of London

Celia Fiennes *(1662–1741), a granddaughter of William Fiennes, 1st Viscount Saye and Sele, was born in Wiltshire but lived in London from 1691. She travelled around England mainly on horseback from the early 1680s until about 1712 and visited every county, Wales, and Scotland. She had no pretensions to being a historian, unlike her predecessor William Camden (1551–1623), but her extensive commentaries show her enthusiasm and unbounded curiosity, as well as shrewd common sense in her plainspoken factual accounts of what she observes. Her description of London derives from one of her innumerable journeys. The occasional disconnectedness of her narrative has been retained, but her unconventional grammar has been repaired (square brackets).*

[14]By no means all those hanged at Tyburn were celebrated as heroes, however: Elizabeth Brownrigg (1720–1767), for example, who whipped to death Mary Clifford, her fifteen-year-old apprentice, was sent on her way with exultant jeers and curses by a huge crowd of outraged citizens.

From Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary (1888) (written 1703)

It cannot be thought amiss here to add some remark on the metropolis of England, London, whose situation [is] on so noble a river as the Thames, which empties it at the buoy of the Nore,[15] being there joined with the Medway—another very fine river also—and falls there into the sea which is about 30 miles from London, and is an ebbing, flowing river as far as Sheen beyond London. This is very commodious for ships which did come up just to the Bridge but from carelessness the river is choked up, that obliges the ships to come to an anchor at Blackwall. All along this river are several docks for building ships of the biggest burden. Six miles from the town the last year was built the Royal Sovereign,[16] which is our greatest ship. London joined with Westminster which are two great cities but now with building so joined it makes up but one vast building [*conurbation*] with all its suburbs, and has in the walls 97 parishes, without the walls 16 parishes, 15 suburbs, Surrey, Middlesex, seven parishes in Westminster.

London is the City properly for trade, Westminster for the Court […]

[*There follows a lengthy account of a Lord Mayor's pageant and other ceremonies, and also an account of the grand entry into London by King William III in 1697.*]

There is as I said great public stock in the City by which they have raised sumptuous buildings, the Royal Exchange for one, a large space of ground enclosed round with cloisters and open arches on which are built many walks of shops of all trades. The middle space below was designed and is used for the merchants to meet to concert their business and trade and bills, which is all open and on the top of these piazzas are the effigies in stone of most of our kings and queens since the Conquest, which were anointed crowned heads from whence this Exchange takes its name Royal. In the midst of it stands in stone work on a pedestal the effigies of King Charles II railed in with iron spikes. There is also at the Bridge a great Monument of stone work as is the Exchange. This is of a great height—300 steps up and on the top gives the view of the whole town. This was set up in memory of God's putting a check to the raging flame which by the plots and contrivance of the Papists was lighted.[17] There is a large inscription on it all round mentioning it, and also of the Popish plot[18] and the Gun Powder Treason[19] and all by the Papists.

[15] **Nore**: a hazardous sandbank in the Thames estuary.

[16] **Royal Sovereign**: a 100-gun first-rate ship of the line, decommissioned in 1768.

[17] **by plots … lighted**: This was a common misbelief. The part of the inscription on the Monument blaming the Papists (mentioned below) was added in 1681 and finally erased in 1831.

[18] **Popish plot**: The (purely imaginary) Catholic plot invented by Titus Oates 1678–1681.

[19] **Gun Power Treason**: the (real) Catholic plot by Robert Catesby, Guy Fawkes, and others in 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament; see [**2.31**], n.144.

The Bridge [**1.2 HN**] is a stately building all stone with 18 arches, most of them big enough to admit a large barge to pass; it's so broad that two coaches drive abreast and there is on each side houses and shops just like any large street in the City, of which there are many and well built, even and lofty, most ha[ve] five if not six degrees [*storeys*].

Most of the [*Guild-*]Halls belonging to each company are large and magnificent buildings, as also the churches—very fine and lofty of stone work. The great cathedral is St Paul's which was a vast building but burnt by fire—[and] has since by the City been built up, or rather a tax on coals which brings all to pay for it in London [**2.13 HN**]. It now is almost finished and very magnificent, the choir with curious carved work in wood, the archbishop's seat and the Bishop of London's and Lord Mayor's is very finely carved and adorned; the altar also with velvet and gold. On the right side is placed a large crimson velvet elbow chair which is for the Dean. This is all finished (with a sweet organ) but the body of the Church which is to be closed on the top with a large cupola is not quite done.

There was formerly in the City several houses of the noblemen's with large gardens and outhouses and great attendances, but of late [they] are pulled down and built into streets and squares and called by the names of the noblemen, and this is the practice by almost all even just to the Court, excepting one or two.

2.2 Daniel Defoe: London Surging in Size

Daniel Defoe *(1660–1731) was a versatile and prolific writer in fiction, pamphleteering, and verse, his oeuvre amounting to more than 550 works. He wrote on almost every subject of popular appeal—political, topographical, commercial, religious, and social. Among such works was his* Journal of the Plague Year *(1722)* [**2.8**]. *He resided in London but travelled widely in England and the Continent. His fictions (always masquerading as fact, ironically to appease his Puritan readership, for whom fiction was mere lying) include the ever popular* Robinson Crusoe *(1719), as well as the mildly salacious* Moll Flanders *(1722)* [**2.27–2.28**]. *He wrote in a plain style with a journalist's keen eye for realistic detail, the result being convincing narratives that were immensely readable.*

From A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain *(1724–1726), Vol. 2, Letter 2*

London, as a city only,[20] and as its walls and liberties[21] line it out, might, indeed, be viewed in a small compass; but, when I speak of London, now in the modern acceptation, you expect I shall take in all that vast mass of

[20] **London, as a city only**: i.e. the City of London by itself.

[21] **liberties**: adjacent districts which for historical reasons did not form part of a self-governing borough like the City of London. Shakespeare's Globe theatre, for example, though geographically part of London, was conveniently situated in the Liberty of the Clink, under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester, not the Puritan theatre-hating City of London.

buildings, reaching from Black-Wall in the east, to Tot-Hill Fields in the west; and extended in an unequal breadth, from the bridge, or river, in the south, to Islington north; and from Peterburgh House on the bank side in Westminster, to Cavendish Square, and all the new buildings by, and beyond, Hannover Square, by which the city of London, for so it is still to be called, is extended to Hyde Park Corner in the Brentford Road, and almost to Maribone in the Acton Road, and how much farther it may spread, who knows? New squares, and new streets rising up every day to such a prodigy of buildings, that nothing in the world does, or ever did, equal it, except old Rome in Trajan's time,[22] when the walls were fifty miles in compass, and the number of inhabitants six million eight hundred thousand souls.

It is the disaster of London, as to the beauty of its figure, that it is thus stretched out in buildings, just at the pleasure of every builder or undertaker of buildings, and as the convenience of the people directs, whether for trade or otherwise; and this has spread the face of it in a most straggling, confused manner, out of all shape, uncompact, and unequal; neither long or broad, round or square; whereas the city of Rome, though a monster for its greatness, yet was, in a manner, round, with very few irregularities in its shape.

At London, including the buildings on both sides the water, one sees it, in some places, three miles broad, as from St George's in Southwark to Shoreditch in Middlesex; or two miles, as from Peterburgh House to Montague House; and in some places, not half a mile, as in Wapping; and much less, as in Redriff.

We see several villages, formerly standing, as it were, in the country, and at a great distance, now joined to the streets by continued buildings, and more making haste to meet in the like manner; for example, Deptford. This town was formerly reckoned at least two miles off from Redriff, and that over the marshes too—a place unlikely ever to be inhabited—and yet now by the increase of buildings in that town itself, and the many streets erected at Redriff, and by the docks and building yards on the riverside, which stand between both, the town of Deptford and the streets of Redriff (or Rotherhithe, as they write it) are effectually joined, and the buildings daily increasing, so that Deptford is no more a separated town but is become a part of the great mass, and infinitely full of people also. Here they have, within the last two or three years, built a fine new church,[23] and were the

[22]The Roman emperor **Trajan** (98–117 CE) undertook a huge public building programme in the capital. Its population at the time is (*pace* Defoe) usually reckoned at about one million, a size London only reached in 1800.

[23]**a fine new church**: St Paul's, Deptford, a splendid baroque church designed by Thomas Archer, a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren.

town of Deptford now separated and rated by itself, I believe it contains more people, and stands upon more ground, than the city of Wells. […]

That Westminster is in a fair way to shake hands with Chelsea, as St. Giles's is with Marybone; and Great Russell Street by Montague House, with Tottenham-Court: all this is very evident, and yet all these put together, are still to be called London. Whither will this monstrous city then extend? and where must a circumvallation or communication line[24] of it be placed?

THE RESTORATION

2.3 John Evelyn: Charles II's Triumphal Entry into London

John Evelyn *graphically describes in his Diary the rejoicing at Charles's return to London after the restoration of the monarchy (for a note on Evelyn see* [**1.28 HN**]*). Charles had landed at Dover from The Hague and was received with great acclaim in Rochester and other towns* en route *to London.*

[*29 May 1660*] This day his Majesty Charles II came to London after a sad and long exile and calamitous suffering both of the King and Church, being 17 years. This was also his birthday,[25] and with a triumph of above 20,000 horse and foot, brandishing their swords and shouting with inexpressible joy; the ways strewed with flowers, the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, fountains running with wine; the mayor, aldermen, and all the companies in their liveries, chains of gold, and banners; lords and nobles clad in cloth of silver, gold, and velvet; the windows and balconies well set with ladies; trumpets, music, and myriads of people flocking, even so far as from Rochester, so as they were seven hours in passing the city, even from two in the afternoon till nine at night.

I stood in the Strand and beheld it, and blessed God. And all this was done without one drop of blood shed, and by that very army which rebelled against him; but it was the Lord's doing, for such a Restoration was never mentioned in any history ancient or modern, since the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity[26]; nor so joyful a day and so bright ever seen in this nation, this happening when to expect or effect it was past all human policy.

[24] **circumvallation … communication line**: military terms (perimeter wall or defence … route of communication).

[25] **his birthday**: Charles was born 29 May 1630.

[26] **the return … Babylonish captivity**: See [**1.28**], n.169.

2.4 Evelyn: Bodies of Cromwell and Others Exhumed

John Evelyn *recounts with evident satisfaction the inglorious fate of the bodies of Oliver Cromwell and his fellow regicides.*

[*30 January 1661*] […] This day (O the stupendous and inscrutable judgements of God!) were the carcasses of those arch rebels Cromwell, Bradshaw the judge who condemned his Majesty, and Ireton, son-in-law to the usurper,[27] dragged out of their superb tombs in Westminster among the kings, to Tyburn [**2.29 HN**], and hanged on the gallows there from nine in the morning till six at night, and then buried under that fatal and ignominious monument in a deep pit, thousands of people who had seen them in all their pride being spectators. Look back at 22 November 1658[28] and be astonished! And fear God and honour the King; but meddle not with them who are given to change!

2.5 Evelyn: Gambling and Debauchery at the Court of Charles II

The second entry is a marginal note in ***Evelyn****'s Diary written a week after Charles's death. Evelyn was scathing about the King's mistresses, referring to them as "cattle of that sort."*

[*6 January 1662*] This evening, according to custom, his Majesty opened the revels of that night by throwing the dice himself in the privy chamber, where was a table set on purpose, and lost his 100 pounds.[29] (The year before he won 150 pounds.) The ladies also played very deep. I came away when the Duke of Ormond had won about 1000 pounds, and left them still at passage,[30] cards, etc. at other tables, both there and at the Groom-porter's, observing the wicked folly and monstrous excess of passion amongst some losers. Sorry I am that such a wretched custom as play to that excess should be countenanced in a court which ought to be an example of virtue to the rest of the kingdom.

[27] **Cromwell… usurper**: Oliver **Cromwell** (1599–1658); John **Bradshaw** (1602–1659); Henry **Ireton** (1611–1651). The date (30 January) was the 12th anniversary of Charles I's execution.

[28] **22 November 1658**: Cromwell's funeral; he died on 3 September, but the funeral was delayed to give time to prepare for the magnificent (and very costly) ceremony.

[29] **100 pounds**: over £13,000 in 2018 money.

[30] **passage**: a game of dice.

[*6 February 1685*] I can never forget the inexpressible luxury[31] and profaneness, gaming, and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening), which this day sennight[32] I was witness of; the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland, and Mazarin,[33] etc., a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about 20 of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset[34] round a large table, a bank of at least 2000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust.

2.6 Evelyn: James II's Ill-Timed Feast for the Venetian Ambassadors

***Evelyn** disapproves of the sumptuous festivities that James II holds in honour of the Venetian ambassadors, since the court is still officially in mourning, following the death of Charles II on 6 February 1685.*

[*18 December 1685*] […] The dinner was most magnificent and plentiful, at four tables, with music, kettle drums, and trumpets, which sounded upon a whistle at every health. The banquet was 12 vast chargers piled up so high that those who sat one against another could hardly see each other. Of these sweetmeats, which doubtless were some days piling up in that exquisite manner, the ambassadors touched not, but leaving them to the spectators who came out of curiosity to see the dinner, were exceedingly pleased to see in what a moment of time all that curious work was demolished, the confitures voided,[35] and the tables cleared. Thus his Majesty entertained them three days, which (for the table only) cost him £600,[36] as the Clerk of the Green Cloth, Sir William Boreman, assured me. Dinner ended, I saw their procession or cavalcade to Whitehall, innumerable coaches attending. The two ambassadors had four coaches of their own and 50 footmen, as I remember, besides other equipage as splendid as the occasion would permit, the court being still in mourning.

[31] **luxury**: lascivious behaviour, hanky-panky.

[32] **sennight**: week (1.e. a *seven-night*).

[33] **Portsmouth … Mazarin**: Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of **Portsmouth** (1649–1734) (a "young wanton," wrote Evelyn); Barbara Palmer, Duchess of **Cleveland** (1640–1709) ("an impudent woman," "curse of our nation"); Hortense Mancini, Duchess **Mazarin** (1646–1699) (a "famous beauty and errant lady").

[34] **basset**: a card game.

[35] **confitures voided**: confections taken away.

[36] **£600**: worth about £87,000 in 2018.

THE GREAT PLAGUE

2.7 Samuel Pepys Describes the Plague

The last severe outbreak of the bubonic plague in Britain occurred in 1665–1666, when over 100,000 people, about a quarter of London's population, died. The plague constantly recurred and the numbers of its victims had been published regularly after the outbreak of 1603. It was caused by infectious bites from fleas (see ***Introduction*** *2, p. 102), but because this was not known, it seemed to strike its victims suddenly and at random. (see also* [**1.11–1.12**] *and footnotes).*

Samuel Pepys *(1633–1703) stayed in London during the plague as he held important posts in naval affairs (he was to become Secretary to the Admiralty in 1672). His firsthand account of the plague in his Diary provides an invaluable source of information on everyday life (and death) in London, as well as insights into the personality of Pepys himself.*

[*3 September 1665*] […] Among other stories one was very passionate, methought, of a complaint brought against a man in the town for taking a child from London from an infected house. Alderman Hooker[37] told us it was the child of a very able citizen in Gracious [*Gracechurch*] Street, a saddler, who had buried all the rest of his children of the plague; and himself and wife, now being shut up in despair of escaping, did desire only to save the life of this little child, and so prevailed to have it received stark naked into the arms of a friend,[38] who brought it, having put it into new fresh clothes, to Greenwich, where, upon hearing the story we did agree it should be permitted to be received and kept in the town.

[*14 September 1665*] […] And, Lord! To see how I did endeavour all I could to talk with as few as I could, there being now no observation [*observance*] of shutting up of houses infected, that to be sure we do converse and meet with people that have the plague upon them. I spent some thoughts upon the occurrences of this day, giving as much content on one hand, and melancholy on another, as any day in all my life. For the first: the finding of my money and plate and all safe at London, and speeding in my business this day. The hearing of this good news to such excess, after so great a despair of my Lord's[39] doing anything this year; adding to that, the decrease of 500 and more, which is the first decrease we have yet had in the sickness since it began; and great hopes that the next week it will be greater. Then, on the other side, my finding that though the Bill[40] in general is abated, yet the City,

[37] **Alderman Hooker**: Sir Richard **Hooker**, who became Lord Mayor in 1673.

[38] **the child … of a friend**: This "passionate" [*moving*] anecdote formed the subject of a painting by Frank Topham, "Lord Have Mercy Upon Us" (1898), held in the Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

[39] **my Lord**: Sir Edward Montagu (1625–1672), first Earl of Sandwich, Pepy's patron.

[40] **Bill**: the Bill of Mortality, a periodically published official report of the deaths in a given district.

within the walls, is increased, and likely to continue so, and is close to our house there. My meeting dead corpses of the plague, carried to be buried close to me at noonday, through the City in Fenchurch Street. To see a person sick of the sores carried close by me by Gracechurch in a hackney coach. My finding the Angel Tavern, at the lower end of Tower Hill shut up; and more than that, the alehouse at the Tower Stairs; and more than that, that the person was then dying of the plague when I was last there, a little while ago, at night. To hear that poor Payne, my waiter [*servant*], hath buried a child, and is dying himself. To hear that a labourer I sent but the other day to Dagenhams,[41] to know how they did there, is dead of the plague; and that one of my own watermen, that carried me daily, fell sick as soon as he had landed me on Friday morning last, when I had been all night upon the water, and I believe he did get his infection that day at Brainford,[42] and is now dead of the plague. To hear that Captain Lambert and Cuttle[43] are killed in the taking these ships; and that Mr Sidney Montagu is sick of a desperate fever at my Lady Carteret's, at Scott's Hall.[44] To hear that Mr Lewis hath another daughter sick. And lastly, that both my servants W. Hewer[45] and Tom Edwards,[46] have lost their fathers, both in St Sepulchre's[47] parish, of the plague this week, do put me into great apprehensions of melancholy, and with good reason. But I put off my thoughts of sadness as much as I can, and the rather to keep my wife in good heart, and family also.

2.8 Daniel Defoe's Imaginative Reconstruction of the Great Plague

Daniel Defoe *(1660–1731) wrote* A Journal of the Plague Year *five decades after it occurred. In 1665 he could not have been more than five or six years old, but his extraordinarily realistic account of the horrors of the plague have the appearance of being from first hand observation. His information was presumably derived from friends and relatives who survived and also from books and pamphlets (he was a keen reader); doubtless also they were embellished by his imagination. (For a note on* ***Defoe****, see* [**2.2 HN**]*).*

[41] **Dagenhams**: near Romford, Essex, seat of Lady Wright, sister-in-law of Sir Edward Montagu.

[42] **Brainford**: Brentford, in Essex, where Pepys had a country house.

[43] **Captain Lambert and Cuttle**: David **Lambert** and John **Cuttle**, both friends of Pepys, were killed in the Anglo-Dutch Wars.

[44] **Mr Sidney Montagu … Scott's Hall**: **Montagu** was the son of Lord Sandwich; **Scott's Hall**, Kent was the home of Sir Thomas Scott, son-in-law of Sir George Carteret and **Lady Carteret**.

[45] **W. Hewer**: William **Hewer** was Pepys's chief clerk.

[46] **Tom Edwards**: A servant of Pepys, who refers to him as 'my boy'; they were close companions.

[47] **St Sepulchres**: See [**2.28**], n.137.

From A Journal of the Plague Year *(1722)*

This was a mournful scene indeed, and affected me almost as much as the rest; but the other was awful and full of terror: the cart had in it 16 or 17 bodies; some were wrapped up in linen sheets, some in rugs, some little other than naked, or so loose that what covering they had fell from them in the shooting out of the cart, and they fell quite naked among the rest; but the matter was not much to them, or the indecency much to anyone else, seeing they were all dead, and were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind, as we may call it, for here was no difference made, but poor and rich went together. There was no other way of burials, neither was it possible there should, for coffins were not to be had for the prodigious numbers that fell in such a calamity as this.

It was reported by way of scandal upon the buriers, that if any corpse was delivered to them decently wound up, as we called it then, in a winding sheet tied over the head and feet, which some did, and which was generally of good linen; I say, it was reported that the buriers were so wicked as to strip them in the cart, and carry them quite naked to the ground. But as I cannot easily credit anything so vile among Christians, and at a time so filled with terrors as that was, I can only relate it and leave it undetermined.

Innumerable stories also went about of the cruel behaviours and practices of nurses who tended the sick, and of their hastening on the fate of those they tended in their sickness […]

[…] Sometimes a man or woman dropped down dead in the very markets; for many people that had the plague upon them knew nothing of it till the inward gangrene had affected their vitals and they died in a few moments. This caused that many died frequently in that manner in the streets suddenly, without any warning. Others perhaps had time to go to the next bulk[48] or stall, or to any door, porch, and just sit down and die, as I have said before.

These objects were so frequent in the streets that when the plague came to be very raging, on one side there was scarce any passing by the streets but that several dead bodies would be lying here and there upon the ground. On the other hand it is observable that though at first the people would stop as they went along and call to the neighbours to come out on such an occasion, yet afterward no notice was taken of them, but that, if at any time we found a corpse lying, go 'cross the way and not come near it; or if in a narrow lane or passage, go back again, and seek some other way to go on the business we were upon; and in those cases, the corpse was always left till the officers had notice to come and take them away; or till night, when the bearers attending the Dead Cart would take them up and carry them away. Nor did those undaunted creatures who performed these offices fail to search their pockets, and sometimes strip off their clothes if they were well dressed, as sometimes they were, and carry off what they could get […]

[48] **bulk**: a counter projecting from a shop into the street.

[… I]t is scarce credible what dreadful cases happened in particular families every day: people in the rage of the distemper, or in the torment of their swellings, which was indeed intolerable, running out of their own government, raving and distracted, and oftentimes laying violent hands upon themselves, throwing themselves out at their windows, shooting themselves, etc.; mothers murdering their own children in their lunacy, some dying of mere grief as a passion, some of mere fright and surprise without any infection at all; others frighted into idiotism and foolish distractions; some into despair and lunacy, others into melancholy madness.

THE GREAT FIRE

2.9 John Dryden: London on Fire

Just after midnight on Sunday 2nd September, 1666, a fire broke out in a bakery in Pudding Lane, near London Bridge, and over four days spread rapidly westward, blown by a strong east wind that fanned its flames into a temperature that could melt the iron bars in Newgate prison, and blew embers that started spot-fires ahead of its progress. It was helped by the fact that "the streets were not only narrow and the houses all built of timber, lath and plaster […] but the manner of the building in those days, one storey projecting out beyond another, was such that in some narrow streets the houses almost touched one another at the top" [**2.11**]. *It was also assisted by the absence of professional fire-fighters and effective fire-fighting equipment, and by the inactivity of the Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, who (roused early on Sunday morning) declined to authorize the destruction of houses to create fire-breaks on the grounds that "a woman could piss it out". By Wednesday evening it had destroyed most of the City (except the north-eastern edge, from Bishopsgate to the Tower) and an area to its west, up to Temple Bar, devouring 32,000 houses, 87 churches, St Paul's Cathedral, the great Guildhalls, and the Royal Exchange. It even began to cross the Bridge, but was stopped by a gap in the houses.*

John Dryden *(1631–1700), poet, dramatist, and essayist, wrote* Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders, 1666*—a poem in the epic style, which describes (among other things) the spread of the fire and the devastation it caused. Dryden had become a fervent royalist, and the poem is a patriotic and pious one (but not without irony). Charles II and James Duke of York are given lavish praise for their firefighting efforts, but London is saved finally by God's intervention so that it will become an even greater city, its streets "With silver paved, and all divine with gold."*

From Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders, 1666 *(1667)*

215

Such was the rise of this prodigious fire,
  Which in mean buildings first obscurely bred,
From thence did soon to open streets aspire,
  And straight to palaces and temples spread.

216
The diligence of trades and noiseful gain,
And luxury, more late,[49] asleep were laid;
All was the night's, and in her silent reign,
No sound the rest of nature did invade.

217
In this deep quiet, from what source unknown,
Those seeds of fire their fatal birth disclose;
And first, few scattering sparks about were blown,
Big[50] with the flames that to our ruin rose.

218
Then, in some close-pent room it crept along,
And smouldering as it went, in silence fed;
Till th'infant monster, with devouring strong,
Walked boldly upright with exalted head.

219
Now, like some rich or mighty murderer,
Too great for prison, which he breaks with gold;
Who fresher for new mischiefs does appear,
And dares the world to tax him with the old.

220
So 'scapes th'insulting[51] fire his narrow gaol,
And makes small outlets into open air;
There the fierce winds his open force assail,
And beat him downward to his first repair.

221
The winds, like crafty courtesans, withheld
His flames from burning, but to blow them more;
And, every fresh attempt, he is repell'd
With faint denials, weaker than before.

222
And now, no longer letted [*hindered*] of his prey,
He leaps up at it with enrag'd desire;
O'erlooks the neighbours with a wide survey,
And nods at every house his threatening fire.

[49] **more late**: later to bed than honest tradesmen.

[50] **Big**: pregnant.

[51] **insulting**: (1) leaping friskily; (2) attacking.

223

The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge[52] descend,
With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice;
About the fire into a dance they bend,
And sing their Sabbath[53] notes with feeble voice […]

255

Those who have homes, when home they do repair
To a last lodging call their wandering friends.
Their short uneasy sleeps are broke with care,
To look how near their own destruction tends.

256

Those who have none sit round where once it was,
And with full eyes each wonted room require;
Haunting the yet warm ashes of the place,
As murder'd men walk where they did expire.

257

Some stir up coals and watch the Vestal[54] fire,
Others in vain from sight of ruin run;
And while through burning labyrinths they retire,
With loathing eyes repeat what they would shun.

258

The most, in fields, like herded beasts lie down;
To dews obnoxious[55] on the grassy floor;
And while their babes in sleep their sorrows drown,
Sad parents watch the remnants of their store.

259

While by the motion of the flames they guess
What streets are burning now, and what are near;
An infant, waking, to the paps would press,
And meets, instead of milk, a falling tear […]

[52] **The ghosts … Bridge**: The heads of traitors were displayed on spikes on London **Bridge**.

[53] **Sabbath**: (1) Sunday, when the fire broke out, just after midnight; (2) "A midnight meeting of demons, sorcerers and witches, presided over by the Devil" (*OED*).

[54] **Vestal**: Vesta was the ancient Roman goddess of the hearth.

[55] **To dews obnoxious**: exposed to [harmful] damp.

275
Nor could thy fabric, Paul's, defend thee long,
Though thou wert sacred to thy Maker's praise;
Though made immortal by a poet's song[56];
And poets' songs the Theban walls could raise.[57]

276
The daring flames peep'd in and saw from far,
The awful beauties of the sacred choir;
But, since it was profan'd by Civil War,[58]
Heaven thought it fit to have it purg'd by fire.

277
Now down the narrow streets it swiftly came,
And widely opening, did on both sides prey.
This benefit we sadly owe the flame,
If only ruin must enlarge our way.

278
And now four days the sun had seen our woes,
Four nights the moon beheld th'incessant fire;
It seemed as if the stars more sickly rose,
And farther from the feverish north retire.

279
In th'émpyrean Heav'n (the bless'd abode)
The Thrones and the Dominions[59] prostrate lie,
Not daring to behold their angry God;
And an hush'd silence damps the tuneful sky.

280
At length th'Almighty cast a pitying eye,
And mercy softly touch'd his melting breast;
He saw the town's one half in rubbish lie,
And eager flames give on to storm the rest.

[56]**Though made … song**: Referring to Edmund Waller's poem "Upon His Majesty's Repairing of Paul's" (1645).

[57]**And poets' songs … raise**: Referring to the harpist Amphion in Greek mythology, whose music drew stones together to build the walls of Thebes.

[58]**profaned by Civil War**: Cromwell used the nave as cavalry barracks; the iconoclastic Parliamentarians severely damaged effigies, woodwork, and windows.

[59]**Thrones and Dominions**: two of the nine orders of angels.

281
An hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipp'd above;
Of it a broad extinguisher he makes,
And hoods the flames that to their quarry strove.

282
The vanquish'd fires withdraw from every place,
Or full with feeding, sink into a sleep;
Each household Genius[60] shows again his face,
And from the hearths the little Lares[61] creep.

2.10 Pepys' Buried Treasures

***Samuel Pepys** and others bury their possessions of value to be safe from the Fire.*

[*4 September 1666*] Up by break of day to get away the remainder of my things, which I did by a lighter at the Iron Gate[62]; and my hands [*servants*] so few that it was the afternoon before we could get them all away. Sir W. Pen[63] and I to the Tower Street, and there met the fire burning three or four doors beyond Mr Howell's,[64] whose goods, poor man, his trays, and dishes, shovels, etc. were flung all along Tower Street in the kennels [*gutters*], and people working therewith from one end to the other; the fire coming on in that narrow street on both sides with infinite fury. Sir W. Batten,[65] not knowing how to remove his wine, did dig a pit in the garden and laid it in there; and I took the opportunity of laying all the papers of my office that I could not otherwise dispose of. And in the evening Sir W. Pen and I did dig another and put our wine in it, and I my parmesan cheese[66] as well as my wine and some other things.

2.11 Defoe: London Before and After the Fire

***Daniel Defoe** affirms that due to the lack of any enforcement of planning laws that were made after the Great Fire, more houses were built in London after the Fire than before it, and the amount of open ground was noticeably reduced. See also* [**2.2 HN**].

[60] **Genius**: tutelary deity.

[61] **Lares**: gods of the household in Roman mythology.

[62] **Iron Gate**: Irongate Stairs in Lower Thames Street, near the Tower.

[63] **Sir W. Pen**: William **Pen** (or Penn) (1621–1670) was Vice-Admiral in the Commonwealth and an Admiral thereafter; he was Commissioner of the Navy Board under Pepys.

[64] **Mr Howell**: a turner in the employ of the Navy Board.

[65] **Sir W. Batten**: Sir William **Batten** (d. 1667), a naval officer and Surveyor of the Navy.

[66] **parmesan cheese** (from Parma in Italy) was much rarer and dearer than it is now.

From A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain *(1724–1726), Vol. 2, Letter 2*

It is true that before the Fire of London the streets were narrow and public edifices, as well as private, were more crowded, and built closer to one another; for soon after the Fire, the King, by his proclamation, forbid all persons whatsoever, to go about to rebuild for a certain time, viz. till the Parliament (which was soon to sit) might regulate and direct the manner of building, and establish rules for the adjusting every man's property, and yet might take order for a due enlarging of the streets and appointing the manner of building as well for the beauty as the conveniency of the city, and for safety in case of any future accident; for though I shall not inquire whether the city was burnt by accident or by treachery, yet nothing was more certain than that as the city stood before, it was strangely exposed to the disaster which happened, and the buildings looked as if they had been formed to make one general bonfire, whenever any wicked party of incendiaries should think fit.

The streets were not only narrow and the houses all built of timber, lath and plaster, or, as they were very properly called Paper Work, and one of the finest range of buildings in the Temple are, to this day, called the Paper Buildings from that usual expression.

But the manner of the building in those days, one storey projecting out beyond another, was such that in some narrow streets the houses almost touched one another at the top, and it has been known that men, in case of fire, have escaped on the tops of the houses, by leaping from one side of a street to another; this made it often, and almost always happen, that if a house was on fire, the opposite house was in more danger to be fired by it, according as the wind stood, than the houses next adjoining on either side.

How this has been regulated, how it was before, and how much better it now is, I leave to be judged by comparing the old unburnt part of the city with the new.

But though by the new buildings after the Fire, much ground was given up and left unbuilt to enlarge the streets, yet 'tis to be observed that the old houses stood severally upon more ground, were much larger upon the flat, and in many places, gardens and large yards about them, all which in the new buildings are, at least, contracted, and the ground generally built up into other houses, so that, notwithstanding all the ground given up for beautifying the streets, yet there are many more houses built than stood before upon the same ground; so that taking the whole city together, there are more inhabitants in the same compass than there was before […]

Another increase of buildings in the city is to be taken from the inhabitants in the unburnt parts following the same example, of pulling down great old buildings, which took up large tracks of ground in some of the well inhabited places, and building on the same ground not only several houses, but even whole streets of houses, which are since fully inhabited […]

These are prodigious enlargements to the city, even upon that which I call inhabited ground, and where infinite numbers of people now live, more than lived upon the same spot of ground before.

INSTITUTIONS

2.12 John Evelyn: Some Unusual Proceedings of the Royal Society

In the 1640s and 1650s a group of people interested in 'natural philosophy' met informally at various venues, including Gresham College.[67] *They formed the nucleus of what became a Society in 1660, which, having been granted a royal charter in 1662 by Charles II, became 'The Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge,' the first national institution in the world devoted to the advancement of science. Its motto,* nullius in verba *(roughly, 'don't take anyone's word for it'), represents the revolutionary rejection of mere authority as a source of knowledge in favour of experiment and observation, and the early work of the society was consequently resisted and even derided by conservatives; Jonathan Swift* [**2.20 HN**] *lampooned it in* Gulliver's Travels *(1726) as the 'Academy of Lagado,' where barely sane 'projectors' seek to extract sunlight from cucumbers or discover knowledge by mechanically-generated random combinations of words. But history was not on Swift's side: early Fellows of the Royal Society include such extraordinary scientific luminaries as Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke, each with a scientific law*[68] *to his credit, Sir Isaac Newton (with many such laws), and the architect of St Paul's* [**2.13 HN**], *the mathematician Sir Christopher Wren.*

But to be fair to Swift, the early proceedings of the Society, though enthusiastic, were not narrowly focussed, and didn't always resemble science as we now understand it, at times verging on the eccentric. ***John Evelyn*** *was one of the group who founded the Royal Society, and his Diary relates the great variety of the business that was transacted.*

[*5 April 1682*] To the R. Society, where at a Council was regulated what *Collections* should be published monthly, as formerly the *Transactions*, which had of late been discontinued but were now much called for by the curious abroad and at home.

[*12 April 1682*] I went this afternoon with several of the Royal Society to a supper which was all dressed, both fish and flesh, in Monsieur Papin's Digesters,[69] by which the hardest bones of beef itself, and mutton, were

[67] Founded in 1597 under the will of Sir Thomas Gresham, Gresham College is London's first institution of higher learning, where professors (who hold temporary tenure) give public lectures. Originally the subjects were confined to astronomy, geometry, medicine, law, divinity, rhetoric and music, but since 1985 they have expanded to include commerce, the environment, and information technology.

[68] Hooke's Law defines the amount of force required to deform an elastic body such as a spring, and Boyle's Law defines the relation between the volume of a gas and the pressure exerted on it.

[69] **Monsieur Papin's Digesters**: Denis **Papin** (1647–?1712) was elected a member of the Royal Society in 1680. His **book** (see below) was *A New Digester or Engine for Softening Bones* (1681).

made as soft as cheese, without water or other liquor, and with less than eight ounces of coals, producing an incredible quantity of gravy; and for close of all a jelly made of the bones of beef, the best for clearness and good relish, and the most delicious that I had ever seen or tasted. We eat pike and other fish bones, and all without impediment; but nothing exceeded the pigeons, which tasted just as if baked in a pie, all these being stewed in their own juice, without any addition of water save what swam about the Digester, as *in balneo*[70]; the natural juice of all these provisions acting on the grosser substances, reduced the hardest bones to tenderness; but it is best descanted with more particulars for extracting tinctures, preserving and stewing fruit, and saving fuel, in Dr Papin's book, published and dedicated to our Society, of which he is a member. He is since gone to Venice with the late Resident here,[71] and also a member of our Society, who carried this excellent mechanic, philosopher, and physician to set up a philosophical meeting in that city. This philosophical supper caused much mirth amongst us, and exceedingly pleased all the company.

2.13 Ned Ward: The Rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral

Old St Paul's was gutted by the Great Fire in 1666, and it was decided to demolish it and build a completely new cathedral, which was accomplished with astonishing speed for such a huge edifice. After Christopher Wren received the royal warrant for one of his designs in 1675, in the Baroque style, with a magnificent dome and a porticoed west front, building was completed in only 36 years. Even so, Londoners were impatient at what seemed to be lack of progress. ***Edward (Ned) Ward*** *(1667–1731) comments with some acidity on the inefficiency of the labourers he observes. He was a London publican, known for his entertaining conversation and the graphic accounts in his writings of everyday life in London.*

From The London Spy *(1698–1709), Part 5*

From thence we turned through the West Gate of St Paul's Churchyard, where we saw a parcel[72] of stone-cutters and sawyers so very hard at work that, I protest, notwithstanding the vehemency of their labour and the temperateness of the season, instead of using their handkerchiefs to wipe the sweat off their faces, they were most of them blowing their nails.[73] "Bless me!" said I to my friend, "sure, this church stands in a colder climate

[70] ***in balneo***: in a bath (an alchemical term).

[71] **the late Resident here**: the Venetian Paolo Sarotti, who was in London 1675–1681; he and his son Giovanni Sarotti, who was elected a Fellow in 1679, set up an academy in Venice with brief success.

[72] **parcel**: group, bunch (contemptuous).

[73] **blowing their nails**: blowing on their fingers to warm them (since they are not being warmed by exercise).

than the rest of the nation, or else those fellows are of a strange constitution to seem ready to freeze at such warm exercise." "You must consider," says my friend, "this is work carried on at a national charge,[74] and ought not to be hastened on in a hurry, for the greatest reputation it will gain when it's finished will be that it was so many years in building […]".

We went a little further, where we observed ten men in a corner, very busy about two men's work, taking as much care that everyone should have his due proportion of the labour, as so many thieves in making an exact division of their booty. The wonderful piece of difficulty the whole number had to perform was to drag along a stone of about three hundredweight in a carriage, in order to be hoisted upon the mouldings of the cupola, but were so fearful of dispatching this facile undertaking with too much expedition that they were longer in hauling on it half the length of the church than a couple of lusty porters, I am certain, would have been carrying it to Paddington without resting of their burden.

2.14 Joseph Addison: The Royal Exchange

Joseph Addison *(1672–1719), poet, dramatist, essayist, and co-producer with Richard Steele of the immensely popular periodical* The Spectator *(1711–1712), expatiates on the wonders of the Royal Exchange. The Exchange was rebuilt in 1669 after the Great Fire and became one of the great business centres of the world: part market, part shopping-mall, part Stock Exchange. Addison writes with the expansiveness and patriotic fervour of Sir Roger de Coverley, a character who often appears in* The Spectator, *though he is not named here.*

From The Spectator, *No. 69 (19 May 1711)*

There is no place in the town which I so much love to frequent as the Royal Exchange. It gives me a secret satisfaction, and in some measure gratifies my vanity as I am an Englishman, to see so rich an assembly of countrymen and foreigners consulting together upon the private business of mankind, and making this metropolis a kind of emporium for the whole earth. I must confess I look upon High Change[75] to be a great council, in which all considerable nations have their representatives. Factors [*agents*] in the trading world are what ambassadors are in the politic world: they negotiate affairs, conclude treaties, and maintain a good correspondence between those wealthy societies of men that are divided from one another by seas and oceans or live on the different extremities of a continent. I have often been pleased to hear disputes adjusted between an inhabitant of Japan and an alderman of London, or to see a subject of the Great Mogul[76] entering into a league with one of

[74] **at a national charge**: There was a tax on coal to pay for the rebuilding.

[75] **High Change**: the Exchange when trade is most active.

[76] **the Great Mogul**: the emperor of Delhi, who ruled Hindustan in the north of the Indian subcontinent.

the Czar of Muscovy [*Russia*]. I am infinitely delighted in mixing with these several ministers of commerce, as they are distinguished by their different walks[77] and different languages. Sometimes I am jostled among a body of Armenians; sometimes I am lost in a crowd of Jews; and sometimes make one in a group of Dutchmen. I am a Dane, Swede, or Frenchman at different times, or rather fancy myself like the old philosopher,[78] who upon being asked what countryman he was, replied that he was a citizen of the world.

2.15 Ned Ward: Crowds at the Entrance to the Royal Exchange

Ned Ward *(see* [**2.13 HN**]*) evokes something of the lively market in front of the Royal Exchange; he is less enchanted than Addison with its cosmopolitan crowds, describing "bum-firking Italians", Dutchmen with "slovenly mien and swinish looks", Frenchmen who "step a minuet as they walk", and Spaniards who "stink as strong of garlic as a Bologna sausage".*

From The London Spy *(1698–1709), Part 3*

The pillars at the entrance of the front portico[79] were adorned with sundry memorandums [*reminders*] of old age, and infirmity, under which stood here and there a jack-in-the-box [*swindler*], like a parson in a pulpit, selling cures for your corns, glass eyes for the blind, ivory teeth for broken mouths, and spectacles for the weak-sighted; the passage to the gate being lined with hawkers, gardeners, mandrake-sellers[80] and porters. After we crowded a little way among this miscellaneous multitude we came to a pippin-monger's [*fruit-seller's*] stall, surmounted with [*overtopped by*] a chemist's shop, where drops, elixirs, cordials and balsams had justly the prehemence [*pre-eminence*] of apples, chestnuts, pears and oranges (the former being ranked in as much order upon shelves, as books in a bishop's library, and the latter being marshalled with as much exactness as an army ready to engage). […]

We then proceeded and went on to the 'Change, turned to the right, and jostled in amongst a parcel of swarthy buggerantoes,[81] preternatural[82] fornicators (as my friend called them), who would ogle a handsome young man

[77] **walks**: "each of the portions of the ambulatory [*arcade*] formerly allotted to different classes of merchants and designated by special names, as *East India, Virginia, Jamaica, Spanish walk*, etc.", *OED* 10.b.

[78] **the old philosopher**: Diogenes the Cynic (C4th BCE).

[79] **portico**: the formal entrance, consisting of columns supporting a pediment.

[80] **mandrake-sellers**: The ground-up root of *mandragora officinarum* was a soporific (and thought to promote fertility in women).

[81] **swarthy buggerantoes**: **swarthy** because they (and their tastes) are foreign (as opposed to *true-bred English whoremasters*). Ward may have coined the term **buggeranto**, which was "often used as a term of abuse applied to foreigners" (*OED*).

[82] **preternatural**: sodomy was felt to be outside the ordinary course of nature.

with as much lust as a true-bred English whoremaster [*lecher*] would gaze upon a beautiful virgin. Advertisements hung as thick round the pillars of each walk as bells about the legs of a morris-dancer, and an incessant buzz, like the murmurs of the distant ocean, as a diapason[83] to our talk, like a drone[84] to a bagpipe. The wainscot was adorned with quacks' bills[85] instead of pictures; never an empiric[86] in the town, but had his name in a lacquered frame, containing a fair invitation for a fool and his money to be soon parted; thus he that wants physic for a clap,[87] or a wet-nurse for a child, may be furnished here at a minute's warning. After we had squeezed our way through a crowd of bum-firking[88] Italians, we fell into a throng of straitlaced[89] monsters in fur and thrum-caps,[90] with huge loggerheads,[91] effeminate[92] waists, and buttocks like a Flanders mare,[93] with slovenly mien, swinish looks, whose upper lips were gracefully adorned with turd-coloured[94] whiskers; these […] were grunting[95] to each other, like hogs at their peas. These, my friend told me, were the water-rats[96] of Europe, who love nobody but themselves, and fatten upon the spoils, and build their own welfare upon the ruins of their neighbours.

2.16 Defoe: Westminster Abbey

***Defoe** remarks on several features of Westminster Abbey. The last that he mentions is still a subject of note at the present day.*

[83] **diapason**: a swelling sound.

[84] **drone**: "the bass pipe of a bagpipe, which emits only one continuous tone" (*OED*).

[85] **quacks' bills**: advertisements for medical charlatans.

[86] **empiric**: fraudulent practitioner of what we would now call 'alternative medicine'.

[87] **physic for a clap**: treatment for gonorrhœa, almost certainly worthless: as a physician wrote 150 years later, "We do not know of any substance, which, taken into the system, is an antidote to the infection of gonorrheal matter" (Bostwick 215).

[88] **firking**: "beating, whipping" but also a fudged version of "fucking" (c.p. "gang bang," "knocking shop,"). They are thus practitioners either of flagellation (like the "flogging-cullies" Ward mentions in Part 2) or of anal sex, or perhaps both (both for Ward were "classes in the black-school of sodomy").

[89] **straitlaced**: uncommunicative, morose (a stereotypical characteristic of the Dutch).

[90] **thrum-caps**: coarse knitted woollen caps, as worn by Dutch sailors.

[91] **loggerheads**: heads disproportionately large; fools.

[92] **effeminate**: self-indulgent, voluptuous.

[93] **buttocks like a Flanders mare**: enormous buttocks. The Dutch were held to be gluttonous.

[94] **turd-coloured**: because of all the snuff they take.

[95] A caricature of the Dutch language to English ears.

[96] **water-rats**: pirates (with a pun on the last syllable). Despite the current reign of the Dutch King William III (the nephew of Charles II), England and the Netherlands had traditionally been naval, colonial and mercantile rivals, who fought three wars between 1652 and 1674, both sides having resorted at times to piracy.

From A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain *(1724–1726), Vol. 2, Letter 2*

The Abbey, or Collegiate Church of Westminster, stands next to this [*Westminster Hall*]; a venerable old pile of building it is indeed, but so old and weak that had it not been taken in hand some years ago, and great cost bestowed in upholding and repairing it,[97] we might, by this time, have called it a heap not a pile,[98] and not a church but the ruins of a church.

But it begins to stand upon new legs now, and as they continue to work upon the repairs of it, the face of the whole building will, in a short while, be entirely new.

This is the repository of the British kings and nobility, and very fine monuments are here seen over the graves of our ancient monarchs. The particulars are too long to enter into here and are so many times described by several authors that it would be a vain repetition to enter upon it here; besides, we have by no means any room for it.

The monarchs of Great Britain are always crowned here, even King James II[99] submitted to it, and to have it performed by a Protestant bishop. It is observable that our kings and queens make always two solemn visits to this church, and very rarely, if ever, come here any more, viz. to be crowned and to be buried.

Two things I must observe here, and with that I close the account of it. (1) 'Tis very remarkable that the royal vault, in which the English royal family was laid, was filled up with Queen Anne; so that just as the family was extinct above,[100] there was no room to have buried any more below. (2) It is become such a piece of honour to be buried in Westminster Abbey that the body of the church begins to be crowded with the bodies of citizens, poets, seamen, and parsons, nay, even with very mean persons, if they have but any way made themselves known in the world; so that in time the royal ashes will be thus mingled with common dust, that it will leave no room either for king or common people, or at least not for their monuments, some of which also are rather pompously foolish than solid and to the purpose.

[97] **in upholding and repairing it**: Restoration work was undertaken 1698–1723 by Christopher Wren. Nicholas Hawksmoor designed the West Towers, which were not completed until 1745.

[98] **pile**: a large imposing building.

[99] **King James II**: the last Catholic monarch of England, 1685–1688 (see [**2.6**]).

[100] **the family … above**: Queen Anne died in 1714, her death ending the Stuart dynasty.

ALL THAT LIFE CAN AFFORD

2.17 Samuel Johnson in Praise of London

Samuel Johnson *(1709–1784), one of the most brilliant English men of letters—biographer, lexicographer, poet, essayist, and dramatist—was a man of shrewd insight, opinionated, eccentric, but always humane, who gathered around him a large literary circle of like-minded people. He occasionally travelled abroad but always regarded London as his home.* ***James Boswell*** *(1740–1795) was his great friend and fellow-traveller and took great pains to record Johnson's life in detail, writing with enthusiasm, and vitality. His celebrated* Life of Samuel Johnson *is written with the devotion and admiration of a close companion.*

[*5 July 1763*] Talking of London, he observed, "Sir, if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists."

[*30 September 1769*] Talking of a London life, he said, "The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." BOSWELL. "The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another." JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir; but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages."

[*20 September 1777*] I suggested a doubt, that if I were to reside in London, the exquisite zest with which I relished it in occasional visits might go off, and I might grow tired of it. JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

[*9 April 1778*] […] "A great city is, to be sure, the school for studying life; and 'The proper study of mankind is man,' as Pope observes" (see Pope 1966, 250).

2.18 John Gay: The Labyrinthine Streets of London

John Gay *(1685–1732), poet, dramatist, and prose writer, was best known for his ballad opera* The Beggar's Opera *(1728). He was a friend of Johnson, Pope, Swift, and other men of letters. In his* Trivia *his satirical view of London streets is markedly different from that of Johnson, who much enjoyed London's "innumerable little lanes and courts"* [**2.17**]. *The Seven Dials was the junction of seven streets meeting in a circular piazza in the centre of which was a Doric column with clock faces. It was designed in 1693 to be an affluent residential area (it is near Covent Garden), but became a haunt of criminals and sex-workers,* who met in its many taverns.

From Trivia, or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London *(1716), Bk 2*

Where fam'd Saint Giles's ancient limits spread,
An inrail'd[101] column rears its lofty head.
Here to seven streets, seven dials [*clocks*] count the day,
And from each other catch the circling ray.
Here oft the peasant, with enquiring face,
Bewilder'd, trudges on from place to place;
He dwells on every sign with stupid [*stupefied*] gaze,
Enters the narrow alley's doubtful maze,
Tries every winding court and street in vain,
And doubles o'er his weary steps again.
Thus hardy Theseus,[102] with intrepid feet,
Travers'd the dang'rous Labyrinth of Crete;
But still the wand'ring passes forced his stay,[103]
Till Ariadne's clue[104] unwinds the way.
But do not thou, like that bold chief, confide [*trust*]
Thy vent'rous footsteps to a female guide;
She'll lead thee, with delusive smiles along,
Dive in thy fob,[105] and drop thee in the throng.

2.19 Gay on Pall Mall

John Gay [**2.19 HN**], *in his mock-Georgic poem* Trivia, *does not confine his warnings to the slums of London, but sketches the hazards of walking even in fashionable Pall Mall with its expensive shops and aristocratic residences. The name derives from the Italian game* palla-maglio *('ball-mallet'), also called 'pell mell,' which was played mainly by the upper classes in the street that was especially laid out for it in the seventeenth century, and which was consequently blocked to wheeled traffic.*

From Trivia, or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London *(1716), Bk 2*

[101] **inrailed**: enclosed by railings.

[102] **Theseus**: mythical founder of Athens. He entered the baffling maze or 'Labyrinth' of Crete to slay its occupant, the Minotaur, a fearsome bull-man monster to whom Athenian virgins were being sacrificed.

[103] **wandering passes forced his stay**: winding passages brought him to a halt.

[104] **clue**: or 'clew'; a ball of yarn or thread. The Cretan princess **Ariadne** gave **Theseus** a ball of thread with which (by unravelling it) he traced his way into (and thus safely out of) the Labyrinth. This story is the origin of the modern sense of *clue* as "guide, pointer, hint."

[105] **fob**: "A small pocket formerly made in the waistband of the breeches and used for carrying a watch, money, or other valuables" (*OED*).

O bear me to the paths of fair Pell Mell,
Safe are thy pavements, grateful [*pleasing*] is thy smell!
At distance, rolls along the gilded coach,
Nor sturdy carmen [*carters*] on thy walks encroach;
No lets [*hindrances*] would bar thy ways, were chairs[106] denied –
The soft supports of Laziness and Pride;
Shops breath perfumes, through sashes ribbons glow,
The mutual arms of ladies and the beau.
Yet still even here, when rains the passage hide,
Oft the loose stone spirts up a muddy tide
Beneath thy careless foot; and from on high,
Where masons mount the ladder, fragments fly;
Mortar and crumbled lime in showers descend,
And o'er thy head destructive tiles impend [*hang*].

2.20 Jonathan Swift: "A Description of a City Shower"

This poem by ***Jonathan Swift*** *(1667–1745) is a mock-Georgic skit on London life in London weather. Swift was the great satirist of his age. He was born in Ireland, where he was ordained and eventually became Dean of St Patrick's (1713). He was a prolific writer, particularly on politics and matters relating to the Church and Ireland. He spent much time among fellow writers both in Dublin and London, where together with Pope, Gay, and others, he founded the Scriblerus Club. His poem has none of the savage indignation of his* Gulliver's Travels *(1726) or* A Modest Proposal *(1729); however, it shows a wry observation that places it firmly in the field of comic satire.*

From The Tatler *(1710), No. 238*

Careful observers may foretell the hour
(By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower.
While rain depends [*impends*], the pensive cat gives o'er
Her frolics, and pursues her tail no more.
Returning home at night, you'll find the sink [*open sewer*]
Strike your offended sense with double stink.
If you be wise, then go not far to dine,
You'll spend in coach-hire more than save in wine.[107]
A coming shower your shooting corns presage,

[106] **chairs**: sedan chairs, enclosed litters carried on horizontal poles by two bearers; they were either private (a lady could be carried about the crowded streets in privacy and cleanliness by her servants) or for public hire. As status-symbols they were **supports of … Pride**, having right of way over mere pedestrians.

[107] **save in wine**: i.e. more than the money you save on wine (as someone else's guest) will be spent on a coach to transport you through the rain.

Old achës[108] throb, your hollow tooth will rage.
Saunt'ring in coffee-house is Dullman seen;
He damns the climate and complains of spleen.[109]

Meanwhile the South, rising with dabbled[110] wings,
A sable cloud athwart the welkin flings,
That swill'd more liquor than it could contain,
And like a drunkard gives it up again.
Brisk Susan whips her linen from the rope,
While the first drizzling shower is born aslope;
Such is that sprinkling which some careless quean [*hussy*]
Flirts [*flicks*] on you from her mop, but not so clean.
You fly, invoke the gods; then turning, stop
To rail [*protest*]; she singing, still whirls on her mop.
Not yet the dust had shunned th'unequal strife,
But aided by the wind, fought still for life,
And wafted with its foe by violent gust,
'Twas doubtful which was rain, and which was dust.
Ah, where must needy poet seek for aid,
When dust and rain at once his coat invade?
His only coat, where dust confus'd with rain
Roughen the nap,[111] and leave a mingled stain.

Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
Threat'ning with deluge this devoted [*doomed*] town.
To shops in crowds the daggled [*bespattered*] females fly,
Pretend to cheapen [*bargain for*] goods, but nothing buy.
The templar[112] spruce, while every spout's abroach, [*is emitting water*]
Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.
The tucked-up sempstress walks with hasty strides,
While streams run down her oiled umbrella's sides.
Here various kinds by various fortunes led,
Commence acquaintance underneath a shed.
Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs,[113]
Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs.
Boxed in a chair[114] the beau impatient sits,

[108] **aches**: pronounced "aitches" in C18th.

[109] **spleen**: a kind of fashionable melancholy or "nerves".

[110] **South** … **dabbled**: south wind … wetted by splashing.

[111] **Roughen the nap**: make the fibres on the surface of the coat stand up.

[112] **templar**: law student at the Inns of Court (the Middle Temple or the Inner Temple [**3.28**, n.93]); he **seems to call a coach** yet cannot afford one and must wait for the rain to stop.

[113] **Triumphant … Whigs**: The **Tories** won the general election in 1710; Swift had by this time become a Tory.

[114] **Boxed in a chair**: enclosed in a sedan (see [**2.19**], n.106).

While spouts run clatt'ring o'er the roof by fits;
And ever and anon with frightful din
The leather[115] sounds; he trembles from within.
So when Troy chair men bore the wooden steed,
Pregnant with Greeks, impatient to be freed;
(Those bully Greeks who, as the moderns do,
Instead of paying chair-men run them through).
Laocoon struck the outside with his spear,
And each imprisoned hero quak'd for fear.[116]

Now from all parts the swelling kennels [*gutters*] flow,
And bear their trophies with them as they go:
Filth of all hues and odours, seem to tell
What street they sail'd from, by their sight and smell.
They, as each torrent drives, with rapid force
From Smithfield or St Pulchre's shape their course,
And in huge confluent joined at Snow Hill ridge,
Fall from the conduit prone to Holborn bridge.[117]
Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood.

2.21 Tobias Smollett: Ranelagh and Vauxhall Gardens

These were the two major pleasure gardens in or near London. Both were highly popular, with a rotunda in which concerts were held, a Chinese pavilion, ornamental pond, firework displays and other entertainments. Both had many walks, lit (and unlit) after dark, and were notable for the opportunities they provided for open and covert love-making. Vauxhall, the older of the two, was established in the mid-1650s. It was accessible only by river until 1750 and had a slightly less respectable clientele. Ranelagh, in Chelsea, which opened in 1742, was the more fashionable and was well-known for the patronage of the aristocracy as well as having broad popular appeal.

[115] **leather**: roof of the sedan-chair.

[116] **So when … for fear**: Referring to the Greek warriors in the Trojan War huddled inside their wooden horse, waiting to be let out; **Laocoon,** a Trojan prince, tried to dissuade the Trojans from admitting the horse and flung his spear at it; see Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.13–56. **bully … moderns do**: The heroic **Greeks** are ironically likened to the contemporary ruffians (known as Mohocks) who terrorised the London streets.

[117] **each torrent drives … Holborn** bridge: Drains from **Smithfield** meat market (see **General Introduction**, n.5) met those from the area around **St Sepulchre's** Church (see [**2.28**], n.137), running down **Snow Hill**, at **Holborn Bridge** (which spanned the Fleet River), and thence to the Thames.

***Tobias Smollett** (1721–1771) in* Humphry Clinker *(1771) gives two opposing views of the pleasure grounds—that of the elderly, crusty, intemperate Matthew Bramble juxtaposed with that of his niece Lydia, who regards the pleasure gardens with youthful vivacity and enthusiasm.*

From The Expedition of Humphry Clinker. *2nd ed. 3 vols. (1771), Vol. 1*

To Dr Lewis [from Matt. Bramble, London, 29 May]

The diversions of the times are not ill suited to the genius of this incongruous monster called 'the public.' Give it noise, confusion, glare, and glitter; it has no idea of elegance and propriety. What are the amusements at Ranelagh? One half of the company are following one another's tails in an eternal circle, like so many blind asses in an olive-mill, where they can neither discourse, distinguish, nor be distinguished; while the other half are drinking hot water under the denomination of tea, till nine or ten o'clock at night to keep them awake for the rest of the evening. As for the orchestra, the vocal music especially, it is well for the performers that they cannot be heard distinctly. Vauxhall is a composition of baubles, overcharged with paltry ornaments, ill conceived, and poorly executed, without any unity of design or propriety of disposition. It is an unnatural assembly of objects, fantastically illuminated in broken masses, seemingly contrived to dazzle the eyes and divert the imagination of the vulgar—here a wooden lion, there a stone statue; in one place a range of things like coffee-house boxes, covered a-top; in another, a parcel of alehouse benches; in a third, a puppet show representation of a tin cascade; in a fourth, a gloomy cave of a circular form, like a sepulchral vault half lighted; in a fifth, a scanty slip of grass-plot that would not afford pasture sufficient for an ass's colt. The walks, which nature seems to have intended for solitude, shade, and silence, are filled with crowds of noisy people, sucking up the nocturnal rheums of an aguish climate; and through these gay scenes a few lamps glimmer like so many farthing candles.

To Miss Lætitia Willis, at Gloucester [from Lydia Melford, London, 31 May]

Ranelagh looks like the enchanted palace of a genie, adorned with the most exquisite performances of painting, carving, and gilding, enlightened with a 1000 golden lamps that emulate the noonday sun; crowded with the great, the rich, the gay, the happy, and the fair; glittering with cloth of gold and silver, lace, embroidery, and precious stones. While these exulting sons and daughters of felicity tread this round of pleasure, or regale, in different parties and separate lodges, with fine imperial tea and other delicious refreshments, their ears are entertained with the most ravishing delights of music, both instrumental and vocal. There I heard the famous Tenducci,[118] a thing from Italy—it looks for all the world like a man, though they say it is not.

[118] **Tenducci**: Giusto Fernando Tenducci (?1736–1790), Italian-born castrato who sang opera in London and elsewhere.

The voice, to be sure, is neither man's nor woman's, but it is more melodious than either, and it warbled so divinely that while I listened I really thought myself in paradise.

At nine o'clock, in a charming moonlight evening we embarked at Ranelagh for Vauxhall in a wherry,[119] so light and slender that we looked like so many fairies sailing in a nutshell […] The pleasure of this little excursion was, however, damped by my being sadly frighted at our landing, where there was a terrible confusion of wherries and a crowd of people bawling, and swearing, and quarrelling; nay, a parcel of ugly-looking fellows came running into the water and laid hold on our boat with great violence to pull it ashore; nor would they quit their hold till my brother struck one of them over the head with his cane. But this flutter was fully recompensed by the pleasures of Vauxhall, which I no sooner entered than I was dazzled and confounded with the variety of beauties that rushed all at once upon my eye. Image to yourself, my dear Letty, a spacious garden, part laid out in delightful walks, bounded with high hedges and trees, and paved with gravel; part exhibiting a wonderful assemblage of the most picturesque and striking objects, pavilions, lodges, groves, grottoes, lawns, temples, and cascades, porticoes, colonnades, and rotundas, adorned with pillars, statues, and painting, the whole illuminated with an infinite number of lamps, disposed in different figures of suns, stars, and constellations; the place crowded with the gayest company, ranging through those blissful shades, or supping in different lodges on cold collations, enlivened with mirth, freedom, and good humour, and animated by an excellent band of music. Among the vocal performers I had the happiness to hear the celebrated Mrs—, whose voice was so loud and so shrill that it made my head ache through excess of pleasure.

2.22 Hannah More: The Bluestocking Circle

The Circle was an informal social, educational, and philanthropic organization established in the mid eighteenth century to cultivate intellectual pursuits, mainly among women, to patronize the arts in particular, and culture in general. Meetings were held at the home of Elizabeth Montagu (1720–1800), a wealthy woman who was its dominant figure. Those who were stimulated by the group's conversations and activities were Frances (Fanny) Burney (1752–1840), Elizabeth Carter (1717–1806), Sarah Fielding (1710–1768), ***Hannah More*** *(1745–1833), and Hester Thrale (Piozzi) (1741–1821). The Circle was not confined to women: Edmund Burke, David Garrick, Samuel Johnson, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were also members. The writings of the women were mainly philosophical, religious, moral, and classical (in the form of translations). Some were poems and plays but virtually none had London life as its subject. (A notable exception is Fanny Burney's* Evelina, *a novel set mainly in London and including a scene in Vauxhall Gardens* [**2.21**].*)*

[119] **a wherry**: "a light rowing-boat used chiefly on rivers to carry passengers" (*OED*).

Here, ***Hannah More*** *writes effusively to one of her four sisters on her introduction to Elizabeth Montagu's imposing salon. Her account gives an insight into the tenor of its meetings. The letter was first published in* Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Hannah More, *ed. William Roberts (1834).*

London, 1775

Mrs Montagu received me with the most encouraging kindness; she is not only the finest genius, but the finest lady I ever saw. She lives in the highest style of magnificence; her apartments and table are in the most splendid taste; but what baubles are these when speaking of a Montagu! Her form (for she has no *body*) is delicate even to fragility; her countenance the most animated in the world; the sprightly vivacity of fifteen, with the judgement and experience of a Nestor.[120] But I fear she is hastening to decay very fast; her spirits are so active that they must soon wear out the little frail receptacle that holds them. Mrs Carter has in her person a great deal of what the gentlemen mean when they say such a one is a 'poetical lady'; however, independently of her great talents and learning, I like her much; she has affability, kindness, and goodness, and I honour her heart even more than her talents. But I do not like one of them better than Mrs Boscawen[121]; she is at once polite, learned, judicious, and humble; and Mrs Palk tells me, her letters are thought not inferior to Mrs Montagu's. She regretted (so did I) that so many suns could not possibly shine at one time; but we are to have a smaller party, where, from fewer luminaries, there may emanate a clearer, steadier, and more beneficial light. Dr Johnson asked me how I liked the new tragedy of *Braganza*.[122] I was afraid to speak before them all, as I knew a diversity of opinion prevailed among the company: however, as I thought it a less evil to dissent from the opinion of a fellow creature than to tell a falsity, I ventured to give my sentiments, and was satisfied with Johnson's answering, "You are right, madam."

2.23 Ned Ward: Pork Sellers at Bartholomew Fair

Ned Ward *and his friend, on one of their tours of inspection of lower-class London life, examine what is on offer at Pie Corner, a popular part of Bartholomew Fair, where roast pork is sold. See* [**1.23 HN**] *for a note on Bartholomew Fair; see* [**2.14 HN**] *for a note on* ***Ned Ward****.*

From The London Spy *(1698–1709), Part 10*

[… W]e after a short consultation, agreed to gratify our importunate appetites with a quarter of a pig on purpose to be fools in fashion. In order to accomplish our design, with a great deal of elbow labour and much sweating

[120] **Nestor**: an elderly counsellor to Agamemnon in the *Iliad*.

[121] **Mrs Boscawen**: Frances **Boscawen** (?1722–1805), one of the Circle's hostesses.

[122] ***Braganza***: a tragedy by Robert Jephson (1736–1803) first performed in February 1775.

we scrambled though the throng who came pouring into the Fair from all adjacent streets; each stream of rabble contending to repel the force of its opposite current, who were striving, like tide and stream, to overcome each other. At last, with as much difficulty as a hunted buck gets through a wood with his horns on, by inch and inch we gained Pie Corner, where cooks stood dripping at their doors like their roasted swine's flesh at their fires, with painful industry each setting forth with an audible voice the choice and excellency of his pig and pork, which were running as merrily round upon the spit as if they were striving who should be first roasted. Some pigs hanging upon renters [*meat-hooks*] in the shop windows as big as large spaniels, half-baked by the sunbeams, and looked as red as the thighs of a country milk-wench in a frosty morning. After we had gazed round us to examine what cook was most likely to accommodate our stomachs with good entertainment, at last we agreed to step into a large shop where we had great expectancy of tolerable meat and cleanly usage; but had no sooner entered the suffocating kitchen but a swingeing [*huge* (*slang*)] fat fellow, who was appointed overseer of the roast to keep the pigs from blistering, was standing by the spit in his shirt, rubbing of his ears, breast, neck, and armpits with the same wet cloth which he applied to his pigs, which brought such a qualm over my stomach that I had much ado to keep the stuffing of my guts from tumbling into the dripping-pan. So scouring out again, through an army of flies encamped at the door in order to attack the pig sauce, we deferred our eating till a cleanlier opportunity.

2.24 Benjamin Franklin: "Work, the Curse of the Drinking Classes"

Benjamin Franklin *(1706–1790) was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and was apprenticed as a printer. In 1724 he travelled to England where he worked in a London printing house. He returned to Philadelphia in 1726 and set up his own press. He gained esteem as a writer, especially through* Poor Richard's Almanack *(1733–1758), and was influential in American public affairs, helping to draft the Declaration of Independence. In 1757 he travelled to England again and was on friendly terms with Burke, Hume, Adam Smith and Priestley. His* Autobiography *was published posthumously in 1793.*

From Autobiography *(1793), ch. 6*

I now began to think of getting a little money beforehand, and, expecting better work, I left Palmer's[123] to work at Watts's,[124] near Lincoln's Inn Fields, a still greater printing-house. Here I continued all the rest of my stay in London.

[123] **Palmer's**: Samuel Palmer 1695–1732, printer in Bartholomew Close.

[124] **Watts's**: John Watts, died 1762, printer at Wild Court.

At my first admission into this printing-house I took to working at press,[125] imagining I felt a want of the bodily exercise I had been used to in America, where presswork is mixed with composing.[126] I drank only water; the other workmen, near fifty in number, were great guzzlers of beer. On occasion, I carried up and down stairs a large form of types in each hand, when others carried but one in both hands. They wondered to see, from this and several instances, that the *Water-American*, as they called me, was *stronger* than themselves, who drank *strong* beer![127] We had an alehouse boy who attended always in the house to supply the workmen. My companion at the press drank every day a pint before breakfast, a pint at breakfast with his bread and cheese, a pint between breakfast and dinner [*lunch*], a pint at dinner, a pint in the afternoon about six o'clock, and another when he had done his day's work. I thought it a detestable custom; but it was necessary, he supposed, to drink *strong* beer, that he might be *strong* to labour. I endeavoured to convince him that the bodily strength afforded by beer could only be in proportion to the grain or flour of the barley dissolved in the water of which it was made; that there was more flour in a pennyworth of bread; and therefore, if he would eat that with a pint of water, it would give him more strength than a quart of beer. He drank on, however, and had four or five shillings to pay out of his wages every Saturday night for that muddling liquor; an expense I was free from. And thus these poor devils keep themselves always under.

Watts, after some weeks, desiring to have me in the composing-room, I left the pressmen; a new *bienvenu*[128] or sum for drink, being five shillings, was demanded of me by the compositors. I thought it an imposition, as I had paid below; the master thought so too, and forbade my paying it. I stood out two or three weeks, was accordingly considered as an excommunicate, and had so many little pieces of private mischief done me, by mixing my sorts, transposing my pages, breaking my matter, etc., etc., if I were ever so little out of the room, and all ascribed to the chapel[129] ghost, which they said ever haunted those not regularly admitted, that, notwithstanding the master's protection, I found myself obliged to comply and pay the money, convinced of the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually.

I was now on a fair footing with them, and soon acquired considerable influence. I proposed some reasonable alterations in their chapel laws, and carried them against all opposition. From my example, a great part of them

[125] **working at press**: mechanically operating the machine that presses the inked type onto the paper.

[126] **composing**: the fiddly but less strenuous work of assembling metal type into rows in the **forms** or wooden cases.

[127] ***strong* beer**: as opposed to 'small beer,' a weaker beverage that could be drunk all day without impairment. In 1770 Britain brewed over 80 million gallons of small beer, about fourteen gallons for every man, woman and child.

[128] **bienvenu**: "A fee exacted from a new workman" (*OED*).

[129] **chapel**: association or union of workers in a printing workshop.

left their muddling breakfast of beer, and bread, and cheese, finding they could with me be supplied from a neighbouring house with a large porringer [*bowl*] of hot water-gruel, sprinkled with pepper, crumbed with bread, and a bit of butter in it, for the price of a pint of beer, viz., three half-pence. This was a more comfortable as well as cheaper breakfast, and keep their heads clearer. Those who continued sotting [*getting drunk*] with beer all day, were often, by not paying, out of credit at the alehouse, and used to make interest with me to get beer; their *light*, as they phrased it, *being out*. I watched the pay-table on Saturday night, and collected what I stood engaged for them, having to pay sometimes near thirty shillings a week on their accounts. This, and my being esteemed a pretty good *riggite*, that is, a jocular verbal satirist, supported my consequence in the society. My constant attendance (I never making a St. Monday)[130] recommended me to the master; and my uncommon quickness at composing occasioned my being put upon all work of dispatch,[131] which was generally better paid. So I went on now very agreeably.

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

2.25 John Gay: Perils of London by Night

***John Gay** warns against walking the London streets by night. For a note on **Gay** and his* Trivia *(1716), see* [**2.19 HN**].

From Trivia, or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London *(1716), Bk 3*

Though you through cleanlier alleys wind by day,
To shun the hurries of the public way,
Yet ne'er to those dark paths by night retire;
Mind only safety, and condemn the mire.
Then no impervious courts thy haste detain,
Nor sneering ale-wives bid thee turn again.

Where Lincoln's Inn, wide space,[132] is rail'd around
Cross not with vent'rous step; there oft is found
The lurking thief, who while the daylight shone
Made the walls echo with his begging tone;
That crutch which late compassion mov'd shall wound
Thy bleeding head and fell thee to the ground.
Though thou art tempted by the link man's call,[133]

[130] **St. Monday**: An absentee from work on a Monday.

[131] **work of dispatch**: urgent business.

[132] **Lincoln's Inn, wide space**: **Lincoln's Inn** Fields was for centuries London's largest square. While there were fashionable houses beyond its surrounding railings, robbers and petty criminals made the open space unsafe.

[133] **link man's call**: men with torches offered to light people's way in dark areas for a fee.

Yet trust him not along the lonely wall;
In the mid-way he'll quench the flaming brand,
And share the booty with the pilf'ring band.
Still keep the public streets, where oily rays
Shot from the crystal lamp o'erspread the ways.

2.26 James Smith: Sex-Workers in the Strand

*In a poem by **James Smith**, inspired by John Gay's* Trivia, *London's pleasures and vices are surveyed discursively, with attention paid to eating houses, inns, theatres, as well as the more salacious side of London night-life. The Strand was well known in the eighteenth century for its sex-workers and petty criminals. Almost nothing is known of James Smith, except that he lived in Tewkesbury (dates unknown). His poem was evidently popular as it appeared in two further editions after 1768.*

The Art of Living in London (1768), Canto 2

As through the streets, O Virtue, as I go,
Shield me from one that's equally my foe;
Who *cap-à-pie*, like Hamlet's ghost now stalks,
And makes "night hideous" by her nightly walks.[134]
How can the Muse without a sigh proclaim,
And tell that "woman" is this monster's[135] name;
Woman, man's chiefest good, by Heaven design'd
To glad the heart, and humanize the mind;
To soothe each angry care, abate each strife,
And lull the passions as we walk through life;
But fall'n from such a height, so very low,
She now has nothing but her form to show;
A scandal to that sex she was before;
Each grace polluted by the name of W—e.

How shall I speak of all the various arts
She nightly uses to entrap our hearts?
How shall I paint the loose, familiar airs,
Affected speeches, and immodest leers
Of all these midnight daughters as they stand,
In shameless groups along the lengthened Strand?
Lost to all thought – remote from every sense
Of female decency or innocence;
Disrob'd of all restraint or modest port,
Here Prostitution holds her public court.

[134]**Who *cap-à-pie* … walks**: in her alluring make-up and attire she is like Hamlet's father's ghost, who is armed for combat ***cap-à-pie*** ('from head to foot', *Hamlet* 1.2.200), and whose walking makes "**night hideous**" (1.4.54).

[135]**monster**: unnatural creature.

With flaunting strides, and affectation's eye,
Behold these sycophants in love pass by […]
O! purchased love, retail'd through all the town,
Where each may share on paying half a crown[136];
Where every air of tenderness is art,
And not one word, the language of the heart;
Where all this mockery of Cupid's reign
Ends in remorse, in wretchedness, and pain [*i.e. of venereal disease*].

2.27 Daniel Defoe on Shoplifting

***Daniel Defoe**'s heroine Moll Flanders, after a series of unfortunate marriages, becomes bankrupt and impoverished to the point of despair. She succumbs to shoplifting and a life of thieving. This episode graphically describes her initial temptation to steal.*

From The Fortune and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders *(1722)*

Wandering thus about I knew not whither, I passed by an apothecary's shop in Leadenhall Street, where I saw lie on a stool just before the counter a little bundle wrapped in a white cloth; beyond it stood a maidservant with her back to it, looking up towards the top of the shop, where the apothecary's apprentice, as I suppose, was standing up on the counter, with his back also to the door and a candle in his hand, looking and reaching up to the upper shelf for something he wanted, so that both were engaged, and nobody else in the shop.

This was the bait, and the Devil, who laid the snare, prompted me, as if he had spoke, for I remember, and shall never forget it; 'twas like a voice spoken over my shoulder, "Take the bundle; be quick; do it this moment." It was no sooner said but I stepped into the shop, and with my back to the wench, as if I had stood up for a cart that was going by, I put my hand behind me and took the bundle and went off with it, the maid or fellow not perceiving me, or anyone else.

It is impossible to express the horror of my soul all the while I did it. When I went away I had no heart to run, or scarce to mend my pace; I crossed the street indeed and went down the first turning I came to, and I think it was a street that went through into Fenchurch Street; from thence I crossed and turned through so many ways and turnings that I could never tell which way it was, nor where I went. I felt not the ground I stepped on, and the farther I was out of danger the faster I went, till tired and out of breath, I was forced to sit down on a little bench at a door, and then found I was got into Thames Street near Billingsgate. I rested me a little and went on; my blood was all in a fire, my heart beat as if I was in a sudden fright. In short, I was under such a surprise that I knew not whither I was going, or what to do.

[136]**half a crown**: two shillings and sixpence, or about £15 in 2018 terms.

2.28 Defoe: Newgate Prison

There was a prison of some kind on Newgate St for eight centuries, from 1188 to 1902 (when it was demolished to accommodate the enlarged Central Criminal Court or Old Bailey). The prison ***Defoe*** *knew had been rebuilt (after the Great Fire) in 1672, magnificent without and miserable within; it was burned down again during the Gordon Riots* [**2.31**] *and subsequently rebuilt. From all accounts prison conditions were as appalling in the early eighteenth century as they were 100 years earlier when John Earle was writing* (***see*** [**1.17**]). *As then, the degree of discomfort you endured was proportional to your ability to pay the gaolers; those who could pay nothing were confined to "The* Stone Hold, *a most terrible stinking, dark and dismal Place, situated under Ground, in which no Day-light can come,* […] *paved with Stone, on which the Prisoners lie without any Beds". (Langley, 42).*

Newgate housed all kinds of criminals, including those awaiting execution. ***Defoe****'s Moll Flanders would have been incarcerated with the worst offenders, since she had been sentenced to hanging. Defoe himself was in Newgate in 1703 for seditious libel, but his quarters were rather more comfortable: he was solvent and had many friends. Destitute prisoners, like Moll, who were unable to bribe the warders for better conditions had to endure the utmost misery of filth, disease, and privation. Moll describes her entry into Newgate, and a day of executions.*

From The Fortune and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders *(1722)*

I was now fixed indeed. 'Tis impossible to describe the terror of my mind when I was first brought in, and when I looked round upon all the horrors of that dismal place I looked on myself as lost, and that I had nothing to think of but of going out of the world, and that with the utmost infamy. The hellish noise, the roaring, swearing, and clamour, the stench, and nastiness, and all the dreadful afflicting things that I saw there joined to make the place seem an emblem of Hell itself, and a kind of an entrance into it […]

[… T]he next morning there was a sad scene indeed in the prison. The first thing I was saluted with in the morning was the tolling of the great bell at St Sepulchre's,[137] which ushered in the day. As soon as it began to toll, a dismal groaning and crying was heard from the Condemned Hole, where there lay six poor souls who were to be executed that day, some for one crime, some for another, and two for murder.

This was followed by a confused clamour in the house among the several prisoners, expressing their awkward sorrows for the poor creatures that were to die, but in a manner extremely differing one from another. Some cried for them; some brutishly huzzaed and wished them a good journey; some damned and cursed those that had brought them to it; many pitying them; and some few, but very few, praying for them.

[137] **St Sepulchre's**-without-Newgate was a large Gothic church just outside the city wall, near Newgate. These "bells of Old Bailey" tolled as the condemned were escorted to Tyburn [**2.29 HN**].

2.29 Samuel Richardson: An Execution at Tyburn

The novelist (and former London printer) ***Samuel Richardson*** *(1689–1761) published in 1739 a collection of sample letters to provide helpful models for the diffident correspondent; letter 4.38 is "from a person in town to his brother in the country, describing a public execution at Tyburn".*

Execution-days, which happened eight times a year, were public holidays, to allow the edifying spectacle to be appreciated by as many as possible; the condemned prisoners, accompanied by a lively and oddly festive crowd of friends and relations, spectators and body-snatchers, were conveyed in a cart from Newgate Prison [**2.29 HN**]*, where the Old Bailey now stands, some four-and-a-half miles north-eastward to the gallows in the village of Tyburn, where the Edgeware Rd meets Bayswater Rd, near what is now Marble Arch. The gruesome monthly festival widely known as 'Tyburn Fair' was hugely popular: some 30,000 people witnessed an execution in 1776.*[138] *Because of the dangerous size of these boisterous crowds, in 1783 executions were moved to Newgate.*

Tyburn Tree, it was popularly called, was the first permanent gallows in London (erected in 1571), a large tripod-shaped structure, 18 feet high, capable of accommodating 21 victims at a time, seven on each limb of the triangular frame. The sufferers were attached to the crossbeam by a rope around the neck while standing in the cart; the cart then moved away and they were left to strangle slowly under their own weight, though friends and relatives might expedite the grisly process by pulling on their legs.

From The Complete Letter-Writer: Or, Polite English Secretary *(8th edition, 1762),* pp. 207–9

That I might better view the prisoners, and escape the pressure of the mob, which is prodigious—nay, almost incredible—if we consider the frequency of these executions in London, which is once a month, I mounted my horse, and accompanied the melancholy cavalcade from Newgate to the fatal Tree. The criminals were five in number. I was much disappointed at the unconcern and carelessness that appeared in the faces of three of the unhappy wretches: the countenances of the other two were spread with that horror and despair which is not to be wondered at in men whose period is so near, with the terrible aggravation of its being hastened by their own voluntary indiscretion and misdeeds. The exhortation spoken by the bell-man,[139] from the wall of St Sepulchre's churchyard, is well intended; but the noise of the officers, and the mob, was so great, and the silly curiosity of people climbing into the cart to take leave of the criminals made such a confused noise, that I could not hear the words of the exhortation when spoken, though they are as follow:

[138] The figure is from Leon Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law* (New York, 1948–1956), vol. I, p. 175, n.45.

[139] **bell-man**: the clerk of St Sepulchre's (see [**2.28**], n.137), known as the **bell-man**, was responsible for ringing a handbell outside the condemned prisoner's cells the night before their execution, and chanting a poem to encourage penitent meditation ("Examine well yourselves: in time repent").

> All good people, pray heartily to God for the poor sinners who are now going to their deaths, for whom this great bell doth toll. You that are condemned to die, repent with lamentable tears. Ask mercy of the Lord for the salvation of your own souls, through the merit, death and passion of Jesus Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God, to make intercession for as many of you as penitently return unto him. *Lord have mercy upon you! Christ have mercy upon you!*

Which last words the bell-man repeats three times.

All the way up Holborn the crowd was so great as, at every twenty or thirty yards, to obstruct the passage; and wine […] was brought the malefactors, who drank greedily of it, which I think did not suit well with their deplorable circumstances. After this, the three thoughtless young men, who at first seemed not enough concerned, grew most shamefully daring and wanton, behaving themselves in a manner which would have been ridiculous in men in any circumstance whatever: they swore, laughed, and talked obscenely, and wished their wicked companions good luck, with as much assurance as if their employment had been the most lawful.

At the place of execution, the scene grew still more shocking, and the clergyman who attended was more the subject of ridicule than their serious attention. The psalm was sung amidst the curses and quarrelling of hundreds of the most abandoned and profligate of mankind, upon whom […] all the preparations of the unhappy wretches seemed only to serve for the subject of a barbarous kind of mirth, altogether inconsistent with humanity. And as soon as the poor creatures were half-dead, I was much surprised, before such a number of peace-officers,[140] to see the populace fall to pulling and hauling the carcases with so much earnestness, as to occasion several warm rencounters and broken heads. These, I was told, were the friends of the persons executed, or such as (for the sake of tumult) chose to appear so, and some persons sent by private surgeons to obtain bodies for dissection. The contests between these were fierce and bloody, and frightful to look at, so that I made the best of my way out of the crowd, and with some difficulty, rode back among a large number of people, who had been upon the same errand with myself. The face of everyone spoke a kind of mirth, as if the spectacle they had beheld afforded pleasure instead of pain, which I am wholly unable to account for. […] All was hurry and confusion, racket and noise, praying and oaths, swearing and singing of psalms. […] In this, the behaviour of my countrymen is past accounting for, every street and lane I passed through bearing rather the face of a holiday, than of that sorrow which I expected to see for the untimely death of five members of the community.

[140] **peace-officers**: parish officers or constables appointed to preserve the public peace.

One of their bodies was carried to the lodging of his wife, who not being in the way[141] to receive it, they immediately hawked it about to every surgeon they could think of; and when none would buy it, they rubbed tar all over it,[142] and left it in a field, hardly covered with earth.

2.30 Samuel Johnson: The Crime of Poverty

***Samuel Johnson**'s poem* London *was adapted from the third Satire of Juvenal, retaining the latter's acrimonious tone but suiting it to what Johnson saw as the corruption, crime, avarice, malice, and other sins of London. In the city the "rabble rages" and ruffians lie in ambush; but Johnson's satire is mainly reserved for the wealthy and influential. He muses on the plight of the poor, who must suffer insults and the scorn of the insolent rich. The poem was praised at some length by Boswell in the year it was published.*

From London: A Poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal *(1738)*

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues;
This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse.
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak[143]
Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure, the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

Has Heaven reserv'd, in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore?
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D.
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;
Where won by bribes, by flatteries implor'd,
The groom retails the favours of his lord.

[141] **in the way**: ready and/or willing.

[142] **Tar** is a preservative and antiseptic: perhaps they were attempting to preserve the body in case the wife later decided to reclaim it.

[143] **at a tatter'd cloak**: i.e. on seeing a sign of poverty.

2.31 Thomas Holcoft: The Gordon Riots

Thomas Holcroft *(1745–1809), playwright and poet, was probably an eye witness of the Gordon Riots, a civil uprising that occurred in June 1780. It was initiated by Lord George Gordon (1751–1793), beginning as a peaceful protest to petition for repeal of the Papists Act of 1778, which had removed many of the legal constraints upon Catholics (they had been forbidden to keep schools, for example, or own land—or even a horse worth more than £5). The crowd gathered in St George's Fields, Southwark, roughly 50,000 strong, to march to the Houses of Parliament. However, when it was clear that their protest was in vain, Gordon lost control of the demonstrators. The mob set alight to Roman Catholic chapels and residences, and broke into all the major prisons in London, freeing the prisoners. The Bank of England was attacked, and as the crowd grew more frenzied and anarchic, it determined to destroy all institutions, including royal palaces. Eventually martial law was declared, and the militia were ordered to fire on groups of rioters. By 9th June, a week after the insurgency began, and nearly 300 deaths, order was restored. Many ringleaders of the riot were hanged; Lord George Gordon was accused of high treason, but was acquitted. The graphic description of the riots by* ***Thomas Holcroft****, who wrote under the pseudonym "William Vincent of Gray's Inn," was one of the sources of Dickens's coverage of the event in* Barnaby Rudge *(1841), ch. 64.*

From A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances *(1780)*

[… O]n Friday, June 2nd at ten in the forenoon, an immense concourse assembled at the place appointed, some with serious intentions, some with wicked, and others out of curiosity, and notwithstanding the intense heat, which was that day very remarkable, kept parading the fields with their flags, singing hymns, marshalling themselves in ranks, and waiting for their leader. About eleven o'clock Lord George arrived among them and gave directions in what manner he would have them proceed, and about twelve (that the whole city might be convinced how serious the people were in their demands) one numerous party was ordered to go round over London Bridge, another over Blackfriars, and a third to follow him over Westminster. A huge roll of parchment, too, almost as much as a man could carry, containing the names of those who had signed the petition was borne before them. They proceeded with great decorum and decency on their route, and the whole body was assembled about half past two, before both Houses of Parliament,[144] on which occasion they gave a general shout.

But however peaceable and well-disposed some of them might be, it was very evident from the habit and appearance of numbers amongst them, that

[144] From 1550 to 1834 the meeting place of the House of **Commons** was somewhat makeshift: the (deconsecrated) Royal Chapel of St Stephen in the palace of Westminster. The **Lords** met in the nearby White Chamber, in the cellars of which the Catholic would-be terrorist Guy Fawkes was arrested on November 5, 1605, curating dozens of barrels of gunpowder. In 1834 the buildings were destroyed by fire and replaced by the fine neo-Gothic edifice we are familiar with today.

order and regularity were not long to be expected from such an assembly; on the contrary, they soon began to exercise the most arbitrary and dictatorial power over both Lords and Commons. They obliged almost all the Members to put blue cockades in their hats, and call out, "No Popery!". Some they compelled to take oaths to vote for the repeal of the obnoxious Act, and others they insulted in the most indecent and violent manner […]

[… O]n Sunday in the afternoon, the rioters assembled in large bodies and attacked the chapels and dwelling houses of the Catholics in and about Moorfields. They stripped their houses of furniture, and their chapels, not only of the ornaments and insignia of religion, but tore up the altars, pulpits, pews, and benches, and made huge fires of them, leaving nothing but the bare walls, and in many places not even them. They publicly avowed their intention to root out Popery, to release those who had been confined in Newgate [**2.29 HN**] for their proceedings at the Sardinian and Warwick Street chapels on Friday, to pull down the houses of the justices who committed them, and the persons who gave evidence against them likewise […]

[… T]hey came to Newgate, and publicly declared they would go and release the confined rioters. When they arrived at the doors of the prison, they demanded of Mr Akerman,[145] the keeper, to have their comrades immediately delivered up to them; and upon his persisting to do his duty by refusing, they began some to break the windows, some to batter the doors and entrances into the cells with pickaxes and sledgehammers, others with ladders to climb the vast walls, while others collected firebrands and whatever combustibles they could find, and flung into his dwelling house. What contributed more than anything to the spreading of the flames was the great quantity of household furniture belonging to Mr Akerman, which they threw out of the windows, piled up against the doors, and set fire to; the force of which presently communicated to the house, from the house to the chapel, and from thence, by the assistance of the mob, all through the prison. A party of constables, nearly to the amount of a hundred, came to the assistance of the keeper; these the mob made a lane for and suffered to pass till they were entirely encircled, when they attacked them with great fury, broke their staffs, and converted them into brands, which they hurled about wherever the fire, which was spreading very fast, had not caught. It is almost incredible to think that it were possible to destroy a building of such amazing strength and extent, with so much swiftness as they accomplished this […]

As soon as the day was drawing towards a close, one of the most awful and dreadful spectacles this country ever beheld was exhibited. The mob had not only declared their resolution of firing the prisons and some private houses but had avowed their intention to destroy the Bank, Gray's Inn, Temple, Lincoln's Inn, the Grand Arsenal at Woolwich, and Royal Palaces.

[145] **Mr Akerman**: Richard **Akerman** (?1722–1792) had been Head Gaoler of Newgate for many years. His humane treatment of prisoners was remarked on by Johnson and others in 1780.

A universal stupor had seized the minds of men. They looked at one another, and waited with a resigned consternation for the events which were to follow. Government indeed had exerted itself to the utmost, as far as their power, under the direction of the civil magistrate, would extend. Now, however, it was become necessary to make use of the royal prerogative and give discretionary powers to the military. Nothing could convey a more awful idea of the mischief which was dreaded than the strong guard which was placed in the Royal Exchange for the protection of the Bank, as nothing perhaps could have equalled the national desolation, had the diabolical purposes of the insurgents upon this place succeeded. Besides this, soldiers were distributed at Guildhall, in the Inns of Court, in almost every place tenable as a fortification, and in some private houses; and the cannon was disposed to the best advantage in the Park.[146]

With minds thus predisposed to terror by so many objects of devastation, and in a city which but a few days before enjoyed the most perfect tranquillity, let those who were not spectators judge what the inhabitants felt when they beheld at the same instant the flames ascending and rolling in vast and voluminous clouds from the King's Bench and Fleet prisons, from New Bridewell,[147] from the toll gates on Blackfriar's Bridge, from houses in every quarter of the town, and particularly from the bottom and middle of Holborn, where the conflagration was horrible beyond description […] Men, women, and children were running up and down with beds, glasses, bundles, or whatever they wished most to preserve. In streets where there were no fires, numbers were removing their goods and effects at midnight. The tremendous roar of the insatiate and innumerable fiends who were the authors of these horrible scenes, was heard at one instant, and at the next the dreadful report of soldiers' muskets, as if firing in platoons, and at various places. In short, everything which could impress the mind with ideas of universal anarchy and approaching desolation, seemed to be accumulating. Sleep and rest were things not thought of; the streets were swarming with people, and uproar, confusion, and terror reigned in every part.

It is hardly possible to collect in one point of view the havoc of this night. Had half the mischief the mob had threatened been effected, nothing less than national bankruptcy and destruction could have ensued. That they were prevented at those places on the safety of which the very existence of the empire might be said to depend, was owing not to their want of will but power and to the exertion of Government.

[146] **the Park**: Hyde Park (see **Introduction 2**, n.2).

[147] **New Bridewell**: a prison.

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CHAPTER 3

Period 3: London—New Riches, New Squalor (1781–1870)

INTRODUCTION

This introduction considers the alarming growth in extent and population of London in the Industrial Revolution and its social consequences, an increase not just in size but in diversity, thanks to the arrival of immigrants drawn by Britain's religious toleration, its political liberties and its economic opportunities. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, for example, were beginning late in the eighteenth century to supplement those who had come earlier from Western Europe. Among the crowds Wordsworth observes on the streets of London in the 1790s are not just "The Frenchman and the Spaniard," or even "The Swede, the Russian", but also American Indians, "Moors, / Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese, / And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns" (*The Prelude* 1805, 7.235–43). The introduction looks at the railways, and their enablement of suburbanisation, and at the beginnings of social and political reform, including the expanding base of education and the consequent creation of a broad reading public.

In the last stanza of Blake's poem "London" (1792) [**3.7**] the speaker indicates that life for many there is blighted before it begins:

> But most thro' midnight streets I hear
> How the youthful Harlot's curse
> Blasts the new-born Infant's tear
> And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

We should not take Blake's poem simply as a realistic picture of London, for as Geoffrey Keynes comments "Blake is writing of a mental state symbolised by the social injustices seen every day in London" (verso Plate 46). Nevertheless, social conditions in England in the late eighteenth century were

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such that an up-rising along the lines of the French Revolution could well have taken place, as indicated by the Gordon Riots in London in 1780 (see [**2.31 HN**]), which seemed to Horace Walpole to set the whole of London ablaze. As he wrote on 8th June "I never till last night saw London and Southwark in flames!" (1859, 8.388). The riots were put down after a week, but they scarred the nation's memory. With the Revolution in France in 1789 as another prompt, a view began to take hold that a booming population might be a danger to the State. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* by Thomas Malthus, published in 1798, gave support to this fear: "Malthus's core argument was that while human population increased exponentially, food production increased more slowly, in a linear fashion or arithmetic series" (Hodgson, 1). His conclusion was that without controls a nation's population would always outstrip resources. In effect, Malthus argued that a surging birth-rate was a recipe for social misery. There was, in addition, a widely-shared fear that the "surplus" population would threaten law and order. When Thackeray went "to see a man hanged" it was not the hanging itself that most interested him but rather the behaviour of the London crowd [**3.9**].

On the other hand, there were those who believed that a numerous people constituted a nation's chief riches. We sense this in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846–1847) when the wealthy London merchant Mr Dombey reproves Toodles for having so many children:

> "You have a son, I believe?" said Mr Dombey.
> "Four on 'em, Sir. Four hims and a her. All alive!"
> "Why, it's as much as you can afford to keep them!" said Mr Dombey.
> "I couldn't hardly afford but one thing in the world less, Sir."
> "What is that?"
> "To lose 'em, Sir." (ch. 2)

Toodles and his wife go on to produce four more children. For Toodles, the times are good, and there is plenty of bread and butter [**3.20**]. However, Dickens's celebration of fecundity here ran counter to the Malthusian creed which dominated economic and political thinking throughout the nineteenth century, and it was partly uneasiness about population tendencies that led the Government, anxious to have information on which to base the management of taxation, military expenditure, policing, the Poor Law and so forth, to order a rudimentary census in 1801. This found that the total population of England and Scotland was approximately 10,500,000, of which about 1,000,000, or one tenth, resided in London. As the nineteenth century proceeded the population increased at an ever greater rate: in 1851, for example, London had 2,286,609 people, more than double the figure for 1801.[1]

Even before census taking began it was clear to some that an individual could never be more isolated than when in London and surrounded by crowds. Wordsworth, who lived in London for three months in 1791 and

[1] Figures from http://www.demographia.com/dm.lon31.htm, accessed 1 May 2018.

again in 1795, experienced a sense of estrangement amidst the throng: "The face of every one/ That passes by me is a mystery!" [**3.5**]. Moreover, Wordsworth reflects that even when individuals live side-by-side they make no attempt to penetrate that mystery (Wordsworth 1959, 226):

> Above all, one thought
> Baffled my understanding, how men lived
> Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
> Strangers, and knowing not each other's names. (*Prelude* 1805, 7.117–20)

Like Blake, Wordsworth speaks of London's moral degradation, though for him it is seen mainly in its secluded and hidden parts; lawmakers live elsewhere and are insulated from—and probably indifferent to—the labyrinths below (Wordsworth 1959, 230):

> Private courts,
> Gloomy as Coffins, and unsightly Lanes
> Thrill'd by some female Vender's scream, belike
> The very shrillest of all London Cries
> May then entangle us awhile,
> Conducted through those labyrinths unawares
> To privileg'd Regions and inviolate,
> Where from their airy lodges studious Lawyers
> Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green. (*Prelude* 1805, 7.196–204)

These secret and hidden parts became more numerous as London expanded, steadily absorbing the villages and towns on its borders, until eventually 'London' came to signify not just a City but a County.[2] When Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist* takes Oliver with him to burgle a house in Chertsey, twenty-five miles west of the metropolis, they pass along Bethnal Green Road until they reach the centre of the City; then they go through Shoreditch and Smithfield and on to Holborn; from there they pass Kensington, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Kew Bridge and Brentford and still have some miles to go before they are truly out of London.[3]

As the capital expanded it sometimes preserved pockets of rurality close to newly built middle-class villas, as John Ruskin reports on the area of his boyhood, Herne Hill, actually only four miles from Charing Cross [**3.11**]. Just as often, however, London rolled out its dirt and diseases to its annexes, as Charles Kingsley writes in *Alton Locke* of "those narrow, brawling torrents of filth and poverty and sin – the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian![4] and see what London is!" [**3.41**].

[2] London County was created in 1889 and encompassed 28 local boroughs.

[3] *Oliver Twist* was serialised in *Bentley's Miscellany*, 1837–1839.

[4] **Belgravian**: denizen of Belgravia, an affluent district of London.

Kingsley wrote this in 1850. Shortly afterwards, with the glories of the Great Exhibition still fresh in memory, there were fearsome outbreaks of cholera in Soho where drinking water was taken from the Broad Street Pump. In 1854 Dr John Snow surmised that this water was contaminated by leaks from a nearby cesspool, and he concluded therefore that cholera was water-borne. It took some time for his discovery to be acted upon, and Londoners, especially those living in poorer, over-crowded parts, would generally not have reliable access to clean water for several years, even though the Metropolitan Water Board was established in 1855.

Polluted water was probably the greatest material evil that Londoners had to endure in mid-century, when the Thames was still used as a sewer; but there was much other nastiness. Suburban Londoners might try to create a refuge in the midst of squalor, though perhaps few carried this out as wholeheartedly as Wemmick in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. He lives in Walworth, two miles south of the Thames, and treats his cottage as if it were a castle. It is approached by a drawbridge, and has battlements and a cannon. It also has a summer-house, a pig in a sty and a large vegetable garden. "So, sir […] if you can suppose the little place besieged, it would hold out a devil of a time in point of provisions" (ch. 25). Here is not merely an instance of not knowing one's neighbours: Wemmick's impulse is to hold them at a distance as if they are potential invaders. His work as a lawyer's clerk in an office in Little Britain near Newgate brings him continually into contact with criminals, so perhaps his defence of his Walworth home is understandable.

Increased rates of childbirth, a decline in infant mortality and the movement of people from country to town were the main reasons for the crowding, especially in the East End. But London also attracted hundreds of immigrants each year, some coming from elsewhere in the Kingdom and some from other parts of Europe or even further afield, drawn by Britain's religious toleration, its political liberties or its economic opportunities. Jewish people from Eastern Europe were beginning late in the eighteenth century to supplement those who had come from Western Europe after Cromwell re-admitted them in 1655 (they had been expelled from England in 1290). There were refugees from France after the Revolution of 1789[5] and from Spain in the 1820s.[6] The parents of the poets Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti had fled to London from Italy in 1824. Among other notable refugees were Giuseppe Mazzini who resided in London in 1840–1841 and 1847, and Karl Marx, who lived there from 1850 until his death. These came because they perceived that London offered them greater political and intellectual freedom.

Thus although Britain was exporting many of its people to its colonies, its population continued to grow—and London to expand. The coming of the railways made no difference in this respect, for though they helped unify

[5] Some at Tellson's Bank near Temple Bar in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Bk 2, ch. 1.

[6] In Somers Town in the 1820s; mentioned in *Bleak House*, ch. 43.

the country and enabled Londoners to travel more quickly to the provinces, necessarily they enabled provincials to migrate to the capital. Such was the demand that after the first London railway station, London Bridge, was built in 1836, it was followed by eight more main-line terminals by 1866 (Best 1971, 34). Before the coming of the Underground there was no line which linked all these stations together: customers had to find other means to travel from one terminus to another.[7] Furthermore, all the railway companies were required to stop their lines short of Central London, and paradoxically this encouraged suburbanisation, and created a new large cohort of commuters. Unlike the typical worker's situation in previous centuries, in the nineteenth century the place of work was now usually not the place of residence. In *Dombey and Son* the construction of the railway in the vicinity of Camden Town is shown to cause huge social upheaval: "In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement" [**3.20**]. There is more than a hint of irony in that sentence, but Dickens believes that passengers will be able to see from their coach windows the squalid poverty that formerly would not have confronted them: clearer vision may lead to enlightenment.

A curious feature of the authors represented here and in Period IV is that most were not natives of London. Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire, Wordsworth in Cumberland, De Quincey in Manchester, Cobbett in Surrey, Thackeray in India, Hawthorne and Melville in the USA, Surtees in Northumberland, Kingsley in Devon and Hardy in Dorset. Even Dickens, who seems to know London as if he had grown up with it from birth, did not come to live there until he was ten years old. His central characters, such as David Copperfield, Esther Summerson and Philip Pirrip, come to London only after childhoods in the provinces, and London's qualities are magnified for these new-comers. This is true also for Arthur Clennam of *Little Dorrit*: he *was* born in London, but has spent twenty years in China, and when he returns home finds it particularly nauseating, arriving as he does on a Sunday [**3.8**].

Strangers or quasi-strangers to London apprehended it all the more sharply because they looked upon it as outsiders. This is the case with Wordsworth on Westminster Bridge [**3.12**], Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snow [**3.1**] and Thomas De Quincey [**3.19**] at St Paul's Cathedral, and Dickens's Rosa Budd in a boat on the Thames [**3.16**]. These travellers find pleasure in what they behold, as the city's noisome qualities are momentarily disguised—but not forgotten. Melville describes the circumstances of the lawyers in the Temple as 'The Paradise of Bachelors,' but twins this with 'The Tartarus of Maids'; the latter is set in New England, it is true, but its likeness could easily have been found in London, as Wordsworth shows in [**3.5**].

[7] By walking, cabriolets or horse-drawn buses, introduced in 1829.

Londoners and non-Londoners alike were struck by the variety and social diversity of London. They could be intrigued to find sumptuous wealth less than a stone's throw away from abject poverty—though for artists and writers, filth and degradation are often the very materials for the imagination to work upon, motivated as they can be by the attraction of repulsion. We sense this in Mary Robinson in 1800 [**3.2**], Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1856 [**3.37**] and Charles Kingsley in 1850 [**3.41**]. There is a touch of it too in the pronouncements of Cobbett [**3.4**]. The same principle is constantly impelling Dickens. It can be seen as well in the work of Henry Mayhew, especially in his series the *London Labour and the London Poor* [**3.39**]. He records statements from all kinds of Londoners from the lower depths—thieves, beggars, barrow boys, sex-workers, crossing-sweepers,[8] scavengers and many more (see Quennell 1969, 301–45). Mayhew had begun his interviews in the 1840s and he brought them together in three volumes in 1851. This was the year of the Great Exhibition and his researches counterpointed the national boasting personified in London's showcase at the Crystal Palace, at which Mayhew directed some gentle satire in "The World's Show" [**3.21**]. With sterner wit, John Ruskin declared that the Crystal Palace "possessed no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys" (Vol. 1, Sect. 56).

Well before 1851, London presided over an empire that spread across a fifth of the world. This empire required firm direction from the Colonial Office, sometimes sadly lacking. In the days before the Suez Canal, it would take at least a year for a request or query from the New South Wales administration to be sent to London and to receive a reply; if the Colonial Office dithered, the gap in communication could be even greater. Therefore, there was a tendency for London to be both admired as a centre of political power and purposeful business and yet satirised for its stagnant bureaucracy and indifference. In *Little Dorrit* Dickens depicts a society where members of a narrow privileged class do nothing to advance the welfare of the people in general; instead they seek to recruit to their number the apparently wealthy but actually morally bankrupt financier Mr Merdle [**3.23**]. One of the weapons employed by this ruling elite to preserve their position is the Civil Service or, as Dickens calls it, the Circumlocution Office, dedicated to the principle of 'How Not to Do It'—i.e. not to do anything at all. It is partly the ineptitude of Government that is responsible for Mr Plornish's difficulties [**3.31**]. It is not just ineptitude either: Dickens asserts that the Circumlocution Office is "a politico-diplomatic hocus pocus piece of machinery, for the assistance of the nobs in keeping off the snobs" (ch. 10).

[8] By the end of Victoria's reign there were more than 50,000 horses transporting goods and people around London, producing something in the order of 500 tons of faeces each day, and over 12,000 gallons of urine, most of it deposited in the streets. If you wished to cross the street undefiled, therefore, you needed to employ the essential, but undervalued, services of a crossing-sweeper. See https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Great-Horse-Manure-Crisis-of-1894/, accessed 24 May 2018.

Nevertheless, the Civil Service underwent a moderate reform when in the 1860s competitive examinations were set for those wishing to enter some of its branches—not to the satisfaction of Anthony Trollope, who had been admitted as a clerk to the Post Office in the old way, using family contacts (1883, ch. 3; see also [**3.25 HN**]). This change, it is true, was brought about by Parliamentary action, but generally speaking the creative writers of the period had no very high opinion of the motives of the legislators, believing that they could be easily manipulated, as we see in the passage from Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* [**3.24**]. Disraeli, already an M.P. and a future Prime Minister, may be credited with insider knowledge.

Governed or misgoverned, Londoners had their amenities. There were the theatres, fifteen of them in London in 1836, Drury Lane [**3.23**] being one, and twenty-six in 1870 (Cruikshank 1949, Charts 2 and 3). There was St Paul's Cathedral [**Introduction**, n.4, **3.18** and **3.19**], parks such as Kensington Gardens [**3.13**], and recreation grounds such as Blackheath [**3.17**]. There was the Great Exhibition of 1851 [**3.21–3.22**] and the International Exhibition of 1861 [**3.26**]. There were restaurants [**3.25**] and [**3.38**] and family life [**3.30**, **3.32** and **3.33**]. There could also be the simple pleasure of seeing and being seen, as with Surtees's comic hero, 'Soapy' Sponge [**3.34**].

One amenity to be prized above all others as far as writers were concerned was the public's access to literature. An increasing population brought with it an expanding readership. In the first third of the nineteenth century the great novelist of that age, Walter Scott, published his novels as 'three-deckers,' i.e. three volumes at ten shillings and sixpence each, or £1/11/6d, one thirteenth of the total annual income of an average worker. The great novelist in the middle third of the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens, published many of his novels monthly, in serial parts at one shilling a part—much more affordable. Following Dickens, Mayhew, Thackeray, Trollope, Kingsley and many others initially published their works serially before selling them in book form. Most of the publishing houses were based in London, and many newspapers and journals were edited there. All these things helped London dominate English culture, a culture not only for the upper classes, but one shared through literacy with the middle classes and, gradually, the working classes too. In 1841 seven out of ten men and five out of ten women were literate. By 1871 the figures were eight out of ten men and almost eight out of ten women. Book sales were more than commensurate: in 1841, 10,000 books were published; in 1871, 41,000 (Cruikshank, Chart 1).

Amongst our selections in Period III the most poignant are those found early, Blake seeing everywhere marks of woe, Wordsworth isolated when surrounded by crowds, and a bereft Tennyson standing alone on a bald street [**3.6**]. This is how we end the period too, first with De Quincey, destitute and near-death in a London street, saved by a sex-worker whose own situation is scarcely any better [**3.44**]. For Rossetti's Jenny, Saturday night in the Haymarket is where sex-workers are bought and sold [**3.45**]. Finally, we have Hardy's Ruined Maid [**3.47**], encountered in a London street by a young

friend from the country. She is superficially better off than De Quincey's sex-worker: she has a polished if suspect accent, gay feathers in her hat, a bracelet and fine gloves. But it is doubtful whether she has inner contentment. Her glamour is a veneer which could easily fade—rather as Wordsworth's London, viewed from Westminster Bridge [**3.12**] early in the morning, will be murky and dim by the end of the day.

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AN OPENING MISCELLANY

3.1 Charlotte Bronte: London as Life and Freedom

Charlotte Bronte's *heroine Lucy Snowe in* Villette *has spent some time as companion and nurse to Miss Marchmont, an elderly, eccentric, and crippled spinster, Lucy's world being thus confined to two "hot, close rooms." On Miss Marchmont's death she travels to London, and at the age of 23 is enraptured at the wonders of a wide world that offers a freedom she has never known.*

Charlotte Bronte (1816–1855) published under the androgynous pen-name of Currer Bell.

From Villette *(1853), Vol. 1, ch. 6*

The next day was the first of March, and when I awoke, rose, and opened my curtain, I saw the risen sun struggling through fog.[9] Above my head, above the house tops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orbed mass, dark blue and dim—THE DOME.[10] While I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life: in that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah's gourd.[11]

"I did well to come," I said, proceeding to dress with speed and care. "I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets, and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?"

Being dressed, I went down, not travel-worn and exhausted, but tidy and refreshed […]

The street on which my little sitting room window looked was narrow, perfectly quiet, and not dirty; the few passengers were just as one sees in provincial towns: here was nothing formidable; I felt sure I might venture out alone.

[9] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

[10] **THE DOME**: **the dome** of St Paul's Cathedral; see **General Introduction**, n.4.

[11] **as fast … gourd**: When **Jonah** was outside Nineveh, God made a **gourd** (a shrub) grow quickly to shelter him from the sun. But Lucy's hopes are to be dashed: "God prepared a worm when the morning rose next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered" (Jonah 4:5–7).

Having breakfasted, out I went. Elation and pleasure were in my heart: to walk alone in London seemed of itself an adventure. Presently I found myself in Paternoster Row—classic ground this.[12] I entered a bookseller's shop, kept by one Jones; I bought a little book—a piece of extravagance I could ill afford; but I thought I would one day give or send it to Mrs Barrett.[13] Mr Jones, a dried-in man of business, stood behind his desk; he seemed one of the greatest, and I one of the happiest, of beings.

Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning. Finding myself before St Paul's, I went in; I mounted to the dome: I saw thence London, with its river, and its bridges, and its churches; I saw antique Westminster, and the green Temple Gardens,[14] with sun upon them, and a glad, blue sky of early spring above; and, between them and it, not too dense a cloud of haze.

Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure. Since those days, I have seen the West End,[15] the parks, the fine squares; but I love the city far better. The city seems so much more in earnest: its business, its rush, its roar, are such serious things, sights, and sounds. The city is getting its living—the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the city you are deeply excited.

3.2 Mary Robinson: "London's Summer Morning"

Born Mary Darby in Bristol, ***Mary Robinson*** *(1756–1800) was well-known in her time as a poet, novelist, dramatist and Shakespearean actress, for which she earned the nickname 'Perdita' (from* The Winter's Tale*). She married Thomas Robinson in Westminster in 1773, but the marriage was unhappy and she was impoverished until she became mistress of the Prince of Wales (later George IV), when she briefly became a leader in fashionable society. In the last 17 years of her short life she was stricken with illness and cultivated her poetic rather than dramatic talents. She was acutely aware of the injustices and inequalities of English society and was an early sympathizer with the French Revolution. Her "London's Summer Morning" was written in 1795, though not published until 1800. It shows remarkable clarity of observation of Londoners in the early morning but, while it is very possibly indebted to Swift's "A Description of the Morning"* [**2.20**]*, it substitutes close sympathetic observation for Swift's satirical detachment.*

[12] **Paternoster Row** was a pedestrian precinct famous for its booksellers.

[13] **Mrs Barrett**: Lucy's nurse as a child and now an old friend.

[14] **Temple Gardens**: the gardens of the Inner and Middle Temples (see [**3.28**, n.93]).

[15] **the West End**: the fashionable district, including Mayfair, Belgravia, Soho and the City of Westminster.

From Lyrical Tales *(1800)*

Who has not waked to list [*hear*] the busy sounds
Of summer's morning, in the sultry smoke
Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
And tattered covering, shrilly bawls his trade,
Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
Proclaims the dustman's [*street-sweeper*'s] office; while the street
Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
The din of hackney coaches, wagons, carts;
While tinmen's shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,[16]
Fruit barrows, and the hunger-giving cries
Of vegetable vendors fill the air.
Now every shop displays its varied trade,
And the fresh-sprinkled pavement cools the feet
Of early walkers. At the private door
The ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop,[17]
Annoying the smart 'prentice, or neat girl,
Tripping with bandbox[18] lightly. Now the sun
Darts burning splendour on the glittering pane,
Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim,
In shops (where beauty smiles with industry)
Sits the smart damsel; while the passenger [passer-by]
Peeps through the window, watching every charm.
Now pastry dainties catch the eye minute
Of humming insects, while the limy snare[19]
Waits to enthral them. Now the lamplighter
Mounts the tall ladder, nimbly venturous,
To trim the half-filled lamp; while at his feet
The pot-boy [*publican's servant*] yells discordant. All along
The sultry pavement, the old-clothes-man cries
In tone monotonous, and sidelong views
The area for his traffic: now the bag
Is slyly opened, and the half-worn suit
(Sometimes the pilfered treasure of the base
Domestic spoiler) for one half its worth,

[16] **cork-cutters**: those who cut cork into stoppers for bottles.

[17] **housemaid … mop**: something of a motif in this genre of urban georgic: compare Swift's Moll who "whirl[s] her mop with dext'rous airs" [**2.20**] and Gay's "careless quean" who flicks water from her mop on passers-by [**2.18**].

[18] **bandbox**: light box for carrying millinery.

[19] **limy snare**: sticky material used to catch insects.

Sinks in the green abyss.[20] The porter now
Bears his huge load along the burning way;
And the poor poet wakes from busy dreams,
To paint the summer morning.

3.3 Charles Dickens: A London 'Pea-Souper'

Charles Dickens *(1812–1870) lived in London from 1822 to 1858, and thereafter maintained a base there at the office of his journal* All the Year Round. *All but one of his novels has substantial portions set in London, which (he asserted) provided great stimulus for him. The opening of* Bleak House *provides a graphic description of the city in November but is important also for its symbolic associations. The novel is (among other things) a satire on the English legal system, particularly as it concerns the case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, which is protracted, involved, and ultimately futile since its mounting cost finally outweighs the value of the estate in dispute. The opening paragraphs form a prelude to the sordid competitiveness that characterizes the Chancery suit and indeed other plots in the novel. People jostle each other with their umbrellas in order to get the best footholds in the mud that covers the streets, as if to suggest in this grubby world mud and money are equated. The dense 'pea-souper'* fog[21] *is also a metaphor for the human condition with clear outlines of reality being lost and people having no idea where they are or where they are going. There are suggestions that such competition and lack of sense of direction have been the norm ever since Biblical times (Noah's flood was supposed to purify the world but left only mud when its waters receded), and also in scientific terms (the sight of a megalosaurus on Holborn Hill would not be surprising). The fog is thickest and the streets muddiest at the High Court of Chancery, as if the Lord High Chancellor himself presides over the "groping and floundering" condition of humanity.*

From Bleak House *(1852–1853), ch. 1*

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely

[20] **the old-clothes-man … abyss**: **The old-clothes-man** is a receiver of stolen goods from the burglar (**base/Domestic spoiler**); he puts the **pilfered treasure** in his **green abyss** (an ironical term for the green briefcase used by barristers and lawyers).

[21] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foothold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits[22] and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses[23] of collier brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales[24] of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar.[25] And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.[26]

Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.

[22] **aits**: small islands in a river.

[23] **cabooses**: small galleys (kitchens) in merchant ships (a **brig** has two masts).

[24] **gunwale**: low wooden fence round the edge of the deck.

[25] **Temple Bar**: a western gate into the city in the Strand, near the Inns of Court, demolished in 1870 to improve traffic flow. It used to display the heads of traitors.

[26] **Court of Chancery**: sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall, the **Court of Chancery** (presided over by the Lord Chancellor) dealt with (among other matters not regulated by common law) trusts and the administration of estates. It was notoriously slow and convoluted in its deliberations.

3.4 William Cobbett: The Great Wen

William Cobbett *(1763–1835) was a journalist and pamphleteer. He wrote polemics against corruption in government, and against the Corn Laws and other taxes that affected the rural population in particular. His radical ideas for political reform made him unpopular with the Tory establishment; he was imprisoned (1810–1812), and later lived in voluntary exile in the United States (1817–1819) to avoid arrest for sedition. He was a staunch advocate of rural England, and from 1821 to 1833 rode on horseback through many English counties (and Scotland) to observe at firsthand the impoverished condition of country people, which was, he argued, aggravated by the financial status and corruption of cities like London that were swelling in size and wealth at the expense of the countryside. His* Rural Rides *was collected in book form in 1830 and 1833, and an enlarged edition appeared posthumously in 1853. He coined the term "the Wen" to describe London anatomically as a cystic excrescence on the body of England.*

From "Kentish Journal," in Rural Rides *(1853) (written 1821)*

[…] Have I not, for twenty long years, been regretting the existence of these unnatural embossments [*protruberances*], these white-swellings, [*tubercular tumours*] these odious wens,[27] produced by corruption and engendering crime and misery and slavery? We shall see the whole of these wens abandoned by the inhabitants and, at last, the cannons on the fortifications may be of some use in battering down the buildings. But what is to be the fate of the great Wen of all—the monster, called by the silly coxcombs of the press, "the metropolis of the empire"? What is to become of that multitude of towns that has been stuck up around it? The village of Kingston was smothered in the town of Portsea; and why? Because taxes, drained from other parts of the kingdom, were brought thither.

The dispersion of the Wen is the only real difficulty that I see in settling the affairs of the nation and restoring it to a happy state. But dispersed it must be; and if there be half a million or more of people to suffer, the consolation is that the suffering will be divided into half a million of parts. As if the swelling out of London, naturally produced by the Funding System,[28] were not sufficient; as if the evil were not sufficiently great from the inevitable tendency of the system of loans and funds, our pretty gentlemen must resort to positive institutions to augment the population of the Wen. They found that the increase of the Wen produced an increase of thieves and prostitutes, an increase of all sorts of diseases, an increase of miseries of all sorts; they saw that taxes drawn up to one point produced these effects; they must have

[27] **wens**: fatty tumours of the head.

[28] **Funding System**: Cobbett argues that the Poor Laws, while assisting the poor, only increase their number.

a 'penitentiary,'[29] for instance, to check the evil, and *that* they must needs have in the Wen! So that here were a million of pounds drawn up in taxes, employed not only to keep the thieves and prostitutes still in the Wen, but to bring up to the Wen workmen to build the penitentiary, who, and whose families, amounting perhaps to thousands, make an addition to the cause of that crime and misery, to check which is the object of the penitentiary! People would follow, they must follow, the million of money.

3.5 William Wordsworth: Alienation and Anonymity

The Prelude, *a long autobiographical poem by* ***William Wordsworth*** *(1770–1850), was written and revised over many years and the final version was not published until soon after his death, in 1850. It tells of the development of his poetic imagination from childhood on, in various episodes not always chronologically arranged. Wordsworth lived in London in early 1791 and again in 1793; he also paid several visits there later (see* [**3.12 HN**]*). He recorded his impressions of the city in Book 7 ("Residence in London"). He enjoyed London's plays, pleasure gardens, museums, and the oratory of churches, law courts, and parliament, but crowds gave him a sense of estrangement and an unsettling awareness of human beings' ignorance of each other, as exemplified here in the emblem of the blind Beggar.*

From The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind *(1850), Bk 7*

How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, "The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!"
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight[30] procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
And once, far-travelled in such a mood, beyond
The reach of common indication, lost
Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
Abruptly with the view (a sight not rare)
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain

[29] **'penitentiary'**: The building of the National Penitentiary in Millbank, Pimlico, was completed in 1821, the year in which Cobbett was writing his diatribe. The prison was London's largest.

[30] **second sight**: "a supposed power by which occurrences in the future or things at a distance are perceived as though they were actually present" (*OED*).

His story, whence he came, and who he was.
Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
As with the might of waters; an apt type [*symbol*]
This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
Both of ourselves and of the universe;
And on the shape of that unmoving man,
His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
As if admonished from another world.

3.6 Alfred, Lord Tennyson: The Noise of Life Begins Again

The poem was written by ***Tennyson*** *(1809–1892) in memory of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam (1811–1833). Tennyson and Hallam met at Cambridge and thereafter became close friends and fellow-poets. Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily. The poem was written between 1833—when Hallam died (in Vienna) at the early age of 22—and 1850, when it was published anonymously. The poem consists of 132 sections of varying lengths but all with the same metre and stanza. Section 7 describes the London streetscape where Hallam once resided in Wimpole Street, now made bleak and "unlovely" by the poet's acute nostalgia and profound sense of loss. The noise of early morning London in the distance serves to make the silent street more sombre, and the future for the poet the more blank, as day breaks. Later in the poem, in Section 119, the speaker stands once more in Wimpole Street, his mood now serene and the street smelling of the meadow. (See also* [**3.26 HN**]*)*

From In Memoriam A.H.H. *(1850), Sect. 7*

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more –
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing[31] I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

[31] **like … thing**: The poet's feelings of guilt (perhaps at the possibly homoerotic nature of his intense love for Hallam) make him recall the ghost of Hamlet's father, who "started like a guilty thing / Upon a fearful summons" when the day dawned (*Hamlet* 1.1.152–3).

3.7 William Blake: "Marks of Woe"

"London" (1794) by poet and painter ***William Blake*** *(1757–1827) offers a radical critique of the Industrial Revolution that was rapidly transforming (and "blackening") London and the unchecked capitalism that drove it, deftly characterising its ideology (fifty years before Marx formulated the concept) as "mind-forged manacles," spurious but powerful mental shackles, and its victims—the boy forced up chimneys to sweep them, the soldier enlisted or press-ganged as cannon fodder, the "youthful harlot" forced to sell her body on the "midnight streets"—as mere commodities to be exploited. But he also suggests that this commodification of values and relationships is a sort of universal acid that cannot be safely quarantined by the ruling classes, and that will eventually corrode even the most sacred institutions, reducing marriage (for example) to nothing more than a permanent form of sex-work.*

"London," from Songs of Innocence and Experience *(1794)*

I wander through each chartered[32] street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry[33] of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,[34]
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimneysweeper's cry
Every blackening[35] church appals,[36]
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.[37]

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the newborn infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

[32] **chartered**: established by charter; privileged, made free.

[33] **cry**: (1) street-vendor's **cry**; (2) **cry** of anguish.

[34] **ban**: (1) curse; (2) proclamation, prohibition.

[35] **blackening**: (1) with soot from 'dark Satanic mills'; (2) morally degenerating.

[36] **appals**: (1) makes pale (with horror); (2) casts a pall over.

[37] **Runs in blood down palace walls**: The king of France, Louis XVI, was guillotined by the revolutionaries in 1793. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the prophetess Cassandra foretells the king's murder by crying that the palace smells of 'dripping blood'.

3.8 Charles Dickens: A Sunday in London

Arthur Clennam is a middle-aged business man. Born and brought up in London he has spent twenty years in China representing the interests of the family firm of which his supposed mother, the wheel-chair bound Mrs Clennam, is the head. At some time far in the past Mrs Clennam has perpetrated a great injustice against Arthur Clennam's birth mother, of whom he has known nothing. Meanwhile, William Dorrit has become an inmate of the debtor's prison, the Marshalsea, for debts that he has no capacity to settle. Society, moreover, is in a state of moral paralysis and Arthur Clennam returns to a city that seems rigid, stagnant and incapable of change. Dickens traces this inertia to a reluctance on the part of many to take responsibility for their actions and a tendency to blame others—hence the subtitle of the novel, "nobody's fault." (For a note on Dickens see [**3.3 HN**])

From Little Dorrit, or Nobody's Fault *(1856–1857), ch. 3*

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an over-worked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world—all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea[38] gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it—or the worst, according to the probabilities.

At such a happy time, so propitious to the interest of religion and morality, Mr. Arther Clennam, newly arrived from Marseilles by way of Dover, and by Dover coach the Blue-eyed Maid,[39] sat in the window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill. Ten thousand responsible house surrounded him, frowning as heavily on the streets they composed, as if they were every one inhabited by the ten young men of the Calendar's story, who blackened their faces and bemoaned their miseries every night.[40] Fifty thousand lairs surrounded

[38] **South Sea gods**: Sculptures from Easter Island acquired by the British Museum.

[39] **Blue-eyed Maid**: Coach that plied between Dover and the Blue-eyed Maid Tavern in Southwark.

[40] **Calendar**: Story in *The Arabian Nights*, favourite reading for the young Dickens.

him where people lived so unwholesomely, that fair water put into their crowded rooms on Saturday night, would be corrupt on Sunday morning; albeit my lord, their county member, was amazed that they failed to sleep in company with their butcher's meat. Miles of close wells and pits of houses, where the inhabitants gasped for air, stretched far away towards every point of the compass. Through the heart of the town a deadly sewer ebbed and flowed, in the place of a fine fresh river. What secular want could the millions or so of human beings whose daily labour, six days in the week, lay among these Arcadian objects, from the sweet sameness of which they had no escape between the cradle and the grave—what secular want could they possibly have upon their seventh day? Clearly they could want nothing but a stringent policeman.

3.9 William Makepeace Thackeray: "Going to See a Man Hanged."

William Thackeray *(1811–1863) briefly studied art in Paris and then began a career as a journalist. Though he achieved fame as a novelist, notably with* Vanity Fair *(1848), he continued to write articles for London journals for much of his life. One of his most memorable pieces is "Going to See a Man Hanged". The man to be hanged was François Courvoisier, who had murdered his employer, and a crowd of 40,000 people are said to have witnessed his execution outside Newgate Prison (see* [**2.29 HN**]*). Thackeray concentrates not so much on the execution as on the crowd, as he is uneasy about its volatile mood. For a comparison see Samuel Richardson on "An Execution at Tyburn"* [**2.30**]*. For Thackeray see also* [**3.33 HN**] *and* [**3.36 HN**].

From Fraser's Magazine, *22 July 1840*

[… Y]onder, glittering through the crowd in Newgate Streets—, the Sheriff's carriages are slowly making their way. We have been here three hours! Is it possible that they can have passed so soon? Close to the barriers where we are, the mob has become so dense that it is with difficulty a man can keep his feet. Each man, however, is very careful in protecting the women, and all are full of jokes and good-humour. The windows of the shops opposite are now pretty nearly filled by the persons who hired them. Many young dandies are there with moustaches and cigars; some quiet fat family-parties, of simple honest tradesmen and their wives, as we fancy, who are looking on with the greatest imaginable calmness, and sipping their tea. Yonder is the sham Lord W–, who is flinging various articles among the crowd; one of his companions, a tall, burly man, with large moustaches, has provided himself with a squirt, and is aspersing the mob with brandy-and-water. Honest gentleman! high-bred aristocrat! genuine lover of humour and wit! I would walk some miles to see thee on the treadmill, thee

and thy Mohawk[41] crew! We tried to get up a hiss against these ruffians, but only had a trifling success; the crowd did not seem to think their offence very heinous; and our friend, the philosopher in the ragged elbows, who had remained near us all the time, was not inspired with any such savage disgust at the proceedings of certain notorious young gentlemen, as I must confess fills my own particular bosom. He only said, "So-and-so is a lord, and they'll let him off," and then discoursed about Lord Ferrers[42] being hanged. The philosopher knew the history pretty well, and so did most of the little knot of persons about him, and it must be a gratifying thing for young gentlemen to find that their actions are made the subject of this kind of conversation. Scarcely a word had been said about Courvoisier all this time. We were all, as far as I could judge, in just such a frame of mind as men are in when they are squeezing at the pit-door of a play, or pushing for a review or a Lord Mayor's show.[43] We asked most of the men who were near us, whether they had seen many executions—most of them had, the philosopher especially; whether the sight of them did any good—"For the matter of that, no; people did not care about them at all; nobody ever thought of it after a bit." A countryman, who had left his drove in Smithfield, said the same thing; he had seen a man hanged at York, and spoke of the ceremony with perfect good sense, and in a quiet sagacious way. J. S–, the famous wit, now dead, had, I recollect, a good story upon the subject of executing, and of the terror which the punishment inspires. After Thistlewood[44] and his companions were hanged, their heads were taken off, according to the sentence, and the executioner, as he severed each, held it up to the crowd, in the proper orthodox way, saying, "Here is the head of a traitor!" At the sight of the first ghastly head the people were struck with terror, and a general expression of disgust and fear broke from them. The second head was looked at also with much interest, but the excitement regarding the third head diminished. When the executioner had come to the last of the heads, he lifted it up, but, by some clumsiness, allowed it to drop. At this the crowd yelled out, "Ah, Butter-fingers!" the excitement had passed entirely away. The punishment had grown to be a joke—Butter-fingers was the word—a pretty commentary, indeed, upon the august nature of public executions, and the awful majesty of the law. It was past seven now; the quarters rang and passed away; the crowd began to grow very eager and more quiet, and we turned back every now and then and looked at

[41] **Mohawk**: or 'mohock', one of a gang of aristocratic hooligans who supposedly terrorized London by night in the C18th; derived from **Mohawk**, the indigenous North American tribe of warriors, a branch of the Iroquois. The **treadmill** was a form of forced labour used in prisons, introduced in 1818.

[42] **Lord Ferrers**: executed in 1760 for the murder of his steward.

[43] **Lord Mayor's show**: an annual celebration in the City of London.

[44] **Thistlewood**: Arthur Thistlewood (1774–1820), one of the radical Cato Street Conspiracy, who had planned to murder the Cabinet; he was hanged until dead and then decapitated, in accordance with the Treason Act (1814).

St. Sepulchre's[45] clock. Half-an-hour, twenty-five minutes. What is he doing now? He has his irons off by this time. A quarter: he's in the press-room[46] now, no doubt. Now at last we had come to think about the man we were going to see hanged. How slowly the clock crept over the last quarter! Those who were able to turn round and see (for the crowd was now extraordinarily dense) chronicled the time, eight minutes, five minutes; at last—ding, dong, dong, dong!—the bell is tolling the chimes of eight.

DELIGHTS AND BEAUTIES

3.10 Thomas Hood: Let's All Go Down the Strand

Thomas Hood *(1799–1845) was born in London, the son of a book-seller. He wrote many sentimental, comic and satirical poems, essays and stories, and he edited various periodicals, notably* Hood's Own *(1839), the* New Monthly Magazine *(1841–1843), and* Hood's Magazine *(1843). Our extract he contributed (as* 'Incog.'*) in November 1821 to the* London Magazine*, of which he was assistant editor, 1821–1843. In 1844 appeared his poem "The Bridge of Sighs," concerning a sex-worker who had thrown herself from Waterloo Bridge.*

From A Sentimental Journey from Islington to Waterloo Bridge *(1821)*

I was now in the Strand, close to Temple Bar[47]; and from hence to Waterloo Bridge,[48] I calculated would be the journey of an hour. Who is there that can walk along this, or any of the principal City streets, without admiring the number of elegant shops, and the still more elegant and wonderful productions which they contain? They are to me the sources of the greatest pleasure; and when time will permit me to do so, I inspect them from the goldsmith's and jeweller's, down to the humblest repositories of the tinman and brazier. Nay, I have been caught, and rallied by my acquaintance for looking in lovingly at the haberdasher's and milliner's.

It is not that I am merely smitten with the beauty of their articles that I look into them with such admiration and delight, but it is because I can there trace an evident and progressive improvement in the arts and manufactures of my country. *This* affords me a delight in which all must participate. Whether we examine those paintings and prints, which are more strictly termed works of

[45] **St Sepulchre's**: See [**2.28**], n.137.

[46] **press-room**: "The Press Room, a dark close chamber, … obtained its name from an immense wooden machine kept in it, with which such prisoners as refused to plead to their indictments were pressed to death" Ainsworth (1850: 193). The practice (the only form of torture ever sanctioned under English Common Law) was officially abandoned in 1772.

[47] **Strand** … **Temple Bar**: the **Strand** ran west from **Temple Bar** to the City of Westminster.

[48] **Waterloo Bridge**: opened in 1817 and named to mark victory over Napoleon at Waterloo.

art; whether we examine those fabrics which have been produced by the most complicated machinery, or those minor articles which are the works of the handicraftsman, we shall find that there prevails in all a degree of taste which can only be the result of a general cultivation of mind. It is this that has led to so many ingenious inventions, and has tended above all to promote the general alliance between elegance and utility; and when we contemplate the mighty effects of its progress hitherto, who can calculate its future attainments? Long may it continue its mighty march, to the honour and happiness of my countrymen; and may they, in better days, obtain for their industry and ingenuity those rewards which hitherto have not kept pace with their merits. May they still travel onwards in the path of improvement, and surmounting all obstacles which a meaner ambition would plant in their way, reach that point of excellence and perfection to which man in this world may be destined to attain! Here a bookseller's shop gave a new turn to my speculations. We are certainly a reading people, I thought, as I looked in at the window; but I would fain know if this cultivation of the mind conduces to happiness. I was inclined to decide in the affirmative; for the collection before me suggested the names of Shakespeare, Addison, Milton, and a host of other authors, linked with a thousand reminiscences. Much must depend upon one's course of reading, said I, still running over the titles: *A Sermon to Sinners*; *The Fool's Jest Book*; *Dialogues of the Dead*; *Life in London*; *Tomline's Sea Worthies*; *The Newgate Calendar*; *Cato's Letter to the Country*; *The King's Reply to his People*; *Words to the Wyse*; *Witte's Cronykill*; *A New Spelling Book*. But what have we[49] here? It happened very strangely, I might almost say miraculously, that I read a solution of my speculation in a book before me. It was called *The Prayse of Ignorance*[50] […]

3.11 John Ruskin Recalls a Childhood Paradise at Herne Hill

John Ruskin *(1819–1900) was a prolific art critic, essayist, painter, story writer and lecturer. He travelled widely in France and Italy and his experiences abroad stimulated his lifelong love of nature's beauty and his interest in medieval, Renaissance, and modern art. In his* Præterita *("Things past")—one of his last works—he recalls his idyllic boyhood at Herne Hill, to which his family moved in 1823 when he was four. Herne Hill was then semi-rural, with large houses and gardens, although it was only four miles from Charing Cross. Particularly when the railways arrived in 1862 there was much sub-division and the district became over-developed. Ruskin's love of Herne Hill, as he remembered it, was analogous to his love of nature and past beauties.*

[49] ***A Sermon to Sinners … A New Spelling Book***: amongst these only ***The Newgate Calendar*** is notable, for its regular reports of sensational crimes.

[50] ***The Prayse of Ignorance***: Hood would publish an extract from this "Oration" in *Whims and Oddities, First Series*, 1826.

From Præterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life *(1886–1889), Vol. 1, ch. 2*

When I was about four years old my father found himself able to buy the lease of a house on Herne Hill, a rustic eminence four miles south of the 'Standard in Cornhill'[51]; of which the leafy seclusion remains, in all essential points of character, unchanged to this day: certain Gothic splendours, lately indulged in by our wealthier neighbours, being the only serious innovations; and these are so graciously concealed by the fine trees of their grounds that the passing viator [*wayfarer*] remains unappalled by them; and I can still walk up and down the piece of road between the Fox tavern and the Herne Hill station, imagining myself four years old […]

The group, of which our house was the quarter, consisted of two precisely similar partner-couples of houses, gardens and all to match; still the two highest blocks of buildings seen from Norwood on the crest of the ridge; so that the house itself, three-storied, with garrets above, commanded, in those comparatively smokeless days, a very notable view from its garret windows, of the Norwood hills on one side and the winter sunrise over them; and of the valley of the Thames on the other, with Windsor telescopically clear in the distance, and Harrow, conspicuous always in fine weather to open vision against the summer sunset. It had front and back garden in sufficient proportion to its size; the front richly set with old evergreens and well-grown lilac and laburnum; the back, seventy yards long by twenty wide, renowned over all the hill for its pears and apples, which had been chosen with extreme care by our predecessor (shame on me to forget the name of a man to whom I owe so much!)—and possessing also a strong old mulberry tree, a tall white-heart cherry tree, a black Kentish one, and an almost unbroken hedge all round, of alternate gooseberry and currant bush; decked, in due season (for the ground was wholly beneficent) with magical splendour of abundant fruit: fresh green, soft amber, and rough-bristled crimson bending the spinous [*thorny*] branches; clustered pearl and pendant ruby joyfully discoverable under the large leaves that looked like vine.

The differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden and that of Eden, as I had imagined it, were that, in this one, all the fruit was forbidden; and there were no companionable beasts. In other respects the little domain answered every purpose of Paradise to me; and the climate, in that cycle of our years, allowed me to pass most of my life in it.

[51] '**Standard in Cornhill**': A lofty erection containing a vertical pipe with spouts and taps to supply water to the public (see *OED* 3.7).

3.12 William Wordsworth: "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802"

William Wordsworth *(1770–1850) wrote this celebrated sonnet in early morning on his way to France on 31 July 1802; it is likely that he drafted it at this time and revised it before 3 September. London, in its "bright and glittering" splendour and its features depicted with a sharp focus, is as vividly realized as the natural phenomena of "valley, rock, or hill" when they too are steeped in early sunlight. The poem is also about the poet, whose apprehension of the scene proves his senses are far from "[d]ull," and who can stimulate others (the readers) into sharing his appreciation of the majesty of the scene. The calm that he sees is also the inner ("felt") calm that the scene invokes—there is reciprocity between the observer and the observed. However, the emphatic "now" in the fourth line suggests that London's sleep will not last: when the city wakes, its industry will corrupt the air with smog and noise, trade will disrupt the natural flow of the river, and the crowds will be as disturbing and unsettling as they were in* [**3.5**].

From Poems in Two Volumes *(1807)*

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

3.13 Matthew Arnold, "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens"

Kensington Gardens date from the seventeenth century when they became the grounds of Kensington Palace under William III. They were opened to the public by William IV in the early nineteenth century. They are adjacent to Hyde Park, of which they were once a part, and extend over 270 acres. ***Matthew Arnold*** *(1822–1888) was a major poet, essayist, and educationalist. He spent much time in London but as Inspector of Schools travelled widely in the provinces. In the poem the Gardens provide opportunity for reflection, and in the life of the glade in which the poet lies, with its "endless active life" of nature and innocent humanity (the child with the broken toy), he finds a calm that is isolated from the "city's hum"*

and "impious uproar." It is clear from the last stanza that his aesthetic vision in the Gardens promotes an insight into the moral vision for which he petitions the "Calm Soul of all things." As with Wordsworth in [**3.12**], *the experience of a scene of outer calm provokes a longing for an inner calm that assures a fully integrated harmonious life.*

From Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems *(1852)*

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screened by dark trees on either hand;
And at its head, to stay the eye,
Those black-topped, red-boled pine trees stand.

The clouded sky is still and grey,
Through silken rifts soft peers the sun.
Light the green-foliaged chestnuts play,
The darker elms stand grave and dun.

The birds sing sweetly in these trees
Across the girdling city's hum;
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,
And eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

I, on men's impious uproar hurled,
Think sometimes, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new.
When I, who watch them, am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass.
The flowers close, the birds are fed;
The night comes down upon the grass:
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm Soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others, give.
Calm, calm me more; nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

3.14 George Borrow on Cheapside

George Borrow *(1803–1881) was educated in Edinburgh and Norwich. Articled as a solicitor, he early adopted literature as his profession. He travelled widely in Britain, Europe and the East; in Russia and Spain he was the agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society. He made a particular study of Romany culture and his two most famous books,* Lavengro *(1851) and* The Romany Rye *(1857), draw on this in heavily fictionalised autobiographies. He celebrates the romance of the open road, when "the wind's on the heath," but he is also able to capture the atmosphere of a city, as he does in this picture of Cheapside.*

From Lavengro *(1851), ch. 31*

"O Cheapside![52] Cheapside!" said I, as I advanced up that mighty thoroughfare, "truly thou art a wonderful place for hurry, noise, and riches! Men talk of the bazaars of the East – I have never seen them – but I daresay that, compared with thee, they are poor places, silent places, abounding with empty boxes, O thou pride of London's east! – mighty mart of old renown! – for thou art not a place of yesterday: – long before the Roses red and white battled in fair England,[53] thou didst exist – a place of throng and bustle – place of gold and silver, perfumes and fine linen. Centuries ago thou couldst extort the praises even of the fiercest foes of England. Fierce bards of Wales, sworn foes of England, sang thy praises centuries ago; and even the fiercest of them all, Red Julius[54] himself,

[52] **Cheapside**: 'market place'; from Old English *ceapan*, to buy. A broad street near St Paul's in the City, it was the major market-place of London from the Middle Ages.

[53] **Roses … England**: the Wars of the **Roses** 1455–1485, between Yorkists (White Rose) and Lancastrians (Red Rose); ended at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 with the victory of Henry Tudor of Lancaster, who became Henry VII and married Elizabeth of York.

[54] **Red Julius**: Iolo Goch, whose real surname was Llwyd.

wild Glendower's[55] bard, had a word of praise for London's 'Cheape,' for so the bards of Wales styled thee in their flowing odes. Then, if those who were not English, and hated England, and all connected therewith, had yet much to say in thy praise, when thou wast far inferior to what thou art now, why should true-born Englishmen, or those who call themselves so, turn up their noses at thee, and scoff thee at the present day, as I believe they do? But, let others do as they will, I, at least, who am not only an Englishman, but an East Englishman,[56] will not turn up my nose at thee, but will praise and extol thee, calling thee mart of the world – a place of wonder and astonishment! – and, were it right and fitting to wish that anything should endure for ever, I would say prosperity to Cheapside, throughout all ages – may it be the world's resort for merchandise, world without end."

And when I had passed through the Cheape I entered another street, which led up a kind of ascent, and which proved to be the street of the Lombards,[57] called so from the name of its first founders; and I walked rapidly up the street of the Lombards, neither looking to the right nor left, for it had no interest for me, though I had a kind of consciousness that mighty things were being transacted behind its walls: but it wanted the throng, bustle, and outward magnificence of the Cheape, and it had never been spoken of by "ruddy bards"! And, when I had got to the end of the street of the Lombards, I stood still for some time, deliberating within myself whether I should turn to the right or the left, or go straight forward, and at last I turned to the right, down a street of rapid descent, and presently found myself upon a bridge[58] which traversed the river which runs by the big city.

A strange kind of bridge it was; huge and massive, and seemingly of great antiquity. It had an arched back, like that of a hog, a high balustrade, and at either side, at intervals, were stone bowers bulking over the river, but open on the other side, and furnished with a semicircular bench. Though the bridge was wide—very wide—it was all too narrow for the concourse upon it. Thousands of human beings were pouring over the bridge. But what chiefly struck my attention was a double row of carts and wagons, the generality drawn by horses as large as elephants, each row striving hard in a different direction, and not unfrequently brought to a stand-still. Oh the cracking of whips, the shouts and oaths of the carters, and the grating of wheels upon the enormous stones that formed the pavement! In fact, there was a wild burly-burly upon the bridge, which nearly deafened me. But, if upon the bridge there was a confusion, below it there was a confusion ten times

[55] **Glendower**: Owain **Glyn Dŵr**, c.1359–c.1415, Prince of Powys, who led unsuccessful resistance to English rule in Wales.

[56] **East Englishman**: Borrow was from Norfolk, a county of East Anglia.

[57] **Lombards**: **Lombard** Street was originally the place of settlement of goldsmiths from Lombardy in Northern Italy. The Royal Exchange, Banks and the Bank of England are situated there.

[58] **bridge**: Old London Bridge (see [**1.2 HN**]).

confounded. The tide, which was fast ebbing, obstructed by the immense piers of the old bridge, poured beneath the arches with a fall of several feet, forming in the river below as many whirlpools as there were arches. Truly tremendous was the roar of the descending waters, and the bellow of the tremendous gulfs, which swallowed them for a time, and then cast them forth, foaming and frothing from their horrid wombs. Slowly advancing along the bridge, I came to the highest point, and there I stood still, close beside one of the stone bowers, in which, beside a fruit-stall, sat an old woman, with a pan of charcoal at her feet, and a book in her hand, in which she appeared to be reading intently. There I stood, just above the principal arch, looking through the balustrade at the scene that presented itself—and such a scene! Towards the left bank of the river, a forest of masts, thick and close, as far as the eye could reach; spacious wharfs, surmounted with gigantic edifices; and, far away, Caesar's Castle, with its White Tower.[59] To the right, another forest of masts, and a maze of buildings, from which, here and there, shot up to the sky chimneys taller than Cleopatra's Needle,[60] vomiting forth huge wreaths of that black smoke which forms the canopy—occasionally a gorgeous one—of the more than Babel[61] city. Stretching before me, the troubled breast of the mighty river, and, immediately below, the main whirlpool of the Thames—the Maëlstrom[62] of the bulwarks of the middle arch—a grisly pool, which, with its superabundance of horror, fascinated me. Who knows but I should have leapt into its depths?—I have heard of such things—but for a rather startling occurrence which broke the spell. As I stood upon the bridge, gazing into the jaws of the pool, a small boat shot suddenly through the arch beneath my feet. There were three persons in it; an oarsman in the middle, whilst a man and woman sat at the stern. I shall never forget the thrill of horror which went through me at this sudden apparition. What!—a boat—a small boat—passing beneath that arch into yonder roaring gulf! Yes, yes, down through that awful water-way, with more than the swiftness of an arrow, shot the boat, or skiff, right into the jaws of the pool. A monstrous breaker curls over the prow—there is no hope; the boat is swamped, and all drowned in that strangling.

[59] **Caesar's Castle … White Tower**: The Tower of London, mistakenly thought to have been built by Julius Caesar, but in fact constructed by the Normans.

[60] **Cleopatra's Needle**: an ancient Egyptian Obelisk in Alexandria. In 1877 it was transported thence to be re-erected on the Thames Embankment.

[61] **Babel**: Genesis 11:1–9 tells of the people of Earth who all spoke one language until they tried to build a tower to reach Heaven; God confounded their efforts by causing them to 'babble' in a multitude of mutually unintelligible languages. Then as now, London was a polyglot city.

[62] **Maelstrom**: a powerful whirlpool in the Arctic Ocean off the coast of Norway, and by extension any such whirlpool in a sea or river.

3.15 Frederick Locker-Lampson, "St. James's Street," 1867

Frederick Locker-Lampson *(1821–1895) published a collection of light verse,* London Lyrics *(1857, reprinted and amplified in 1867 and 1876), and an anthology* Lyra Elegantiarum *(1867); he prefaced the latter with an analysis of true* vers de société *where "sentiment never surges into passion, and where humour never overflows into boisterous merriment"—rules which are perhaps too carefully observed in "St. James's Street."*

From Lyra Elegantiarum *(1867)*

St. James's Street,[63] of classic fame!
The finest people throng it! –
St. James's Street? I know the name!
I think I've passed along it!
Why, that's where Sacharissa sighed
When Waller read his ditty;
Where Byron lived, and Gibbon died,
And Alvanley was witty.[64]

A famous street. It skirts the Park
Where Rogers took his pastime;
Come, gaze on fifty men of mark,
And then call up the fast time!
The plats at White's, the play at Crock's,
The bumpers to Miss Gunning;
The bonhomie of Charlie Fox,
And Selwyn's ghastly funning.[65]

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,
As north and south it stretches,
Still smacks of Williams' pungent squibs,
And Gillray's fiercer sketches;

[63] **St. James's Street**: runs from Piccadilly downhill to St. James's Palace and Pall Mall; several exclusive men's clubs are situated there.

[64] **Sacharissa … Waller … Byron … Gibbon … Alvanley**: **Sacharissa** is Lady Carlisle, praised in poems by Edmund **Waller** (1606–1687); Lord George **Byron** (1788–1824), poet; Edward **Gibbon** (1737–1794), historian; William Arden, 2nd Baron **Alvanley** (1789–1849), Regency buck or dandy.

[65] **Rogers … White's … Crock's … Miss Gunning … Charlie Fox … Selwyn**: Samuel **Rogers** (1763–1855), poet; **White's** and **Crock's**, men's clubs; **Miss Gunning**, Elizabeth, Duchess of Hamilton, 1733–1790, *née* Gunning; **Charles James Fox** (1749–1806), Whig Statesman; **Mrs. Selwyn**, biting satirist in Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778).

The quaint old dress, the grand old style,
The mots, the racy stories; –
The wine, the dice, – the wit, the bile,
The hate of Whigs and Tories.[66]

At dusk, when I am strolling there,
Dim forms will rise around me;
Old Pepys creeps past me in his chair,
And Congreve's airs astound me!
And once Nell Gwynne, a frail young sprite,
Looked kindly when I met her;
I shook my head, perhaps, – but quite
Forgot to quite forget her.[67]

The street is still a lively tomb
For rich and gay and clever,
The crops of dandies bud and bloom.
And die as fast as ever.
Now gilded youth loves cutty-pipes,[68]
And slang that's rather rancid, –
It can't approach its prototypes
In tone, – or so I've fancied.

In Brummell's[69] day of buckle shoes,
Starch crávats, and roll collars,
They'd fight, and woo, and bet, – and lose
Like gentlemen and scholars:
I like young men to go the pace,
I half forgive old Rapid[70];
These louts disgrace their name and race, –
So vicious and so vapid!

Worse times may come. *Bon ton*,[71] alas!
Will then be quite forgotten,
And all we much revere will pass

[66] **Williams' … Gillray's … Whigs … Tories**: Helen Maria **Williams** (1761?–1827), poet and friend of the Girondistes in the French Revolution; James **Gillray** (1757–1815) mordant caricaturist; **Whigs and Tories**, political parties originating in the seventeenth century.

[67] **Pepys … Congreve … Nell Gwynne**: Samuel **Pepys** (see [**2.7 HN**]); William **Congreve** (1670–1729), playwright; Eleanor (**Nell**) **Gwyn** (1650–1687), actress and long-time mistress of Charles II.

[68] **cutty-pipes**: fashionably short ('cut') pipes.

[69] **Brummel's**: George 'Beau' **Brummell** (1778–1840), Regency dandy, leader of fashion in London.

[70] **old Rapid**: character in Thomas Morton's *A Cure for the Heartache*, first performed at Covent Garden in 1797.

[71] ***Bon ton***: good breeding, good manners (an archaic term even then).

From ripe to worse than rotten;
Rank weeds will sprout between yon stones,
And owls will roost at Boodle's,
And Echo will hurl back the tones
Of screaming Yankee Doodles.[72]
I like the haunts, and many such,
Where wit and wealth are squandered,
The gardened mansions, just as much,
Where grace and rank have wandered, –
The spots where ladies fair and leal
First ventured to adore me! –
And something of the like I feel
For this old street before me.

3.16 Charles Dickens: Going Up the River

This passage from ***Charles Dickens's*** The Mystery of Edwin Drood *cannot of course be put fully in context since the novel (Dickens's last) was unfinished. (For a note on Dickens see* [**3.3 HN**].) *The episode itself, describing a relaxing day on the Thames near London, is probably of no especial consequence in the novel's plot; however, there are details in the characterization of the participants that may well be significant. Lieutenant Tartar proves by his capability and manliness that he may well deserve the hand in marriage of Rosa Bud, the heroine, who does nothing except listen to him as he talks; she later discovers that she too can row (with much assistance). Grewgious, the London lawyer, is the benign and shrewd guardian of Rosa but (with comic irony) steers and rows the boat with hopeless ineptitude. The day's outing ends with the prospect of dark bridges and shadows—the world of John Jasper, the intense, jealous, and passionate would-be lover of Rosa, of the opium den that he frequents, and of the mysterious fate of several of the novel's characters. The novel is set in the early 1840s.*

From The Mystery of Edwin Drood *(1870), ch. 22*

"It occurred to me," hinted Mr Tartar, "that we might go up the river, the weather being so delicious and the tide serving. I have a boat of my own at Temple Stairs."

"I have not been up the river for this many a day," said Mr Grewgious, tempted.

"I was never up the river," added Rosa.

Within half an hour they were setting this matter right by going up the river.

[72] **Boodle's … Yankee Doodles**: **Boodle's**—a gentlemen's club in St James' St; **Yankee Doodles**—brash informal Americans.

The tide was running with them, the afternoon was charming. Mr Tartar's boat was perfect. Mr Tartar and Lobley (Mr Tartar's man) pulled a pair of oars. Mr Tartar had a yacht, it seemed, lying somewhere down by Greenhithe; and Mr Tartar's man had charge of this yacht, and was detached upon his present service. He was a jolly favoured man, with tawny hair and whiskers, and a big red face. He was the dead image of the sun in old woodcuts, his hair and whiskers answering for rays all round him. Resplendent in the bow of the boat, he was a shining sight, with a man-of-war's man's shirt on—or off, according to opinion[73]—and his arms and breast tattooed all sorts of patterns. Lobley seemed to take it easily, and so did Mr Tartar; yet their oars bent as they pulled, and the boat bounded under them. Mr Tartar talked as if he were doing nothing, to Rosa who was really doing nothing, and to Mr Grewgious who was doing this much that he steered all wrong; but what did that matter, when a turn of Mr Tartar's skilful wrist, or a mere grin of Mr Lobley's over the bow, put all to rights! The tide bore them on in the gayest and most sparkling manner, until they stopped to dine in some everlastingly green garden, needing no matter-of-fact identification here; and then the tide obligingly turned—being devoted to that party alone for that day; and as they floated idly among some osier beds, Rosa tried what she could do in the rowing way, and came off splendidly, being much assisted; and Mr Grewgious tried what he could do, and came off on his back, doubled up with an oar under his chin, being not assisted at all. Then there was an interval of rest under boughs (such rest!) what time Mr Lobley mopped, and, arranging cushions, stretchers,[74] and the like, danced the tight rope the whole length of the boat like a man to whom shoes were a superstition and stockings slavery; and then came the sweet return among delicious odours of limes in bloom, and musical ripplings; and, all too soon, the great black city cast its shadow on the waters, and its dark bridges spanned them as death spans life, and the everlastingly green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable, and far away.

3.17 Nathaniel Hawthorne: A London Suburb

Nathaniel Hawthorne *(1804–1864), born in Salem, Massachusetts, is best known for his novels* The Scarlet Letter *(1850) and* The House of the Seven Gables *(1851). In 1853 he was appointed American Consul in England and lived in London from 1853–1857. His account of his time there,* Our Old Home, *from which this extract is taken, was published in 1863, first serialised in the Atlantic Monthly and then in one volume by James Osgood, Boston.*

From Our Old Home *(1863)*

[73] **shirt … opinion**: i.e. it is a matter of opinion whether Lobley's sleeveless top (as worn by an able seaman from a man-of-war) constitutes a shirt at all.

[74] **stretchers**: the narrow planks placed across the boat for the rowers to set their feet against.

[E]ven when we stepped beyond our own gate, we were not shocked with any immediate presence of the great world. We were dwelling in one of those oases that have grown up (in comparatively recent years, I believe) on the wide waste of Blackheath,[75] which otherwise offers a vast extent of unoccupied ground in singular proximity to the metropolis. As a general thing, the proprietorship of the soil seems to exist in everybody and nobody; but exclusive rights have been obtained, here and there, chiefly by men whose daily concerns link them with London, so that you find their villas or boxes standing along village streets which have often more of an American aspect than the elder English settlements. The scene is semi-rural. Ornamental trees overshadow the sidewalks, and grassy margins border the wheel-tracks. The houses, to be sure, have certain points of difference from those of an American village, bearing tokens of architectural design, though seldom of individual taste; and, as far as possible, they stand aloof from the street, and separated each from its neighbour by hedge or fence, in accordance with the careful exclusiveness of the English character, which impels the occupant, moreover, to cover the front of his dwelling with as much concealment of shrubbery as his limits will allow. Through the interstices, you catch glimpses of well-kept lawns, generally ornamented with flowers, and with what the English call rock-work, being heaps of ivy-grown stones and fossils, designed for romantic effect in a small way. Two or three of such village streets as are here described take a collective name,—as, for instance, Blackheath Park,—and constitute a kind of community of residents, with gateways, kept by a policeman, and a semi-privacy, stepping beyond which, you find yourself on the breezy heath.

On this great, bare, dreary common I often went astray, as I afterwards did on the Campagna of Rome, and drew the air (tainted with London smoke though it might be) into my lungs by deep inspirations, with a strange and unexpected sense of desert freedom. The misty atmosphere helps you to fancy a remoteness that perhaps does not quite exist. During the little time that it lasts, the solitude is as impressive as that of a Western prairie or forest; but soon the railway shriek, a mile or two away, insists upon informing you of your whereabout; or you recognize in the distance some landmark that you may have known,—an insulated villa, perhaps, with its garden-wall around it, or the rudimental street of a new settlement which is sprouting on this otherwise barren soil. Half a century ago, the most frequent token of man's beneficent contiguity might have been a gibbet, and the creak, like a tavern sign, of a murderer swinging to and fro in irons. Blackheath, with its highwaymen and footpads, was dangerous in those days; and even now, for aught I know, the Western prairie may still compare favourably with it as a safe region to go

[75] **Blackheath**: in the 1850s part of the county of Kent, but commonly regarded as a London suburb.

astray in. When I was acquainted with Blackheath, the ingenious device of garrotting had recently come into fashion; and I can remember, while crossing those waste places at midnight, and hearing footsteps behind me, to have been sensibly encouraged by also hearing, not far off, the clinking hoof-tramp of one of the horse-patrols who do regular duty there. About sunset, or a little later, was the time when the broad and somewhat desolate peculiarity of the heath seemed to me to put on its utmost impressiveness. At that hour, finding myself on elevated ground, I once had a view of immense London, four or five miles off, with the vast Dome in the midst, and the towers of the two Houses of Parliament[76] rising up into the smoky canopy, the thinner substance of which obscured a mass of things, and hovered about the objects that were most distinctly visible,—a glorious and sombre picture, dusky, awful, but irresistibly attractive, like a young man's dream of the great world, foretelling at that distance a grandeur never to be fully realized.

INSTITUTIONS

3.18 William Blake: St Paul's Cathedral on Holy Thursday

***Blake's** poem describes the annual ritual held on Ascension Day in which many thousand orphans from London charity schools, dressed in their uniforms, processed in pairs into St Paul's Cathedral, to offer thanks for their welfare under the "wise guardians of the poor." The children's innocence is suggested by the seeming spontaneity with which they enter the Cathedral like the easy flow of the Thames, and sing to Heaven "like a mighty wind." However, the figure of the beadles (there to keep order in the congregation) and the regimentation of the disciplined march of the children intimate that their innocence, despite its being genuine, will be short lived. Blake's companion poem in* Songs of Experience *laments that they will grow up into a world of poverty, misery, and "eternal winter" (cf.* [**3.7**]*).*

"Holy Thursday" in Songs of Innocence and Experience *(1794)*

'Twas on a Holy Thursday,[77] their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,[78]
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.

[76] **Houses of Parliament**: see [**2.31**], n.144.

[77] **Holy Thursday**: also Maundy Thursday, the eve of Good Friday, which commemorates the Last Supper.

[78] **beadle**: "inferior parish officer appointed to keep order in church [and] punish petty offenders"; **wand**: "a rod, stick, or switch for chastisement" (*OED*).

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.
Beneath them sit the agèd men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.[79]

3.19 Thomas De Quincey: Tourists Must Pay to See the Sights of St Paul's Cathedral

Thomas De Quincey *(1785–1859) was a voluminous journalist and essayist. He suffered bouts of depression, and these, together with other illnesses and extreme poverty, led to his opium addiction. His straitened circumstances, which were the result of a disorganized temperament and life style, compelled him to write copiously for an income. The following is an extract from "The Nation of London," expressing his indignation at the importunity of tourist guides in St Paul's, who noisily demanded that he and his companion pay to see the sights of the Cathedral. "The Nation of London" first appeared in* Tait's Magazine *(March 1834).*

From "The Nation of London," in Autobiographical Sketches *(1853), ch. 7 (written 1834)*

The first view of St Paul's, it may be supposed, overwhelmed us with awe; and I did not at that time imagine that the sense of magnitude could be more deeply impressed. One thing interrupted our pleasure. The superb objects of curiosity within the Cathedral were shown for separate fees. There were seven, I think; and any one could be seen independently of the rest for a few pence. The whole amount was a trifle; fourteen pence, I think. But we were followed by a sort of persecution—"Would we not see the bell"? "Would we not see the model"? "Surely we would not go away without visiting the Whispering Gallery"?[80]—solicitations which troubled the silence and sanctity of the place, and must tease [*irritate*] others as it then teased us, who wished to contemplate in quiet this great monument of the national grandeur, which was at that time beginning to take a station also in the land as a depository for the dust of her heroes. What struck us most in the whole interior of the

[79]**Then cherish … door**: Alluding to Hebrews 13:1–2: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

[80]**Whispering Gallery**: this runs around the bottom of the dome, just below the windows, and is famous for its acoustics: someone who whispers to the wall can be heard distinctly on the other side of the dome, over 100 feet away.

pile was the view taken from the spot immediately under the dome, being, in fact, the very same which, five years afterwards, received the remains of Lord Nelson.[81] In one of the aisles going off from this centre, we saw the flags of France, Spain, and Holland, the whole trophies of the war, swinging pompously [*with due ceremony*], and expanding their massy draperies, slowly and heavily, in the upper gloom, as they were swept at intervals by currents of air. At this moment we were provoked by the showman at our elbow renewing his vile iteration of "Twopence, gentlemen; no more than twopence for each"; and so on until we left the place. The same complaint has been often made as to Westminster Abbey. Where the wrong lies, or where it commences, I know not. Certainly I nor any man can have a right to expect that the poor men who attended us should give up their time for nothing, or even to be angry with them for a sort of persecution, on the degree of which possibly might depend the comfort of their own families. Thoughts of famishing children at home leave little room for nice regards of delicacy abroad. The individuals, therefore, might or might not be blameable. But in any case, the system is palpably wrong. The nation is entitled to a free enjoyment of its own public monuments; not free only in the sense of being gratuitous, but free also from the molestation of *showmen*, with their imperfect knowledge and their vulgar sentiment.

3.20 Charles Dickens: The Building of a Railway

Railways originated in England in the 1820s (after many experiments), and after two decades the countryside changed dramatically under their influence. The London and Birmingham Railway, whose construction is graphically described here by ***Charles Dickens*** *(1812–1870), was engineered by Robert Stephenson and was the first line to connect London with any other city. It eventually opened in 1838. Dickens describes the chaos of its erection in Camden Town, a suburb of London that he knew as a schoolboy. He emphasizes that its construction means the wreckage of an old order: not only are houses demolished or undermined but bridges lead nowhere, streets are impassable, and normal rights of way are blocked. Nevertheless, from out of this hideous inferno (he wryly imagines) civilization will advance in a smoother and improved form. For further a note on Dickens see* [**3.3 HN**].

From Dombey and Son *(1848), ch. 6*

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown

[81] **five years … Nelson**: Nelson was buried in St Paul's in 1806. This would imply that De Quincey wrote the essay in 1801, which seems unlikely.

up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel [**3.14**, n.61] towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcases of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.

In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement.

3.21 Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank: The Great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace

The Great Exhibition, held from May to October 1851, was the largest (if not the first) of World Fairs: an exhibition of industry, technology, and other fields of science, fine arts, and culture. The works of many nations were on display, but the primary motivation was to show the world the dominance of English invention and workmanship. The manager of the enterprise, which was under royal patronage, was Henry Cole (1808–1882), an enthusiastic promoter of English industrial design. The exhibition was housed in a vast glass structure, known as the Crystal Palace, in Hyde Park. Designed by Joseph Paxton (1803–1865), it was 1851 feet (564 metres) long and 454 feet (138 metres) wide, and built entirely of plate glass. It housed roughly 100,000 objects from all over the world.

***Henry Mayhew** (1812–1887) and **George Cruikshank** (1792–1878) in their novel* The World's Show *whimsically describe the adventures of the Sandboys family on their way from Buttermere to London to see the Exhibition, but the authors become more serious when they discuss the art of the English workmen and how the display of their craftsmanship means more to them than an increase in wages, since it both educates and ennobles them—by no means a rare sentiment in the mid-nineteenth century.*

From The World's Show, 1851, or, The Adventures of Mr and Mrs Sandboys and Family, Who Came up to London to 'Enjoy Themselves,' and to See the Great Exhibition *(1851), Chs. 12 and 13*

The long-looked-for first of May, 1851, had at length arrived, and the morning was ushered in with merry peals from almost every steeple; afar off the drone of the thousand bells sounded like the boom of a huge gong—the signal, as it were, for the swarming of the Great Hive.

For miles round all wore a holiday aspect; the work-people with clean and smiling faces, and decked out in all the bright colours of their Sunday attire, were up and about shortly after daybreak, and, with their bundle of provisions on their arms, were soon seen streaming along the road, like so many living rays, converging towards the Crystal focus of the World.

It was the great Jubilee of art and industry, to which almost every corner of the earth had sent some token of its skill and brotherly feeling, and to which the inhabitants of the most distant climes had come, each to gaze at the science and handicraft of the other. Never was labour—whether mental or manual, whether the craft of the hand or of the brain—so much honoured—the first great recognition, perhaps, of the artistic qualities of the artisan […]

The Great Exhibition is a higher boon to labour than a general advance of wages. An increase of pay might have brought the working men a larger share of creature comforts, but high feeding, unfortunately, is not high thinking nor high feeling.

Anything which tends to elevate the automatic operation of the mere labourer to the dignity of an artistic process, tends to confer on the working classes the greatest possible benefit.

Such appears to be the probable issue of the Great Exhibition!

Nor can we conceive a nobler pride than that which must be felt by working men when they behold arranged all around them the several trophies and triumphs of labour over the elements of the whole material universe. The sight cannot fail to inspire them with a sense of their position in the State, and to increase their self-respect in the same ratio as it must tend to increase the respect of all others for their vocation […]

The road to the Crystal Palace had for a long time been an extraordinary scene. Extensive trains of wagons stretched far away, like an Eastern caravan, each waiting for its turn to be unloaded, monopolized one side of the carriageway. Omnibuses,[82] with their roofs crowded with people, went dashing by, while carts laden with building materials crept leisurely along.

At almost every one of the public-houses some huge flag was flying from the upper windows, and around the doors were groups of men and soldiers either about to enter or depart. Along the edge of the footpath stood hawkers, shouting out the attractions of their wares—some had trays filled with bright silvery-looking medals of the Exhibition—others, pictures of it printed in gold on "gelatine cards"[83]—while others had merely barrows of nuts, baskets of oranges or trucks of the omnipresent penny ginger-beer.

[82] **omnibuses**: horse-drawn buses (from Latin *omnibus*, 'for all').

[83] **gelatine cards**: cheap cards, used as mementos, on which the outlines of the Crystal Palace were delineated in gold against the deep purple background of the card.

Groups of foreigners, their beards yellow with dust, walked along with their hands stuck in their pockets, so as to make their full pantaloons even fuller than ordinary; and as the omnibuses stopped to pick up or set down their passengers, parties of Germans or Frenchmen were heard jabbering loudly within. Along Rotten Row [**3.43**, n.169] endless troops of equestrians galloped noiselessly along on the soft loose ground at the rear of the Crystal Palace—in front of it an interminable line of carriages drawled slowly past, and while some of those within thrust their heads out at the windows, others leant back, so as to be able to see the height or length of the giant building.

3.22 John Ruskin: The Crystal Palace

John Ruskin *approves of the Great Exhibition as a national museum, but as an architectural historian he has very different ideas on the Crystal Palace from those of its designer Joseph Paxton and the general public. He declared in* Præterita *(1885) that it "possessed no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys." For a note on Ruskin see* [**3.11 HN**].

From The Opening of the Crystal Palace Considered in Some of Its Relations to the Prospects of Art *(1854)*

It is indeed impossible to limit in imagination the beneficent results which may follow from the undertaking thus happily begun. For the first time in the history of the world, a national museum is formed in which a whole nation is interested; formed on a scale which permits the exhibition of monuments of art in unbroken symmetry, and of the productions of nature in unthwarted growth, formed under the auspices of science which can hardly err, and of wealth which can hardly be exhausted; and placed in the close neighbourhood of a metropolis overflowing with a population weary of labour yet thirsting for knowledge, where contemplation may be consistent with rest, and instruction with enjoyment. It is impossible, I repeat, to estimate the influence of such an institution on the minds of the working classes […]

In Mr Laing's[84] speech at the opening of the Palace he declares that "*an entirely novel order of architecture,* producing, by means of unrivalled mechanical ingenuity the most marvellous and beautiful effects, sprang into existence to provide a building." In these words the speaker is not merely giving utterance to his own feelings. He is expressing the popular view of the facts, nor that a view merely popular, but one which has been encouraged by nearly all the professors of art of our time.

[84]**Mr Laing**: Samuel **Laing** (1812–1897) was a railway magnate and chairman of the Crystal Palace Company.

It is to this, then, that our Doric and Palladian pride is at last reduced! We have vaunted the divinity of the Greek ideal—we have plumed ourselves on the purity of our Italian taste—we have cast our whole souls into the proportions of pillars and the relations of orders—and behold the end! Our taste, thus exalted and disciplined, is dazzled by the lustre of a few rows of panes of glass; and the first principles of architectural sublimity, so far sought, are found all the while to have consisted merely in sparkling and in space.

Let it not be thought that I would depreciate (were it possible to depreciate) the mechanical ingenuity which has been displayed in the erection of the Crystal Palace, or that I underrate the effect which its vastness may continue to produce on the popular imagination. But mechanical ingenuity is *not* the essence either of painting or architecture, and largeness of dimension does not necessarily involve nobleness of design. There is assuredly as much ingenuity required to build a screw frigate, or a tubular bridge, as a hall of glass;—all these are works characteristic of the age; and all, in their several ways, deserve our highest admiration, but not admiration of the kind that is rendered to poetry or to art.

3.23 Thomas de Quincey: The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Destroyed

The Theatre Royal in Drury Lane was burnt down in spectacular fashion in 1809. ***Thomas De Quincey*** *(see* [**3.19 HN**]*) muses on the public reaction to public fires, giving this one as an example. De Quincey's essay "On Murder, Considered As One of the Fine Arts' was first published in* Blackwood's Magazine in 1827. *It comprised a fictional address in satirical vein to a Gentleman's Club and was so popular that he wrote a sequel and later a "Postscript," from which this excerpt is taken.*

From "On Murder, Considered as One of the Fine Arts": "Postscript" (1854)

[…] But, on the other hand, the tendency to a critical or aesthetic valuation of fires and murders is universal. If you are summoned to the spectacle of a great fire, undoubtedly the first impulse is—to assist in putting it out. But that field of exertion is very limited, and is soon filled by regular professional people, trained and equipped for the service. In the case of a fire which is operating upon private property, pity for a neighbour's calamity checks us at first in treating the affair as a scenic spectacle. But perhaps the fire may be confined to public buildings. And in any case, after we have paid our tribute of regret to the affair, considered as a calamity, inevitably, and without restraint, we go on to consider it as a stage spectacle. Exclamations of—How grand! How magnificent! arise in a sort of rapture from the crowd. For instance, when Drury Lane was burned down in the first decennium [*decade*] of this century,

the falling in of the roof was signalized by a mimic suicide of the protecting Apollo that surmounted and crested the centre of this roof. The god was stationary with his lyre, and seemed looking down upon the fiery ruins that were so rapidly approaching him. Suddenly the supporting timbers below him gave way; a convulsive heave of the billowing flames seemed for a moment to raise the statue; and then, as if on some impulse of despair, the presiding deity appeared not to fall, but to throw himself into the fiery deluge, for he went down head foremost; and in all respects, the descent had the air of a voluntary act. What followed? From every one of the bridges over the river, and from other open areas which commanded the spectacle, there arose a sustained uproar of admiration and sympathy.

3.24 Benjamin Disraeli: A View of Politicians

*In **Benjamin Disraeli**'s novel the hero Charles Egremont has become interested in the Chartist movement (see* [**3.41**]*, n.156) and how its cause can be advanced in Parliament. In contrast to Egremont's faith in the Parliamentary system, Lady St Julians and her 'fine lady' companions believe politicians lack integrity and are flattered to be asked to parties, after which they will vote according to their hostess's wishes. The imperious Lady St Julians' contemptuous view of politicians, and her belief that she and her circle can govern by "social influences" are expressed with comic forthrightness.*

From Sybil, or, The Two Nations *(1845), Vol. 1, Bk 4, ch. 3*

[…] "People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage, and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well, then, like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader's where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, whom they little think in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. Well, then, of course such people are entirely in one's power, if one only had time and inclination to notice them. You can do anything with them. Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner and if necessary they will rescind them; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names, and they will not only change their principles or desert their party for you, but subscribe their fortunes if necessary and lay down their lives in your service."

MIDDLE CLASS LIFE

3.25 Anthony Trollope: Publicans and Sinners

Anthony Trollope *(1815–1882) began his career as a clerk in the Post Office and was steadily promoted, becoming an influential civil servant. He was an enormously prolific writer, producing (among other works) nearly 50 novels, the best known of which are the Barsetshire series (1855–*1867*) and the Palliser novels (1864–1880). In* The Warden, *the mild and unassuming Reverend Septimus Harding has been accused of malpractice as Warden of St Hiram's Hospital in Barchester. Conscience-stricken, Mr Harding travels to London to see the Attorney-General, Sir Abraham Haphazard, to ask his advice, with a view to resigning his post. While awaiting an appointment with Haphazard, the ingenuous and unworldly Mr Harding eats in a distinctly working-class supper house and relaxes in a cigar divan, both of which are entirely new experiences for him.*

From The Warden *(1855), ch. 16*

He found the house easily […] He was rather daunted by the huge quantity of fish which he saw in the window. There were barrels of oysters, hecatombs[85] of lobsters, a few tremendous-looking crabs, and a tub full of pickled salmon; not, however, being aware of any connection between shellfish and iniquity,[86] he entered, and modestly asked a slatternly woman, who was picking oysters out of a great watery reservoir, whether he could have a mutton chop and a potato.

The woman looked somewhat surprised, but answered in the affirmative, and a slipshod girl ushered him into a long back room, filled with boxes for the accommodation of parties, in one of which he took his seat. In a more miserably forlorn place he could not have found himself: the room smelt of fish, and sawdust, and stale tobacco smoke, with a slight taint of escaped gas; everything was rough, and dirty, and disreputable. The cloth which they put before him was abominable: the knives and forks were bruised, and hacked, and filthy; and everything was impregnated with fish. He had one comfort, however: he was quite alone; there was no one there to look on his dismay; nor was it probable that anyone would come to do so. It was a London supper house. About one o'clock at night the place would be lively enough, but at the present time his seclusion was as deep as it had been in the abbey.

[85] **hecatombs**: huge public sacrifices of animals.

[86] **shellfish … iniquity**: There was indeed a connection (apart from the Biblical prohibition on eating **shellfish** in Leviticus 11:10): such supper houses provided entertainment in the late evening for the working-classes, which included both **shellfish** and the supposed **iniquity** of commercial sex.

In about half an hour the untidy girl, not yet dressed for her evening labours, brought him his chop and potatoes […]

His chop and potatoes, however, were eatable, and having got over as best he might the disgust created by the knives and forks, he contrived to swallow his dinner. He was not much disturbed: one young man, with pale face and watery fishlike eyes, wearing his hat ominously on one side, did come in and stare at him, and ask the girl, audibly enough, "Who that old cock was"; but the annoyance went no further, and the warden was left seated on his wooden bench in peace, endeavouring to distinguish the different scents arising from lobsters, oysters, and salmon. Unknowing as Mr Harding was in the ways of London, he felt that he had somehow selected an ineligible dining house, and that he had better leave it […]

Mr Harding had not a much correcter notion of a cigar divan[87] than he had of a London dinner house, but he was desperately in want of rest, and went as he was directed. He thought he must have made some mistake when he found himself in a cigar shop, but the man behind the counter saw immediately that he was a stranger, and understood what he wanted. "One shilling, sir – thank ye, sir – cigar, sir? – ticket for coffee, sir – you'll only have to call the waiter. Up those stairs, if you please, sir. Better take the cigar, sir – you can always give it to a friend, you know. Well, sir, thank ye, sir –as you are so good, I'll smoke it myself." And so Mr Harding ascended to the divan, with his ticket for coffee, but minus the cigar.

The place seemed much more suitable to his requirements than the room in which he had dined: there was, to be sure, a strong smell of tobacco, to which he was not accustomed; but after the shellfish, the tobacco did not seem disagreeable. There were quantities of books, and long rows of sofas. What on earth could be more luxurious than a sofa, a book, and a cup of coffee? An old waiter came up to him, with a couple of magazines and an evening paper. Was ever anything so civil? Would he have a cup of coffee, or would he prefer sherbet?[88] Sherbet! Was he absolutely in an Eastern divan, with the slight addition of all the London periodicals? He had, however, an idea that sherbet should be drunk sitting cross-legged, and as he was not quite up to this, he ordered the coffee.

The coffee came, and was unexceptionable. Why, this divan was a paradise! The civil old waiter suggested to him a game of chess: though a chess player, he was not equal to this, so he declined, and putting up his weary legs on the sofa, leisurely sipped his coffee, and turned over the pages of his *Blackwood*.[89] He might have been so engaged for about an hour, for the old

[87] **cigar divan**: "a smoking-room furnished with lounges, in connection with a cigar-shop" (*OED*).

[88] **sherbet**: properly, a cooling Eastern drink with fruit and sugar; here, an effervescent drink made with sugar and bicarbonate of soda.

[89] ***Blackwood***: *Blackwood's Magazine*, published monthly (1817–1980).

waiter enticed him to a second cup of coffee, when a musical clock began to play. Mr Harding then closed his magazine, keeping his place with his finger, and lay, listening with closed eyes to the clock […]

He was fatigued, and slept soundly for some time.

3.26 Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "Ode Sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition" (1862)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson *(1809–1892) was appointed poet laureate in 1850 and thereafter published many poems on royal and public occasions, while maintaining his output of lyrical and narrative poems, notably those on Arthurian subjects. This* Ode, *however, was occasioned by the International Exhibition of 1861. It was written by request and designed to be sung by a choir of 4000 thousand voices. Albert, the Prince Consort, who had been the moving force behind the International Exhibition, died soon after it opened, and consequently Tennyson introduced a tribute to him in Stanza II. For a further note on Tennyson see* [**3.6**].

I.

Uplift a thousand voices full and sweet,
In this wide hall with earth's inventions stored,
And praise the invisible universal Lord,
Who lets once more in peace the nations meet,
Where Science, Art, and Labour have outpoured
Their myriad horns of plenty at our feet.

II.

O silent father of our Kings to be
Mourned in this golden hour of jubilee,
For this, for all, we weep our thanks to thee!

III.

The world-compelling plan was thine, –
And, lo! the long laborious miles
Of Palace; lo! the giant aisles,
Rich in model and design;
Harvest-tool and husbandry,
Loom and wheel and enginery,
Secrets of the sullen mine,
Steel and gold, and corn and wine,
Fabric rough, or fairy-fine,
Sunny tokens of the Line,
Polar marvels, and a feast
Of wonder, out of West and East,
And shapes and hues of Art divine!
All of beauty, all of use,

That one fair planet can produce.
Brought from under every star,
Blown from over every main,
And mixt, as life is mixt with pain,
The works of peace with works of war.

IV.

Is the goal so far away?
Far, how far no tongue can say,
Let us dream our dream to-day.

V.

O ye, the wise who think, the wise who reign,
From growing commerce loose her latest chain,
And let the fair white-winged peacemaker fly
To happy havens under all the sky,
And mix the seasons and the golden hours,
Till each man finds his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood,
Breaking their mailed fleets and armed towers,
And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
And gathering all the fruits of peace and crowned with all her flowers.

3.27 Charles Dickens: A London Hackney-Coach

Charles Dickens *(1812–1870) began his writing career as a journalist. From 1833 he was publishing short pieces, which he later called "Sketches," in a variety of magazines and newspapers. Later he brought these together in one volume in 1839. All but one of the sixty or so sketches are set in London. (For more on Dickens and his work see* **HNs** *to* [**3.3**, **3.8**, **3.16**, **3.20**, **3.31**, **3.32** *and* **3.40**].)

Note that a hackney-coach was a horse-drawn carriage let out for hire, whereas a hackney-cab was a new-fangled precursor of the modern taxi.

From Sketches by Boz*, 1836–1837*

We maintain that hackney-coaches, properly so called, belong solely to the metropolis. We may be told, that there are hackney-coach stands in Edinburgh; and not to go quite so far for a contradiction to our position, we may be reminded that Liverpool, Manchester, "and other large towns" (as the Parliamentary phrase goes), have *their* hackney-coach stands. We readily concede to these places the possession of certain vehicles, which may look almost as dirty, and even go almost as slowly, as London hackney-coaches; but that they have the slightest claim to compete with the metropolis, either in point of stands, drivers, or cattle, we indignantly deny.

Take a regular, ponderous, rickety, London hackney-coach of the old school, and let any man have the boldness to assert, if he can, that he ever beheld any object on the face of the earth which at all resembles it, unless, indeed, it were another hackney-coach of the same date. We have recently observed on certain stands, and we say it with deep regret, rather dapper green chariots, and coaches of polished yellow, with four wheels of the same colour as the coach, whereas it is perfectly notorious to every one who has studied the subject, that every wheel ought to be of a different colour, and a different size. These are innovations, and, like other miscalled improvements, awful signs of the restlessness of the public mind, and the little respect paid to our time-honoured institutions. Why should hackney-coaches be clean? Our ancestors found them dirty, and left them so. Why should we, with a feverish wish to "keep moving," desire to roll along at the rate of six miles an hour, while they were content to rumble over the stones at four? These are solemn considerations. Hackney-coaches are part and parcel of the law of the land; they were settled by the Legislature; plated and numbered by the wisdom of Parliament.

Then why have they been swamped by cabs and omnibuses [*horse-drawn buses*]? Or why should people be allowed to ride quickly for eight-pence a mile, after Parliament had come to the solemn decision that they should pay a shilling a mile for riding slowly? We pause for a reply;—and, having no chance of getting one, begin a fresh paragraph.

Our acquaintance with hackney-coach stands is of long standing. We are a walking book of fares, feeling ourselves, half bound, as it were, to be always in the right on contested points. We know all the regular watermen within three miles of Covent-garden by sight, and should be almost tempted to believe that all the hackney-coach horses in that district knew us by sight too, if one-half of them were not blind. We take great interest in hackney-coaches, but we seldom drive, having a knack of turning ourselves over when we attempt to do so. We are as great friends to horses, hackney-coach and otherwise, as the renowned Mr. Martin[90] of costermonger notoriety, and yet we never ride. We keep no horse, but a clothes-horse; enjoy no saddle so much as a saddle of mutton; and, following our own inclinations, have never followed the hounds. Leaving these fleeter means of getting over the ground, or of depositing oneself upon it, to those who like them, by hackney-coach stands we take our stand.

There is a hackney-coach stand under the very window at which we are writing; there is only one coach on it now, but it is a fair specimen of the class of vehicles to which we have alluded—a great, lumbering, square concern of a dingy yellow colour (like a bilious brunette), with very small glasses, but very large frames; the panels are ornamented with a faded coat of arms,

[90]**Mr. Martin**: possibly the **Mr. Martin** of Martin versus Solomons, in John Wight, *More Mornings at Bow Street*, London: James Robins, 1827.

in shape something like a dissected bat, the axletree is red, and the majority of the wheels are green. The box is partially covered by an old great-coat, with a multiplicity of capes, and some extraordinary-looking clothes; and the straw, with which the canvas cushion is stuffed, is sticking up in several places, as if in rivalry of the hay, which is peeping through the chinks in the boot. The horses, with drooping heads, and each with a mane and tail as scanty and straggling as those of a worn-out rocking-horse, are standing patiently on some damp straw, occasionally wincing, and rattling the harness; and now and then, one of them lifts his mouth to the ear of his companion, as if he were saying, in a whisper, that he should like to assassinate the coachman. The coachman himself is in the watering-house; and the waterman, with his hands forced into his pockets as far as they can possibly go, is dancing the "double shuffle," in front of the pump, to keep his feet warm.

The servant-girl, with the pink ribbons, at No. 5, opposite, suddenly opens the street-door, and four small children forthwith rush out, and scream "Coach!" with all their might and main. The waterman darts from the pump, seizes the horses by their respective bridles, and drags them, and the coach too, round to the house, shouting all the time for the coachman at the very top, or rather very bottom of his voice, for it is a deep bass growl. A response is heard from the tap-room; the coachman, in his wooden-soled shoes, makes the street echo again as he runs across it; and then there is such a struggling, and backing, and grating of the kennel, to get the coach-door opposite the house-door, that the children are in perfect ecstasies of delight. What a commotion! The old lady, who has been stopping there for the last month, is going back to the country. Out comes box after box, and one side of the vehicle is filled with luggage in no time; the children get into everybody's way, and the youngest, who has upset himself in his attempts to carry an umbrella, is borne off wounded and kicking. The youngsters disappear, and a short pause ensues, during which the old lady is, no doubt, kissing them all round in the back parlour. She appears at last, followed by her married daughter, all the children, and both the servants, who, with the joint assistance of the coachman and waterman, manage to get her safely into the coach. A cloak is handed in, and a little basket, which we could almost swear contains a small black bottle, and a paper of sandwiches. Up go the steps, bang goes the door, "Golden-cross, Charing-cross, Tom," says the waterman; "Good-bye, grandma," cry the children, off jingles the coach at the rate of three miles an hour, and the mamma and children retire into the house, with the exception of one little villain, who runs up the street at the top of his speed, pursued by the servant; not ill-pleased to have such an opportunity of displaying her attractions. She brings him back, and, after casting two or three gracious glances across the way, which are either intended for us or the potboy (we are not quite certain which), shuts the door, and the hackney-coach stand is again at a standstill.

We have been frequently amused with the intense delight with which 'a servant of all work,' who is sent for a coach, deposits herself inside; and the unspeakable gratification which boys, who have been despatched on a similar errand, appear to derive from mounting the box. But we never recollect to have been more amused with a hackney-coach party, than one we saw early the other morning in Tottenham-court-road. It was a wedding-party, and emerged from one of the inferior streets near Fitzroy-square.[91] There were the bride, with a thin white dress, and a great red face; and the bridesmaid, a little, dumpy, good-humoured young woman, dressed, of course, in the same appropriate costume; and the bridegroom and his chosen friend, in blue coats, yellow waist-coats, white trousers, and Berlin gloves[92] to match. They stopped at the corner of the street, and called a coach with an air of indescribable dignity. The moment they were in, the bridesmaid threw a red shawl, which she had, no doubt, brought on purpose, negligently over the number on the door, evidently to delude pedestrians into the belief that the hackney-coach was a private carriage; and away they went, perfectly satisfied that the imposition was successful, and quite unconscious that there was a great staring number stuck up behind, on a plate as large as a schoolboy's slate. A shilling a mile!—the ride was worth five, at least, to them.

What an interesting book a hackney-coach might produce, if it could carry as much in its head as it does in its body! The autobiography of a broken-down hackney-coach, would surely be as amusing as the autobiography of a broken-down hackneyed dramatist; and it might tell as much of its travels *with* the pole, as others have of their expeditions *to* it. How many stories might be related of the different people it had conveyed on matters of business or profit—pleasure or pain! And how many melancholy tales of the same people at different periods! The country-girl—the showy, over-dressed woman—the drunken prostitute! The raw apprentice—the dissipated spendthrift—the thief!

Talk of cabs! Cabs are all very well in cases of expedition, when it's a matter of neck or nothing, life or death, your temporary home or your long one. But, besides a cab's lacking that gravity of deportment which so peculiarly distinguishes a hackney-coach, let it never be forgotten that a cab is a thing of yesterday, and that he never was anything better. A hackney-cab has always been a hackney-cab, from his first entry into life; whereas a hackney-coach is a remnant of past gentility, a victim to fashion, a hanger-on of an old English family, wearing their arms, and, in days of yore, escorted by men wearing their livery, stripped of his finery, and thrown upon the world, like a once-smart footman when he is no longer sufficiently juvenile for his office, progressing lower and lower in the scale of four-wheeled degradation, until at last it comes to—*a stand*!

[91] **Fitzroy-square**: Georgian Square located in Fitzrovia.

[92] **Berlin gloves**: knitted gloves of fine dyed 'Berlin' wool.

3.28 Charles Lamb: "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple"

Charles Lamb *(1775–1834) was born in London. His father was a clerk to Samuel Salt, a lawyer in Crown Office Row in the Inner Temple, and Charles was brought up there. He was educated at Christ's Hospital, and afterwards worked at East India House until 1825. He wrote poems and plays, and, with his sister Mary,* Tales from Shakespeare *(1807), adaptations to make Shakespeare accessible to the young. His most enduring works, however, are his two collections of essays,* Essays of Elia, *published in 1823 and 1833, 'Elia' being his authorial pseudonym.*

From Essays of Elia, *2nd Series, 1833*

I was born, and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple.[93] Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years, what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places?—These are of my oldest recollections. I repeat, to this day, no verses to myself more frequently, or with kindlier emotion, than those of Spenser,[94] where he speaks of this spot.

> There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,
> The which on Themmes brode aged back doth ride,
> Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,
> There whylome wont the Templer knights to bide,
> Till they decayd through pride.

Indeed, it is the most elegant spot in the metropolis. What a transition for a countryman visiting London for the first time—the passing from the crowded Strand or Fleet-street, by unexpected avenues, into its magnificent ample squares, its classic green recesses! What a cheerful, liberal look hath that portion of it, which, from three sides, overlooks the greater garden: that goodly pile of building strong, albeit of Paper hight,[95] confronting, with massy contrast, the lighter, older, more fantastically shrouded one, named of Harcourt, with the cheerful Crown-office Row (place of my kindly engendure), right opposite the stately stream, which washes the garden-foot with

[93] **Temple**: home of the four Inns of Court, close to the Royal Court of Justice. The Inns of Court are the professional associations for barristers in England and Wales, providing accommodation and chambers, and (before the rise of tertiary legal studies in the C18th) the main site for legal training.

[94] **Spenser**: see [**1.14**]. These lines are from "Prothalamion" 132–3 (1596; Spenser 1966, 602).

[95] **Of Paper hight**: called 'Paper.' Paper Buildings are a set of chambers located in the Inner Temple, built in 1609 from timber, lath and plaster, a construction method known as 'paperwork'.

her yet scarcely trade-polluted waters, and seems but just weaned from her Twickenham Naiades! a man would give something to have been born in such places. What a collegiate aspect has that fine Elizabethan hall, where the fountain plays, which I have made to rise and fall, how many times! to the astoundment of the young urchins, my contemporaries, who, not being able to guess at its recondite machinery, were almost tempted to hail the wondrous work as magic! What an antique air had the now almost effaced sun-dials, with their moral inscriptions, seeming coevals with that Time which they measured, and to take their revelations of its flight immediately from heaven, holding correspondence with the fountain of light! How would the dark line steal imperceptibly on, watched by the eye of childhood, eager to detect its movement, never catched, nice as an evanescent cloud—or the first arrests of sleep!

> Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand
> Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived[96]

What a dead thing is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure, and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian gardens. Why is it almost every where vanished? If its business-use be superseded by more elaborate inventions, its moral uses, its beauty, might have pleaded for its continuance. It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sun-set, of temperance, and good-hours. It was the primitive clock, the horologe of the first world. Adam could scarce have missed it in Paradise. It was the measure appropriate for sweet plants and flowers to spring by, for the birds to apportion their silver warblings by, for flocks to pasture and be led to fold by. The shepherd "carved it out quaintly in the sun"; and, turning philosopher by the very occupation, provided it with mottos more touching than tombstones. It was a pretty device of the gardener, recorded by Marvell, who, in the days of artificial gardening, made a dial out of herbs and flowers.

Lamb here includes Andrew Marvell's poem "The Garden," then returns to his account of the Temple grounds.

The artificial fountains of the metropolis are, in like manner, fast vanishing. Most of them are dried up, or bricked over. Yet, where one is left, as in that little green nook behind the South Sea House, what a freshness it gives to the dreary pile! Four little winged marble boys used to play their virgin fancies, spouting out ever fresh streams from their innocent-wanton lips, in the square of Lincoln's-inn, when I was no bigger than they were figured. They are gone, and the spring choked up. The fashion, they tell me, is gone by,

[96] **Ah! yet … perceived!**: from Shakespeare's Sonnet 104.

and these things are esteemed childish. Why not then gratify children, by letting them stand? Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. They are awakening images to them at least. Why must every thing smack of man, and mannish? Is the world grown up? Is childhood dead? Or is there not in the bosoms of the wisest and the best some of the child's heart left, to respond to its earliest enchantments? The figures were grotesque. Are the stiff-wigged living figures, that still flitter and chatter about that area, less gothic in appearance? or is the splutter of their hot rhetoric one half so refreshing and innocent as the little cool playful streams those exploded cherubs uttered?

They have lately gothicised the entrance to the Inner Temple-hall, and the library front, to assimilate them, I suppose, to the body of the hall, which they do not at all resemble. What is become of the winged horse that stood over the former? a stately arms! and who has removed those frescoes of the Virtues, which Italianized the end of the Paper-buildings?—my first hint of allegory! They must account to me for these things, which I miss so greatly.

The terrace is, indeed, left, which we used to call the parade; but the traces are passed away of the footsteps which made its pavement awful! It is become common and profane. The old benchers had it almost sacred to themselves, in the forepart of the day at least. They might not be sided or jostled. Their air and dress asserted the parade. You left wide spaces betwixt you, when you passed them. We walk on even terms with their successors. The roguish eye of J—ll, ever ready to be delivered of a jest, almost invites a stranger to vie a repartee with it.

Lamb proceeds to describe residents of the Temple who figured large in his youth – Thomas Coventry, Samuel Salt[97] *and Lovel, the latter a picture of Lamb's father. Lamb then concludes:*

I have done injustice to the soft shade of Samuel Salt. See what it is to trust to imperfect memory, and the erring notices of childhood! Yet I protest I always thought that he had been a bachelor! This gentleman, R. N. informs me, married young, and losing his lady in child-bed, within the first year of their union, fell into a deep melancholy, from the effects of which, probably, he never thoroughly recovered. In what a new light does this place his rejection (O call it by a gentler name!) of mild Susan P—, unravelling into beauty certain peculiarities of this very shy and retiring character—Henceforth let no one receive the narratives of Elia for true records! They are, in truth, but shadows of fact—verisimilitudes, not verities—or sitting but upon the remote edges and outskirts of history. He is no such honest chronicler as R. N., and would have done better perhaps to have consulted that gentleman, before he sent these incondite[98] reminiscences to press. But the worthy

[97] **Samuel Salt**: **Salt** was Lamb's father's employer.

[98] **incondite**: poorly constructed or composed.

sub-treasurer—who respects his old and his new masters—would but have been puzzled at the indecorous liberties of Elia. The good man wots not, peradventure, of the license which Magazines have arrived at in this plain-speaking age, or hardly dreams of their existence beyond the Gentleman's[99]—his furthest monthly excursions in this nature having been long confined to the holy ground of honest Urban's obituary. May it be long before his own name shall help to swell those columns of unenvied flattery!—Meantime, O ye New Benchers of the Inner Temple, cherish him kindly, for he is himself the kindliest of human creatures. Should infirmities over-take him—he is yet in green and vigorous senility—make allowances for them, remembering that "ye yourselves are old". So may the Winged Horse, our ancient badge and cognisance, still flourish, so may future Hookers[100] and Seldens[101] illustrate your church and chambers! so may the sparrows, in default of more melodious quiristers, [*choristers*] unpoisoned hop about your walks! so may the fresh-coloured and cleanly nursery maid, who, by leave, airs her playful charge in your stately gardens, drop her prettiest blushing curtsy as ye pass, reductive of juvenescent emotion! so may the younkers of this generation eye you, pacing your stately terrace, with the same superstitious veneration, with which the child Elia gazed on the Old Worthies that solemnized the parade before ye!

3.29 Wilkie Collins: A Child's Sunday in London

William Wilkie Collins *(1824–1896) was born and lived for most of his life in Marylebone in London, the son of a painter. He was educated there and then travelled with his family in Italy, 1836–1838. He published a biography of his father in 1848 but thereafter wrote fiction, his most famous works being* The Woman in White *(1860) and* The Moonstone *(1868). For several years he was a contributor to Dickens's magazine* Household Words, *where he published his third novel,* Hide and Seek, *in 1854. (See* [**3.8**] *for the extract from* Little Dorrit, *which this passage clearly influenced.)*

From Hide and Seek *(1854, revised 1857), ch. 1.*

At a quarter to one o'clock, on a wet Sunday afternoon, in November 1837[102] Samuel Snoxell, page to Mr. Zachary Thorpe, of Baregrove [*Belgrave*] Square, London, left the area[103] gate with three umbrellas under

[99] **Gentleman's**: the **Gentleman's** Magazine; published monthly from 1733 to 1922.

[100] **Hookers**: Richard **Hooker**, 1554–1600, author of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.*

[101] **Seldens**: John **Selden**, 1584–1654, distinguished English jurist.

[102] **November 1837**: In 1836 Collins's friend Dickens under the pseudonym Timothy Sparks had fiercely attacked the advocates of stricter Sabbath Day Laws in his pamphlet *Sunday Under Three Heads.*

[103] **area**: "a sunken court giving access to the basement of a house, separated from the pavement by railings, with a flight of steps providing access" (*OED*).

his arm, to meet his master and mistress at the church door, on the conclusion of morning service. Snoxell had been specially directed by the housemaid to distribute his three umbrellas in the following manner: the new silk umbrella was to be given to Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe; the old silk umbrella was to be handed to Mr. Goodworth, Mrs. Thorpe's father; and the heavy gingham was to be kept by Snoxell himself, for the special protection of "Master Zack", aged six years, and the only child of Mr. Thorpe. Furnished with these instructions, the page set forth on his way to the church.

The morning had been fine for November; but before midday the clouds had gathered, the rain had begun, and the inveterate fog of the season had closed dingily over the wet streets, far and near. The garden in the middle of Baregrove Square—with its close-cut turf, its vacant beds, its bran-new rustic seats, its withered young trees that had not yet grown as high as the railings around them—seemed to be absolutely rotting away in yellow mist and softly-steady rain, and was deserted even by the cats. All blinds were drawn down for the most part over all windows; what light came from the sky came like light seen through dusty glass; the grim brown hue of the brick houses looked more dirtily mournful than ever; the smoke from the chimney-pots was lost mysteriously in deepening superincumbent fog; the muddy gutters gurgled; the heavy rain-drops dripped into empty areas audibly. No object great or small, no out-of-door litter whatever appeared anywhere, to break the dismal uniformity of line and substance in the perspective of the square. No living being moved over the watery pavement, save the solitary Snoxell. He plodded on into a Crescent, and still the awful Sunday solitude spread grimly humid all around him. He next entered a street with some closed shops in it; and here, at last, some consoling signs of human life attracted his attention. He now saw the crossing-sweeper [see **Introduction 3**, n.8] of the district (off duty till church came out) smoking a pipe under the covered way that led to a mews. He detected, through half closed shutters, a chemist's apprentice yawning over a large book. He passed a navigator, an ostler, and two costermongers wandering wearily backwards and forwards before a closed public-house door.[104] He heard the heavy "clop clop" of thickly-booted feet advancing behind him, and a stern voice growling, "Now then! be off with you, or you'll get locked up!"—and, looking round, saw an orange-girl,[105] guilty of having obstructed an empty pavement by sitting on the curb-stone, driven along before a policeman,[106] who was followed

[104]**crossing-sweeper** … **public-house door**: the **crossing sweeper** will work on the Sabbath when church-goers emerge and expect not to get their shoes dirty in the street; the **chemist** has gone to church and left his apprentice to mind the shop in case of emergency; the **navigator** ('navvy'), **ostler** and **costermongers** are not at work on a Sunday, but cannot drink at the **public house** because it is closed during church attendance hours.

[105]**orange-girl**: breaking the law by attempting to sell fruit on the Sabbath; possibly suspected too of soliciting for sex-work.

[106]**policeman**: the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 established by Sir Robert Peel introduced police ('Bobbies' or 'Peelers') to the streets of London—hence still a novelty in 1837.

admiringly by a ragged boy gnawing a piece of orange-peel. Having delayed a moment to watch this Sunday procession of three with melancholy curiosity as it moved by him, Snoxell was about to turn the corner of a street which led directly to the church, when a shrill series of cries in a child's voice struck on his ear and stopped his progress immediately.

The page stood stock-still in astonishment for an instant—then pulled the new silk umbrella from under his arm, and turned the corner in a violent hurry. His suspicions had not deceived him. There was Mr. Thorpe himself walking sternly homeward through the rain, before church was over. He led by the hand "Master Zack," who was trotting along under protest, with his hat half off his head, hanging as far back from his father's side as he possibly could, and howling all the time at the utmost pitch of a very powerful pair of lungs.

Mr. Thorpe stopped as he passed the page, and snatched the umbrella out of Snoxell's hand, with unaccustomed impetuity; said sharply, "Go to your mistress, go on to the church"; and then resumed his road home, dragging his son after him faster than ever.

"Snoxy! Snoxy!" screamed Master Zack, turning round towards the page, so that he tripped himself up and fell against his father's legs at every third step; "I've been a naughty boy at church!"

"Ah! you look like it, you do," muttered Snoxell to himself sarcastically, as he went on. With that expression of opinion, the page approached the church portico, and waited sulkily among his fellow servants and their umbrellas for the congregation to come out.

When Mr. Goodworth and Mrs. Thorpe left the church, the old gentleman, regardless of appearances, seized eagerly on the despised gingham umbrella, because it was the largest he could get, and took his daughter home under it in triumph. Mrs. Thorpe was very silent, and sighed dolefully once or twice, when her father's attention wandered from her to the people passing along the street.

"You're fretting about Zack," said the old gentleman, looking round suddenly at his daughter. "Never mind! leave it to me. I'll undertake to beg him off this time."

"It's very disheartening and shocking to find him behaving so," said Mrs. Thorpe, "after the careful way we've brought him up in, too!"

"Nonsense, my love! No, I don't mean that – I beg your pardon. But who can be surprised that a child of six years old should be tired of a sermon forty minutes long by my watch? I was tired of it myself I know, though I wasn't candid enough to show it as the boy did. There! there! we won't begin to argue: I'll beg Zack off this time, and we'll say no more about it."

Mr. Goodworth's announcement of his benevolent intentions towards Zack seemed to have very little effect on Mrs. Thorpe; but she said nothing on that subject or any other during the rest of the dreary walk home, through rain, fog, and mud, to Baregrove Square.

Rooms have their mysterious peculiarities of physiognomy as well as men. There are plenty of rooms, all of much the same size, all furnished in much the same manner, which, nevertheless, differ completely in expression (if such a term may be allowed) one from the other; reflecting the various characters of their inhabitants by such fine varieties of effect in the furniture-features generally common to all, as are often, like the infinitesimal varieties of eyes, noses, and mouths, too intricately minute to be traceable. Now, the parlour of Mr. Thorpe's house was neat, clean, comfortably and sensibly furnished. It was of the average size. It had the usual side-board, dining-table, looking-glass, scroll fender, marble chimney-piece with a clock on it, carpet with a drugget[107] over it, and wire window-blinds to keep people from looking in, characteristic of all respectable London parlours of the middle class. And yet it was an inveterately severe-looking room—a room that seemed as if it had never been convivial, never uproarious, never anything but sternly comfortable and serenely dull—a room which appeared to be as unconscious of acts of mercy, and easy unreasoning over-affectionate forgiveness to offenders of any kind—juvenile or otherwise—as if it had been a cell in Newgate [**2.29 HN**], or a private torturing chamber in the Inquisition. Perhaps Mr. Goodworth felt thus affected by the parlour (especially in November weather) as soon as he entered it—for, although he had promised to beg Zack off, although Mr. Thorpe was sitting alone by the table and accessible to petitions, with a book in his hand, the old gentleman hesitated uneasily for a minute or two, and suffered his daughter to speak first.

"Where is Zack?" asked Mrs. Thorpe, glancing quickly and nervously all round her.

"He is locked up in my dressing-room," answered her husband without taking his eyes off the book.

"In your dressing-room!" echoed Mrs. Thorpe, looking as startled and horrified as if she had received a blow instead of an answer; "in your dressing-room! Good heavens, Zachary! how do you know the child hasn't got at your razors?"

"They are locked up," rejoined Mr. Thorpe, with the mildest reproof in his voice, and the mournfullest self-possession in his manner. "I took care before I left the boy, that he should get at nothing which could do him any injury. He is locked up, and will remain locked up, because –"

"I say, Thorpe! won't you let him off this time?" interrupted Mr. Goodworth, boldly plunging head foremost, with his petition for mercy, into the conversation.

"If you had allowed me to proceed, sir," said Mr. Thorpe, who always called his father-in-law 'Sir,' "I should have simply remarked that, after having enlarged to my son (in such terms, you will observe, as I thought best fitted to his comprehension) on the disgrace to his parents and himself of his

[107] **drugget**: a coarse woollen cloth used as a floor covering.

behaviour this morning, I set him as a task three verses to learn out of the 'Select Bible Texts for Children'; choosing the verses which seemed most likely, if I may trust my own judgment on the point, to impress on him what his behaviour ought to be for the future in church. He flatly refused to learn what I told him. It was, of course, quite impossible to allow my authority to be set at defiance by my own child (whose disobedient disposition has always, God knows, been a source of constant trouble and anxiety to me); so I locked him up, and locked up he will remain until he has obeyed me. My dear", (turning to his wife and handing her a key), "I have no objection, if you wish, to your going and trying what *you* can do towards overcoming the obstinacy of this unhappy child."

3.30 Elizabeth Gaskell: Haste to the Wedding

Elizabeth Gaskell *(1810–1865) was the daughter of a Unitarian minister. After her mother's death she was brought up by an aunt in Knutsford, Cheshire, which became the setting for two of her most distinguished novels,* Cranford *(1853) and* Wives and Novels *(1866). In 1832 she married William Gaskell, minister of the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel in Manchester. She began her first novel* Mary Barton *(1848) as a distraction after the death of her infant son. After this she was an active novelist and short-story writer.* North and South*, which was first serialised in Dickens's* Household Words*, was much more concerned with life in the industrialised North of England than with the rural South, but its opening picture of upper-middle-class life in London establishes what the novel's heroine, Margaret Hale, will give up when she goes to live in the North.*

From North and South *(1854–1855), ch. 1*

"Edith!" said Margaret, gently, "Edith!"

But, as Margaret half suspected, Edith had fallen asleep. She lay curled up on the sofa in the back drawing-room in Harley Street,[108] looking very lovely in her white muslin and blue ribbons. If Titania[109] had ever been dressed in white muslin and blue ribbons, and had fallen asleep on a crimson damask sofa in a back drawing-room, Edith might have been taken for her. Margaret was struck afresh by her cousin's beauty. They had grown up together from childhood, and all along Edith had been remarked upon by every one, except Margaret, for her prettiness; but Margaret had never thought about it until the last few days, when the prospect of soon losing her companion seemed to give force to every sweet quality and charm which Edith possessed. They had

[108] **Harley Street**: well-to-do residential street in Marylebone; today many eminent medical specialists have their practices there.

[109] **Titania**: Queen of the Fairies in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

been talking about wedding dresses, and wedding ceremonies; and Captain Lennox, and what he had told Edith about her future life at Corfu,[110] where his regiment was stationed; and the difficulty of keeping a piano in good tune (a difficulty which Edith seemed to consider as one of the most formidable that could befall her in her married life), and what gowns she should want in the visits to Scotland, which would immediately succeed her marriage; but the whispered tone had latterly become more drowsy; and Margaret, after a pause of a few minutes, found, as she fancied, that in spite of the buzz in the next room, Edith had rolled herself up into a soft ball of muslin and ribbon, and silken curls, and gone off into a peaceful little after-dinner nap.

Margaret had been on the point of telling her cousin of some of the plans and visions which she entertained as to her future life in the country parsonage, where her father and mother lived; and where her bright holidays had always been passed, though for the last ten years her aunt Shaw's house had been considered as her home. But in default of a listener, she had to brood over the change in her life silently as heretofore. It was a happy brooding, although tinged with regret at being separated for an indefinite time from her gentle aunt and dear cousin. As she thought of the delight of filling the important post of only daughter in Helstone parsonage, pieces of the conversation out of the next room came upon her ears. Her aunt Shaw was talking to the five or six ladies who had been dining there, and whose husbands were still in the dining-room. They were the familiar acquaintances of the house; neighbours whom Mrs. Shaw called friends, because she happened to dine with them more frequently than with any other people, and because if she or Edith wanted anything from them, or they from her, they did not scruple to make a call at each other's houses before luncheon. These ladies and their husbands were invited, in their capacity of friends, to eat a farewell dinner in honour of Edith's approaching marriage. Edith had rather objected to this arrangement, for Captain Lennox was expected to arrive by a late train this very evening; but, although she was a spoiled child, she was too careless and idle to have a very strong will of her own, and gave way when she found that her mother had absolutely ordered those extra delicacies of the season which are always supposed to be efficacious against immoderate grief at farewell dinners. She contented herself by leaning back in her chair, merely playing with the food on her plate, and looking grave and absent; while all around her were enjoying the *mots* [*witticisms*] of Mr. Grey, the gentleman who always took the bottom of the table at Mrs. Shaw's dinner parties, and asked Edith to give them some music in the drawing-room. Mr. Grey was particularly agreeable over this farewell dinner, and the gentlemen staid down stairs longer than usual. It was very well they did—to judge from the fragments of conversation which Margaret overheard.

[110]**Corfu**: one of the Ionian Islands, a British Protectorate from 1815, with a naval base; ceded to Greece in 1864.

"I suffered too much myself; not that I was not extremely happy with the poor dear General, but still disparity of age is a drawback; one that I was resolved Edith should not have to encounter. Of course, without any maternal partiality, I foresaw that the dear child was likely to marry early; indeed, I had often said that I was sure she would be married before she was nineteen. I had quite a prophetic feeling when Captain Lennox"—and here the voice dropped into a whisper, but Margaret could easily supply the blank. The course of true love in Edith's case had run remarkably smooth. Mrs. Shaw had given way to the presentiment, as she expressed it; and had rather urged on the marriage, although it was below the expectations which many of Edith's acquaintances had formed for her, a young and pretty heiress. But Mrs. Shaw said that her only child should marry for love,—and sighed emphatically, as if love had not been her motive for marrying the General. Mrs. Shaw enjoyed the romance of the present engagement rather more than her daughter. Not but that Edith was very thoroughly and properly in love; still she would certainly have preferred a good house in Belgravia,[111] to all the picturesqueness of the life which Captain Lennox described at Corfu. The very parts which made Margaret glow as she listened, Edith pretended to shiver and shudder at; partly for the pleasure she had in being coaxed out of her dislike by her fond lover, and partly because anything of a gipsy or makeshift life was really distasteful to her. Yet had any one come with a fine house, and a fine estate, and a fine title to boot, Edith would still have clung to Captain Lennox while the temptation lasted; when it was over, it is possible she might have had little qualms of ill-concealed regret that Captain Lennox could not have united in his person everything that was desirable. In this she was but her mother's child; who, after deliberately marrying General Shaw with no warmer feeling than respect for his character and establishment, was constantly, though quietly, bemoaning her hard lot in being united to one whom she could not love.

"I have spared no expense in her trousseau," were the next words Margaret heard.

"She has all the beautiful Indian shawls and scarfs the General gave to me, but which I shall never wear again."

"She is a lucky girl," replied another voice, which Margaret knew to be that of Mrs. Gibson, a lady who was taking a double interest in the conversation, from the fact of one of her daughters having been married within the last few weeks.

"Helen had set her heart upon an Indian shawl, but really when I found what an extravagant price was asked, I was obliged to refuse her. She will be quite envious when she hears of Edith having Indian shawls. What kind are they? Delhi? with the lovely little borders?"

[111] **Belgravia**: affluent district in West London, with many elegant residences.

Margaret heard her aunt's voice again, but this time it was as if she had raised herself up from her half-recumbent position, and were looking into the more dimly lighted back drawing-room. "Edith! Edith!" cried she; and then she sank as if wearied by the exertion. Margaret stepped forward.

"Edith is asleep, Aunt Shaw. Is it anything I can do?"

All the ladies said "Poor child!" on receiving this distressing intelligence about Edith; and the minute lap-dog in Mrs. Shaw's arms began to bark, as if excited by the burst of pity.

"Hush, Tiny! you naughty little girl! you will waken your mistress. It was only to ask Edith if she would tell Newton to bring down her shawls: perhaps you would go, Margaret dear?"

Margaret went up into the old nursery at the very top of the house, where Newton was busy getting up some laces which were required for the wedding. While Newton went (not without a muttered grumbling) to undo the shawls, which had already been exhibited four or five times that day, Margaret looked round upon the nursery; the first room in that house with which she had become familiar nine years ago, when she was brought, all untamed from the forest, to share the home, the play, and the lessons of her cousin Edith. She remembered the dark, dim look of the London nursery, presided over by an austere and ceremonious nurse, who was terribly particular about clean hands and torn frocks. She recollected the first tea up there—separate from her father and aunt, who were dining somewhere down below an infinite depth of stairs; for unless she were up in the sky (the child thought), they must be deep down in the bowels of the earth. At home—before she came to live in Harley Street—her mother's dressing-room had been her nursery; and, as they kept early hours in the country parsonage, Margaret had always had her meals with her father and mother. Oh! well did the tall stately girl of eighteen remember the tears shed with such wild passion of grief by the little girl of nine, as she hid her face under the bed-clothes, in that first night; and how she was bidden not to cry by the nurse, because it would disturb Miss Edith; and how she had cried as bitterly, but more quietly, till her newly-seen, grand, pretty aunt had come softly upstairs with Mr. Hale to show him his little sleeping daughter. Then the little Margaret had hushed her sobs, and tried to lie quiet as if asleep, for fear of making her father unhappy by her grief, which she dared not express before her aunt, and which she rather thought it was wrong to feel at all after the long hoping, and planning, and contriving they had gone through at home, before her wardrobe could be arranged so as to suit her grander circumstances, and before papa could leave his parish to come up to London, even for a few days.

Now she had got to love the old nursery, though it was but a dismantled place; and she looked all round, with a kind of cat-like regret, at the idea of leaving it for ever in three days.

"Ah Newton!" said she, "I think we shall all be sorry to leave this dear old room."

"Indeed, miss, I shan't for one. My eyes are not so good as they were, and the light here is so bad that I can't see to mend laces except just at the window, where there's always a shocking draught – enough to give one one's death of cold."

"Well, I dare say you will have both good light and plenty of warmth at Naples. You must keep as much of your darning as you can till then. Thank you, Newton, I can take them down – you're busy."

So Margaret went down laden with shawls, and snuffing up their spicy Eastern smell.

3.31 Charles Dickens: Dinner in Harley Street

Dickens's Little Dorrit *(1857) satirises the excessive bureaucracy of government, the injustice of the legal system, the institution of debtors' prisons (from which ironically debtors could not be released until they paid their debts), and the stratification of society between rich and poor. In this passage, while the devoted Little Dorrit is sewing for her father in the Marshalsea prison, the magnates of society at the wealthy Mr Merdle's dinner, pay effusive tribute to him, whose influence and money, are (they argue) the bastions of society, of which they are the humble members and whose welfare is their greatest concern. (See also* [**3.3 HN**] *and* [**3.8 HN**])

From Little Dorrit *(1857), Bk 1, ch. 21*

There was a dinner giving [*being given*] in the Harley Street establishment, while Little Dorrit was stitching at her father's new shirts by his side that night; and there were magnates from the Court and magnates from the City, magnates from the Commons and magnates from the Lords, magnates from the bench and magnates from the bar, Bishop magnates, Treasury magnates, Horse Guards magnates, Admiralty magnates,—all the magnates that keep us going, and sometimes trip us up […]

When they rose, so many of the magnates had something to say to Mr Merdle individually, that he held little levees by the sideboard, and checked them off as they went out at the door.

Treasury hoped he might venture to congratulate one of England's world-famed capitalists and merchant-princes (he had turned that original sentiment in the House a few times, and it came easy to him) on a new achievement. To extend the triumphs of such men, was to extend the triumphs and resources of the nation; and Treasury felt—he gave Mr Merdle to understand—patriotic on the subject.

"Thank you, my lord", said Mr Merdle; "thank you. I accept your congratulations with pride, and I am glad you approve."

"Why, I don't unreservedly approve, my dear Mr Merdle. Because," smiling Treasury turned him by the arm towards the sideboard and spoke banteringly, "it never can be worth your while to come among us and help us."

Mr Merdle felt honoured by the—

"No, no," said Treasury, "that is not the light in which one so distinguished for practical knowledge, and great foresight, can be expected to regard it. If we should ever be happily enabled, by accidentally possessing the control over circumstances, to propose to one so eminent to—to come among us, and give us the weight of his influence, knowledge, and character, we could only propose it to him as a duty. In fact, as a duty that he owed to Society."

Mr Merdle intimated that Society was the apple of his eye, and that its claims were paramount to every other consideration […]

[…] Bishop then came undesignedly sliding in the direction of the sideboard.

Surely the goods of this world, it occurred in an accidental way to Bishop to remark, could scarcely be directed into happier channels than when they accumulated under the magic touch of the wise and sagacious, who, while they knew the just value of riches (Bishop tried here to look as if he were rather poor himself), were aware of their importance, judiciously governed and rightly distributed, to the welfare of our brethren at large.

Mr Merdle with humility expressed his conviction that Bishop couldn't mean him, and with inconsistency expressed his high gratification in Bishop's good opinion.

Bishop then—jauntily stepping out a little with his well-shaped right leg, as though he said to Mr Merdle "don't mind the apron; a mere form!"—put this case to his good friend:

Whether it had occurred to his good friend, that Society might not unreasonably hope that one so blest in his undertakings, and whose example on his pedestal was so influential with it, would shed a little money in the direction of a mission or so to Africa?

Mr Merdle signifying that the idea should have his best attention, Bishop put another case:

Whether his good friend had at all interested himself in the proceedings of our Combined Additional Endowed Dignitaries Committee, and whether it had occurred to him that to shed a little money in *that* direction might be a great conception finely executed?

Mr Merdle made a similar reply […]

3.32 Charles Dickens: Bran-New People

***Dickens** in* Our Mutual Friend *gives a brief vignette of the* nouveau riche *Veneering family, whose possessions, like their new furniture and friends, are carefully designed to impress. (They eventually go bankrupt and live in France on the jewellery Mr Veneering has bought for his wife.)*

From Our Mutual Friend *(1865), Bk 1, ch. 2*

Mr and Mrs Veneering were bran-new[112] people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new. All their furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, their plate was new, their carriage was new, their harness was new, their horses were new, their pictures were new, they themselves were new, they were as newly married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby, and if they had set up a great-grandfather, he would have come home in matting from the Pantechnicon,[113] without a scratch upon him, French polished to the crown of his head.

For, in the Veneering establishment, from the hall chairs with the new coat of arms, to the grand pianoforte with the new action, and upstairs again to the new fire-escape, all things were in a state of high varnish and polish. And what was observable in the furniture, was observable in the Veneerings—the surface smelt a little too much of the workshop and was a trifle sticky.

3.33 William Thackeray: Wars and Rumours of Wars

Thackeray's Vanity Fair, or, A Novel Without a Hero *following serialisation in monthly parts was published in book form in 1848. Here, Amelia Sedley, one of the would-be heroines of the novel, lives quietly and complacently in London with her family, while the Napoleonic Wars rage in Europe. She is blindly and naively devoted to her husband George Osborne. However, her comfortable middle-class life is soon to be interrupted when her spendthrift father becomes bankrupt and George, who is unfaithful, is killed at Waterloo, leaving her pregnant. The routine life of the Sedleys is short-lived and illusory.*

From Vanity Fair, or, A Novel Without a Hero *(1848), ch. 12*

[…] Amelia lay snug in her home of Russell Square; if she went into the world, it was under the guidance of the elders; nor did it seem that any evil could befall her or that opulent cheery comfortable home in which she was affectionately sheltered. Mamma had her morning duties, and her daily drive,

[112] **bran-new**: now usually in the form *brand new.*

[113] **Pantechnicon**: a large warehouse for storing furniture.

and the delightful round of visits and shopping which forms the amusement, or the profession as you may call it, of the rich London lady. Papa conducted his mysterious operations in the City—a stirring place in those days, when war was raging all over Europe, and empires were being staked; when the *Courier* newspaper had tens of thousands of subscribers; when one day brought you a battle of Vittoria,[114] another a burning of Moscow,[115] or a newsman's horn blowing down Russell Square about dinner time announced such a fact as—"Battle of Leipzig – six hundred thousand men engaged – total defeat of the French – two hundred thousand killed."[116] Old Sedley once or twice came home with a very grave face; and no wonder, when such news as this was agitating all the hearts and all the Stocks of Europe.

Meanwhile, matters went on in Russell Square, Bloomsbury, just as if matters in Europe were not in the least disorganized. The retreat from Leipzig made no difference in the number of meals Mr Sambo[117] took in the servants' hall; the allies poured into France, and the dinner bell rang at five o'clock just as usual. I don't think poor Amelia cared anything about Brienne and Montmirail,[118] or was fairly interested in the war until the abdication of the Emperor; when she clapped her hands and said prayers—oh, how grateful! And flung herself into George Osborne's arms with all her soul, to the astonishment of everybody who witnessed that ebullition of sentiment. The fact is, peace was declared, Europe was going to be at rest; the Corsican was overthrown, and Lieutenant Osborne's regiment would not be ordered on service. That was the way in which Miss Amelia reasoned. The fate of Europe was Lieutenant George Osborne to her.

3.34 Robert Smith Surtees, Sponge in the City

Robert Smith Surtees *(1805–1864) practised law in London but soon became better known as a sporting journalist and novelist. After 1838 he lived on his inherited property Hamsterley in County Durham where he continued to write novels of hunting and shooting. His works imbue these rural sports with comedy that has a strong satirical edge—there is sharp observation of snobbery and self-conceit. Soapey Sponge is a fine horseman but also a rogue and a cad.* Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour *was a great success, being serialized twice before it appeared in book form in 1853.*

From Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour *(1853), ch. 1*

[114] **battle of Vittoria**: an allied victory over the French in June 1813.

[115] **burning of Moscow**: The Russians burnt Moscow in September 1812 so that it would not be taken by the French.

[116] **Battle of Leipzig**: This was the decisive battle against Napoleon (1813). The allies then invaded France; Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba (1814).

[117] **Mr Sambo**: the Sedley's black servant.

[118] **Brienne and Montmirail**: battles won by Napoleon (1814) before his retreat to Paris.

It was a murky October day that the hero of our tale, Mr Sponge, or Soapey Sponge, as his good-natured friends call him, was seen mizzling[119] along Oxford Street, wending his way to the West. Not that there was anything unusual in Sponge being seen in Oxford Street, for when in town his daily perambulations consist of a circuit, commencing from the Bantam Hotel in Bond Street into Piccadilly, through Leicester Square, and so on to Aldridge's, in St Martin's Lane,[120] thence by Moore's sporting-print shop, and on through some of those ambiguous and tortuous streets that, appearing to lead all ways at once and none in particular, land the explorer, sooner or later, on the south side of Oxford Street.

Oxford Street acts to the north part of London what the Strand does to the south; it is sure to bring one up, sooner or later. A man can hardly get over either of them without knowing it. Well, Soapey, having got into Oxford Street, would make his way at a squarey, in-kneed, duck-toed sort of pace, regulated by the bonnets, the vehicles, and the equestrians he met to criticise; for of women, vehicles, and horses, he had voted himself a consummate judge. Indeed, he had fully established in his own mind that Kiddey Downey[121] and he were the only men in London who *really* knew anything about horses, and fully impressed with that conviction, he would halt, and stand, and stare, in a way that with any other man would have been considered impertinent. Perhaps it was impertinent in Soapey—we don't mean to say it wasn't—but he had done it so long, and was of so sporting a gait and cut, that he felt himself somewhat privileged. Moreover, the majority of horsemen are so satisfied with the animals they bestride, that they cock up their jibs[122] and ride along with a "find any fault with either me or my horse, if you can" sort of air.

Thus Mr Sponge proceeded leisurely along, now nodding to this man, now jerking his elbow to that, now smiling on a phaëton,[123] now sneering at a 'bus. If he did not look in at Shackell's, or Bartley's, or any of the dealers on the line, he was always to be found about half past five at Cumberland Gate, from whence he would strike leisurely down the Park, and after coming to a long check at Rotten Row [**3.43**, n.169] rails, from whence he would pass all the cavalry in the Park in review, he would wend his way back to the Bantam, much in the style he had come. This was his summer proceeding.

[119] **mizzling**: departing.

[120] **Aldridge's … St Martin's Lane**: **Aldridge's** sold horses and carriages; **St Martin's Lane** was also known for its saddlery trade.

[121] **Kiddy Downey**: Possibly a nickname for a real character.

[122] **cock up their jibs**: stick their noses in the air.

[123] **phaëton**: fashionable light four-wheeled open carriage.

3.35 Herman Melville: The Temple

Herman Melville *(1819–1891) is famous mainly for his books set in the South Seas and especially for* Moby Dick *(1851). However, he also published several short stories, one of which, "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids," appeared in* Harper's New Monthly Magazine *in 1855. The two locations mentioned in the title are loosely related thematically but not otherwise, the first being set in London, the second in New England. "The Paradise of Bachelors" is based on a visit Melville made to London in 1849.*

From "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids," (1855)

The church and cloisters, courts and vaults, lanes and passages, banquet-halls, refectories, libraries, terraces, gardens, broad walks, domiciles, and dressing-rooms, covering a very large space of ground, and all grouped in central neighbourhood, and quite sequestered from the old city's surrounding din; and everything about the place being kept in most bachelor-like particularity, no part of London offers to a quiet wight [*person* (archaic)] so agreeable a refuge.

The Temple[124] is, indeed, a city by itself. A city with all the best appurtenances, as the above enumeration shows. A City with a park in it, and flower-beds, and a river-side—the Thames flowing by as openly, in one part, as by Eden's primal garden flowed the mild Euphrates. In what is now the Temple Garden, the old Crusaders used to exercise their steeds and lances; the modern Templars now lounge on the benches beneath the trees, and, switching their patent leather boots, in gay discourse exercise at repartee […]

Though to be a Templar, in the one true sense, you must needs be a lawyer, or a student at the law, and be ceremoniously enrolled as a member of the order, yet as many such, though Templars, do not reside within the Temple's precincts, though they may have their offices there, just so, on the other hand, there are many residents of the hoary old domiciles who are not admitted Templars. If being, say, a lounging gentleman and bachelor, or a quiet, unmarried, literary man, charmed with the soft seclusion of the spot, you much desire to pitch your shady tent among the rest in this serene encampment, then you must make some special friend among the order, and procure him to rent, in his name but at your charge, whatever vacant chamber you may find to suit.

Thus, I suppose, did Dr Johnson [**2.18 HN**], that nominal Benedick[125] and widower but virtual bachelor, when for a space he resided here. So, too, did that undoubted bachelor and rare good soul, Charles Lamb [**3.28 HN**]. And hundreds more, of sterling spirits, Brethren of the Order of Celibacy, from time to time have dined, and slept, and tabernacled here. Indeed, the

[124] **Temple**: Church and grounds used by the Knights Templar in the C12th; now a legal district with two of the Inns of Court, the Inner and Outer Temples [**3.28**, n.93].

[125] **Benedick**: term for an apparently confirmed bachelor who suddenly marries; from Benedick in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

place is all a honey-comb of offices and domiciles. Like any cheese, it is quite perforated through and through in all directions with the snug cells of bachelors. Dear, delightful spot! Ah! When I bethink me of the sweet hours there passed, enjoying such genial hospitalities beneath those time-honoured roofs, my heart only finds due utterance through poetry; and, with a sigh, I softly sing, "Carry me back to old Virginny!"[126]

Such then, at large, is the Paradise of Bachelors. And such I found it one pleasant afternoon in the smiling month of May, when, sallying forth from my hotel in Trafalgar Square, I went to keep my dinner-appointment […]

The apartment was well up toward heaven. I know not how many strange old stairs I climbed to get to it. But a good dinner, with famous company, should be well earned. No doubt our host had his dining-room so high with a view to secure the prior exercise necessary to the due relishing and digesting of it.

The furniture was wonderfully unpretending, old, and snug. No new shining mahogany, sticky with undried varnish; no uncomfortable luxurious ottomans, and sofas too fine to use, vexed you in this sedate apartment. It is a thing which every sensible American should learn from every sensible Englishman, that glare and glitter, gim-cracks and gewgaws, are not indispensable to domestic solacement. The American Benedick snatches, down-town, a tough chop in a gilded show-box; the English bachelor leisurely dines at home on that incomparable South Down[127] of his, off a deal board.

3.36 William Makepeace Thackeray: "Great City Snobs"

Thackeray *(1811–1863), educated at the Charterhouse and Cambridge University, travelled in France and Germany 1830–1831. He began his writing career as a journalist and published many satirical pieces in the late 1830s and early 1840s:* The Snobs of England, by One of Themselves *was serialised in* Punch *1846–1847, and was published in volume form as* The Book of Snobs *in 1848. For further notes on Thackeray see* [**3.9**] *and* [**3.33**].

From The Book of Snobs *(1848), ch. 3*

The great City Snob[128] is commonly most difficult of access. Unless you are a capitalist, you cannot visit him in the recesses of his bank parlour in Lombard Street.[129] Unless you are a sprig of nobility there is little hope of

[126] "**Carry me back to old Virginny**": song composed by E. P. Christy and published in 1847; also known as "Floating Scow of Old Virginny".

[127] **South Down**: breed of sheep celebrated for the quality of its meat.

[128] **Snob**: "A person who admires and seeks to imitate, or associate with, those of higher social status or greater wealth" (*OED* 3.c). Thackeray's is the first recorded use of the term in this sense.

[129] **Lombard Street**: since mediaeval times the centre for London's banking houses.

seeing him at home. In a great City Snob firm there is generally one partner whose name is down for charities, and who frequents Exeter Hall[130]; you may catch a glimpse of another (a scientific City Snob) at my Lord N–'s *soirées*, or the lectures of the London Institute[131]; of a third (a City Snob of taste) at picture auctions, at private views of exhibitions, or at the Opera or the Philharmonic. But intimacy is impossible, in most cases, with this grave, pompous, and awful being.

A mere gentleman may hope to sit at almost anybody's table—to take his place at my lord duke's in the country—to dance a quadrille at Buckingham Palace itself—(beloved Lady Willhelmina Waggle-wiggle! do you recollect the sensation we made at the ball of our late adored Sovereign Queen Caroline,[132] at Brandenburg House, Hammersmith?)[133] but the City Snob's doors are, for the most part, closed to him; and hence all that one knows of this great class is mostly from hearsay.

*

And a comfortable thing it is to think that birth can be bought for money. So you learn to value it. Why should we, who don't possess it, set a higher store on it than those who do? Perhaps the best use of that book, the 'Peerage',[134] is to look down the list, and see how many have bought and sold birth,—how poor sprigs of nobility somehow sell themselves to rich City Snobs' daughters, how rich City snobs purchase noble ladies—and so to admire the double baseness of the bargain.

Old Pump and Aldgate[135] buys the articles and pays the money. The sale of the girl's person is blessed by a Bishop at St. George's, Hanover Square,[136] and next year you read, "At Roehampton, on Saturday, the Lady Blanche Pump, of a son and heir."

*

It used to be the custom of some very old-fashioned clubs in this City, when a gentleman asked for change for a guinea, always to bring it to him in *washed silver*: that which had passed immediately out of the hands of the vulgar being

[130] **Exeter Hall**: built 1829–1831; associated with Evangelical Christianity.

[131] **London Institute**: the City and Guilds of London Institute for technical education, founded in 1878.

[132] **Queen Caroline**: Caroline of Brunswick 1768–1821; married to George IV and later rumoured to have been unfaithful to him.

[133] **Brandenburg House**, **Hammersmith**: house owned by the Margrave of Brandenburg from 1792; home of Queen Caroline 1819–1821.

[134] **Peerage**: 1.e. *Burke's Peerage*, first published 1826.

[135] **Pump and Aldgate**: connoting a self-made man from a poorer part of London.

[136] **St. George's, Hanover Square**: church favoured by the wealthy and fashionable for weddings.

considered "as too coarse to soil a gentleman's fingers." So, when the City Snob's money has been washed during a generation or so; has been washed into estates, and woods, and castles, and town mansions, it is allowed to pass current as real aristocratic coin. Old Pump sweeps a shop, runs of messages, becomes a confidential clerk and partner. Pump the Second becomes chief of the house, spins more and more money, marries his son to an Earl's daughter. Pump Tertius goes on with the bank; but his chief business in life is to become the father of Pump Quartus, who comes out a full-blown aristocrat, and takes his seat[137] as Baron Pumpington, and his race rules hereditary over this nation of Snobs.

3.37 Elizabeth Barrett Browning: A Writing Woman

Elizabeth Barrett Browning *(1806–1861) grew up in Hertfordshire, but moved with her family to London in 1835. For long periods a near invalid, she nevertheless published poetry from 1826 onwards and developed her literary career, corresponding with other writers and winning respect for her poetry. In 1845 she met Robert Browning (1812–1889) and in 1846 eloped with him to Italy. Her sequence* Sonnets from the Portuguese *which is based on her love affair with Browning was published in 1850 and has become a popular classic. She went on to write works that attacked tyranny of various kinds: slavery in* The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point *(1848), the industrial exploitation of children in* The Cry of the Children *(1844), and the suppression of Italian nationhood in* Mother and Poet *(1862). Her most ambitious work, however, was the novel in verse* Aurora Leigh, *from which this extract is taken.*

From Aurora Leigh *(1856), Book III, 158–203*

I took a chamber up three flights of stairs
Not far from being as steep as some larks climb,
And, in a certain house in Kensington,
Three years I lived and worked. Get leave to work
In this world, –'tis the best you get at all;
For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts
Than men in benediction. God says, "Sweat
For foreheads"; men say "crowns"; and so we are crowned, –
Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of steel[138]

[137] **takes his seat** as a peer in the House of Lords.

[138] **tormenting circle of steel**: György Dózsa (1470–1514), a would-be crusader who led a peasants' revolt in Hungarian Transylvania, was executed by means of a red-hot iron crown.

Which snaps with a secret spring. Get work, get work;
Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get.
So, happy and unafraid of solitude,
I worked the short days out,–and watched the sun
On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons,
Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass,[139]
With fixed unflickering outline of dead heat,
In which the blood of wretches pent inside
Seemed oozing forth to incarnadine the air,–
Push out through fog with his dilated disk,
And startle the slant roofs and chimney-pots
With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw
Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,[140]
Involve the passive city, strangle it
Alive, and draw it off into the void,
Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as if a sponge
Had wiped out London, – or as noon and night
Had clapped together and utterly struck out
The intermediate time, undoing themselves
In the act. Your city poets see such things,
Not déspicable. Mountains of the south,
When, drunk and mad with elemental wines,
They rend the seamless mist and stand up bare,
Make fewer singers, haply. No one sings,
Descending Sinai; on Parnassus mount,[141]
You take a mule to climb, and not a muse,
Except in fable and figure: forests chant
Their anthems to themselves, and leave you dumb.
But sit in London, at the day's decline,
And view the city perish in the mist
Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep Red Sea,–[142]
The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the host,
Sucked down and choked to silence–then, surprised
By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,
You feel as conquerors though you did not fight,
And you and Israel's other singing girls,
Ay, Miriam[143] with them, sing the song you choose.

[139] **Druidic idol's fiery brass**: it was believed that Druids burned their human sacrifices in wicker cages; see also [**3.41**, n.159].

[140] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

[141] **Sinai … Parnassus**: Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai; Parnassus was sacred to Apollo, god of poetry.

[142] **Pharaoh … Red Sea**: Pharaoh's army, pursuing the Israelites escaping from Egypt, was overwhelmed when the Red Sea closed over it as it crossed (Exodus 15:19–21).

[143] **Miriam**: the sister of Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4).

WORKING-CLASS LIFE

3.38 Leigh Hunt: A London Waiter

James Henry Leigh Hunt *(1784–1859) was born at Southgate and was educated as a charity boy at Christ's Hospital. His first collection of poems appeared in 1807. In 1808 with his brother John, Leigh founded and edited* The Examiner, *a radical weekly journal. In 1813 he was sentenced to two years in jail for libelling the Prince Regent, but he continued to write and to edit* The Examiner *while a prisoner. A friend of Keats, he was attacked with him as a member of the 'Cockney School' of poetry. Though a prolific poet, he is perhaps best remembered now as a gifted essayist. His sketch "The Waiter" appeared in Hunt's magazine* The London Journal, *which he edited 1834–1835.*

"The Waiter," from The London Journal, *No. 63, 13 June 1835*

Going into the City the other day upon business, we took a chop at a tavern, and renewed our acquaintance, after years of interruption, with that swift and untiring personage, yclept a waiter. We mention this long interval of acquaintance, in order to account for any deficiencies that may be found in our description of him. Our readers perhaps will favour us with a better. He is a character before the public: thousands are acquainted with him, and can fill up the outline. But we felt irresistibly impelled to sketch him; like a portrait-painter who comes suddenly upon an old friend, or upon an old servant of the family. We speak of the waiter properly and generally so-called,—the representative of the whole, real official race,—and not of the humourist or other eccentric genius occasionally to be found in it,—moving out of the orbit of tranquil but fiery waiting,—not absorbed,—not devout towards us,—not silent or monosyllabical;—fellows that affect a character beyond that of waiter, and get spoiled in club-rooms, and places of theatrical resort.

Your thorough waiter has no ideas out of the sphere of his duty and the business, and yet he is not narrow-minded either. He sees too much variety of character for that, and has to exercise too much consideration for the "drunken gentleman". But his world is the tavern, and all mankind but its visitors. His female sex are the maid-servants and his young mistress, or the widow. If he is ambitious, he aspires to marry one of the latter: if otherwise, and Molly is prudent, he does not know but he may carry her off some day to be mistress of the Golden Lion at Chinksford, where he will 'show off' in the eyes of Betty Laxon[144] who refused him. He has no feeling of noise itself but as the sound of dining, or of silence but as a thing before dinner. Even a loaf with him is hardly a loaf, it is so many 'breads.' His longest speech is the making out of a bill *viva voce*—"two beefs – one potatoes – three ales

[144] **Golden Lion … Chinksford … Betty Laxon**: all fictional.

– two wines – six and twopence"—which he does with an indifferent celerity, amusing to new-comers who have been relishing their fare, and not considering it as a mere set of items. He attributes all virtues to everybody, provided they are civil and liberal; and of the existence of some vices he has no notion. Gluttony, for instance, with him, is not only inconceivable, but looks very like virtue. He sees in it only so many more 'beefs,' and a generous scorn of the bill. As to wine, or almost any other liquor, it is out of your power to astonish him with the quantity you call for. His "Yes, Sir" is as swift, indifferent, and official, at the fifth bottle as at the first. Reform[145] and other public events he looks upon purely as things in the newspaper, and the newspaper as a thing taken in at taverns, for gentlemen to read. His own reading is confined to "Accidents and Offences", and the advertisements for Butlers, which latter he peruses with an admiring fear, not choosing to 'give up' a certainty.

When young, he was always in a hurry, and exasperated his mistress by running against the other waiters, and breaking the 'neguses.'[146] As he gets older, he learns to unite swiftness with caution; declines wasting his breath in immediate answers to calls; and knows, with a slight turn of his face, and elevation of his voice, into what precise corner of the room to pitch his "Coming, Sir." If you told him that, in Shakespeare's time, waiters said "Anon, anon, Sir,"[147] he would be astonished at the repetition of the same word in one answer, and at the use of three words instead of two; and he would justly infer, that London could not have been so large, nor the chop-houses so busy, in those days. He would drop one of the two syllables of his "Yes, Sir," if he could; but business and civility will not allow it; and therefore he does what he can by running them together in the swift sufficiency of his

> "Yezzir."
> "Thomas!"
> "Yezzir"
> "Is my steak coming?"
> "Yezzir"
> "And the pint of port?"
> "Yezzir."
> "You'll not forget the postman?"
> "Yezzir."

For in the habit of his acquiescence Thomas not seldom says "Yes, Sir", for "No, Sir", the habit itself rendering him intelligible.

His morning dress is a waistcoat or jacket; his coat is for afternoons. If the establishment is flourishing, he likes to get into black as he grows elderly; by which time also he is generally a little corpulent, and wears

[145] **Reform**: the Parliamentary **Reform** Bill of 1832 was still fresh in memory.

[146] **neguses**: hot drinks made with wine.

[147] **anon, Sir**: *Henry IV*, Pt. I, Act 2, Sc. 4.

hair-powder, dressing somewhat laxly about the waist, for convenience of movement. Not however that he draws much upon that part of his body, except as a poise to what he carries; for you may observe that a waiter, in walking, uses only his lower limbs, from his knees downwards. The movement of all the rest of him is by nature, and modified solely by what he bears in his hands.

At this period he has a little money in the funds,[148] and his nieces look up to him. He still carries however a napkin under his arm, as well as a corkscrew in his pocket; nor, for all his long habit, can he help feeling a satisfaction at the noise he makes in drawing a cork. He thinks that no man can do it better; and that Mr. Smith, who understands wine, is thinking so too, though he does not take his eyes off the plate. In his right waistcoat pocket is a snuff-box, with which he supplies gentlemen late at night, after the shops are shut up, and when they are in desperate want of another fillip to their sensations, after the devil[149] and toasted cheese. If particularly required, he will laugh at a joke, especially at that time of night, justly thinking that gentlemen towards one in the morning "will be facetious." He is of opinion it is in "human natur" to be a little fresh at that period, and to want to be put into a coach.

He announces his acquisition of property by a bunch of seals[150] to his watch, and perhaps rings on his fingers; one of them a mourning ring left him by his late master, the other a present either from his nieces' father, or from some ultra-goodnatured old gentleman whom he helped into a coach one night, and who had no silver about him.

To see him dine, somehow, hardly seems natural. And he appears to do it as if he had no right. You catch him at his dinner in a corner,—huddled apart,—"Thomas dining!" instead of helping dinner. One fancies that the stewed and hot meats and the constant smoke ought to be too much for him, and that he should have neither appetite nor time for such a meal.

Once a year (for he has few holidays) a couple of pedestrians meet him on a Sunday in the fields, and cannot conceive for the life of them who it is; till the startling recollection occurs—"Good God! It's the waiter at the Grogram!"[151]

[148] **funds**: government bonds, usually delivering 3% *per annum*.

[149] **devil**: meat grilled with hot seasoning.

[150] **seals**: stamps engraved with a personal device, to be applied to legal documents.

[151] **Grogram**: fictional tavern in London, named after Admiral Edward Vernon (1684–1757), called Old Grogram because he wore suits made of grogram, a coarse fabric made of silk and/or mohair and wool. In 1740 he introduced the custom of diluting the sailors' rum with water, the resultant drink being known as 'grog' (still Australian slang for alcohol).

3.39 Henry Mayhew: Covent Garden Market

Covent Garden Market rose from humble beginnings in 1656, becoming more and more busy as stalls and sheds gave way to permanent structures. Fruit, vegetables, and flowers were the main merchandise. In 1831 a new market-place had been built to cope with the bustle and congestion. ***Henry Mayhew*** *(1812–1887) was a prolific writer in most genres. However, he is best known for his depiction of tradesmen and lower-class life in London (as here), and in particular, for his compassionate accounts of the hardships and misery suffered by the London poor. (See also* [**3.21 HN**]*)*

From "Of Covent Garden Market," in London Labour and the London Poor *(1851)*

On a Saturday—the coster's[152] business day—it is computed that as many as 2000 donkey-barrows, and upwards of 3000 women with shallows [*flat baskets*] and head-baskets visit this market during the forenoon. About six o'clock in the morning is the best time for viewing the wonderful restlessness of the place, for then not only is the 'Garden' itself all bustle and activity, but the buyers and sellers stream to and from it in all directions, filling every street in the vicinity. From Long Acre to the Strand on the one side, and from Bow Street to Bedford Street on the other, the ground has been seized upon by the market-goers. As you glance down any one of the neighbouring streets, the long rows of carts and donkey-barrows seem interminable in the distance. They are of all kinds, from the greengrocer's taxed cart[153] to the coster's barrow—from the showy excursion-van to the rude square donkey-cart and bricklayer's truck. In every street they are ranged down the middle and by the kerb stones. Along each approach to the market too, nothing is to be seen on all sides but vegetables; the pavement is covered with heaps of them waiting to be carted; the flagstones are stained green with the leaves trodden underfoot; sieves and sacks full of apples and potatoes, and bundles of broccoli and rhubarb are left unwatched upon almost every doorstep; the steps of Covent Garden Theatre[154] are covered with fruit and vegetables; the road is blocked up with mountains of cabbages and turnips; and men and women push past with their arms bowed out by the cauliflowers under them, or the red tips of carrots pointing from their crammed aprons, or else their faces are red with the weight of the loaded head-basket […]

[152] **coster**: one who sells fruit, vegetables etc. from a cart in the street.

[153] **taxed cart**: a sprung cart attracting a small tax.

[154] **Covent Garden Theatre**: the first built in 1732 but destroyed by fire. The second, to which Mayhew is referring, opened in 1809. Plays, opera, and ballets were performed there.

The market itself presents a beautiful scene. In the clear morning air of an autumn day the whole of the vast square is distinctly seen from one end to the other. The sky is red and golden with the newly-risen sun, and the rays falling on the fresh and vivid colours of the fruit and vegetables, brightens up the picture as with a coat of varnish. There is no shouting, as at other markets, but a low murmuring hum is heard, like the sound of the sea at a distance, and through each entrance to the market the crowd sweeps by. Under the dark Piazza little bright dots of gas-lights are seen burning in the shops; and in the paved square the people pass and cross each other in all directions, hampers clash together, and excepting the carters from the country, everyone is on the move.

3.40 Charles Dickens: Bleeding Heart Yard

*In **Dickens's** novel the hero Arthur Clennam, together with the heroine Little Dorrit, who resides in the Marshalsea looking after her father, visit Bleeding Heart Yard.*[155] *There the poor inventor Daniel Doyce has his factory, and Little Dorrit's friends, the Plornishes, live. The inmates of the Yard are all hopelessly impoverished and live in fear of strangers in case they are debt-collectors. Plornish, a plasterer, though he constantly looks for employment, is resigned to his ill-luck in either not finding it or losing it when he does find it. (See also* [**3.8 HN**] and [**3.27 HN**]*)*

From Little Dorrit *(1857), Bk 1, ch. 12*

As if the aspiring city had become puffed up in the very ground on which it stood, the ground had so risen about Bleeding Heart Yard that you got into it down a flight of steps which formed no part of the original approach, and got out of it by a low gateway into a maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again. At this end of the Yard, and over the gateway, was the factory of Daniel Doyce, often heavily beating like a bleeding heart of iron, with the clink of metal upon metal […]

"Is it so difficult to get work"? asked Arthur Clennam.

"Plornish finds it so," she returned. "He is quite unfortunate. Really he is."

Really he was. He was one of those many wayfarers on the road of life who seem to be afflicted with supernatural corns, rendering it impossible for them to keep up even with their lame competitors. A willing, working, soft-hearted, not hard-headed fellow, Plornish took his fortune as smoothly as could be expected; but it was a rough one. It so rarely happened that anybody seemed to want him, it was such an exceptional case when his powers

[155] **Bleeding Heart Yard**: now much changed, it exists as a cobbled courtyard off Greville Street, near Holborn Circus.

were in any request, that his misty mind could not make out how it happened. He took it as it came, therefore; he tumbled into all kinds of difficulties, and tumbled out of them; and, by tumbling through life, got himself considerably bruised.

"It's not for want of looking after jobs, I am sure," said Mrs Plornish, lifting up her eyebrows, and searching for a solution of the problem between the bars of the grate; "nor yet for want of working at them, when they are to be got. No one ever heard my husband complain of work."

Somehow or other, this was the general misfortune of Bleeding Heart Yard. From time to time there were public complaints pathetically going about, of labour being scarce—which certain people seemed to take extraordinarily ill, as though they had an absolute right to it on their own terms—but Bleeding Heart Yard, though as willing a Yard as any in Britain, was never the better for the demand.

3.41 Charles Kingsley: The Making of a Chartist

The eponymous hero of Alton Locke *by* ***Charles Kingsley*** *(1819–1875) is a tailor's poverty-stricken apprentice. As a budding poet Locke has tried to no avail to write on subjects about which he knows little or nothing, such as the Pacific Islands. He is taken by his exasperated friend the Scottish bookseller Sandy Mackaye to see the slums of St Giles, about which he could write with firsthand knowledge. The misery that he sees is so appalling that he determines to become a Chartist.*[156]

From Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet *(1850), Vol. 1, ch. 8*

[… Mackaye] seized me by the arm, and hardly giving me time to put on my hat, marched me out into the streets, and away through Clare Market to St Giles's.

It was a foul, chilly, foggy Saturday night. From the butchers' and greengrocers' shops the gaslights flared and flickered, wild and ghastly, over haggard groups of slipshod dirty women, bargaining for scraps of stale meat and frostbitten vegetables, wrangling about short weight and bad quality. Fish stalls and fruit stalls lined the edge of the greasy pavement, sending up odours as foul as the language of sellers and buyers. Blood and sewer-water crawled from under doors and out of spouts, and reeked down the gutters among

[156]**Chartist**: Chartism was a movement 1837–1857 which advocated better working conditions for industrial and agricultural workers. The name was derived from the People's Charter (1838), which petitioned Parliament (in vain) for reform of voting rights, including suffrage for all men over 21. The Chartists held protest meetings (sometimes resulting in violence), especially in the Midlands and Wales. Kingsley was one of the leaders of the Christian Socialist Movement founded in 1848, which shared many of the Chartists' aims but insisted on peaceful methods of improving the people's welfare by educational and theological means.

offal, animal and vegetable, in every stage of putrefaction. Foul vapours rose from cowsheds and slaughterhouses, and the doorways of undrained alleys, where the inhabitants carried the filth out on their shoes from the backyard into the court, and from the court up into the main street; while above, hanging like cliffs over the streets—those narrow, brawling torrents of filth and poverty and sin—the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian! and see what London is! and then go to the library which God has given thee—one often fears in vain—and see what science says this London might be!

"Ay," he muttered to himself as he strode along, "sing awa'; get yoursel' wi' child wi' pretty fancies and gran' words, like the rest o' the poets, and gang to hell for it."

"To hell, Mr Mackaye"?

"Ay, to a verra real hell, Alton Locke, laddie – a warse ane than ony fiends' kitchen, or subterranean Smithfield,[157] that ye'll hear o' in the pulpits – the hell on earth o' being a flunkey, and a humbug, and a useless peacock, wasting God's gifts on your ain lusts and pleasures – and kenning [*knowing*] it – and not being able to get oot o' it, for the chains o' vanity and self-indulgence. I've warned ye. Now look there –"

He stopped suddenly before the entrance of a miserable alley—

"Look! there's not a soul down that yard but's either beggar, drunkard, thief, or warse. Write anent that! Say how you saw the mouth o' hell, and the twa pillars thereof at the entry – the pawnbroker's shop o' one side, and the gin palace at the other – twa monstrous deevils, eating up men, and women, and bairns, body and soul. Look at the jaws o' the monsters, how they open and open, and swallow in anither victim and anither. Write anent that."

"What jaws, Mr Mackaye"?

"They faulding-doors o' the gin shop, goose. Are na they a mair damnable man-devouring idol than ony red-hot statue o' Moloch,[158] or wicker Gogmagog, wherein thae auld Britons burnt their prisoners?[159] Look at thae barefooted, barebacked hizzies, with their arms roun' the men's necks, and their mouths full o' vitriol and beastly words! Look at that Irishwoman pouring the gin down the babbie's throat! Look at that raff o' a boy gaun out o' the pawnshop, where he's been pledging the handkerchief he stole the morning, into the gin shop to buy beer poisoned wi' grains o' paradise, and

[157] **Smithfield**: see **General Introduction**, n.5.

[158] **Moloch**: a Canaanite god whose statue was heated with fire into which child victims were thrown.

[159] **wicker … prisoners**: Mackaye is confusing two legends: (1) **Gogmagog** was the last giant inhabiting Albion (ancient Britain); (2) a huge **wicker** figure in human form was used by the Druids to incarcerate and burn their prisoners.

cocculus indicus, and saut,[160] and a' damnable, maddening, thirst-breeding, lust-breeding drugs! Look at that girl that went in wi' a shawl on her back and cam' out wi'out ane! Drunkards frae the breast! – harlots frae the cradle! – damned before they're born! John Calvin had an inkling o' the truth there, I'm a'most driven to think, wi' his reprobation[161] deevil's doctrines!"

"Well – but – Mr Mackaye, I know nothing about these poor creatures."

"Then ye ought. What do ye ken anent the Pacific? Which is maist to your business? – thae barebacked hizzies that play the harlot o' the other side o' the warld, or these – these thousands o' barebacked hizzies that play the harlot o' your ain side – made out o' your ain flesh and blude? You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at hame. If ye'll be a poet at a,' ye maun be a cockney poet; and while the cockneys be what they be, ye maun write, like Jeremiah of old, o' lamentation and mourning and woe, for the sins o' your people […]"

3.42 William Morris: "Prologue: The Wanderers"

William Morris *(1834–1896), poet, writer of prose romances, painter, designer of furniture, printer and 'father' of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. Educated at Oxford, where he discovered the work of John Ruskin* [**3.11**]*, he was throughout his life "moved by the desire to produce beautiful things"; this desire was accompanied by an intense hatred of modern civilisation. In 1858 he published* The Defence of Guinevere, and Other Poems*, one of the most accomplished Victorian contributions to the Matter of Britain. Amongst his many other works, notable are* A Dream of John Ball *(1887) and* News from Nowhere *(1890), both inspired by the socialist ideals he embraced in later life. Repelled by the Industrial Age, Morris in the* Prologue *to* The Earthly Paradise *wistfully evokes Chaucer's London as "small, and white, and clean".*

From The Earthly Paradise*, 1868–1870*

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
Think, that below bridge the green lapping waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,

[160] **grains … saut**: Grains of Paradise (seeds from an African plant), **cocculus indicus** (fruit from a tree in India and S.E. Asia), and **salt** were all used as additives to disguise poor liquor or to increase thirst.

[161] **reprobation**: Calvin's doctrine that God, in His infinite mercy, condemns some people to eternal torment in Hell before they are even born.

Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne[162];
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's[163] pen
Moves over bills of lading: mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

3.43 Henry Mayhew: "The Narrative of a Gay Woman"

Henry Mayhew *(see* [**3.39 HN**]*) was one of the first English writers to depict sex-workers and their trade without sentiment and without censure.* "The Narrative of a Gay Woman [i.e. *sex-worker*] at the West End of the Metropolis," *is taken from the fourth ('Extra') volume of the* London Labour and the London Poor, *published in 1861. Mayhew describes her as "about twenty-one years of age, beneath the ordinary height, and with a very engaging countenance."*

From London Labour and the London Poor *(1861)*

I was born in the county of—, in England, where my father was an extensive farmer, and had a great number of servants. I have three brothers and one younger sister. I was sent to a boarding school at B—, where I was receiving a superior education, and was learning drawing, music, and dancing. During the vacations, and once every quarter, I went home and lived with my parents, where one of my chief enjoyments was to ride out on a pony I had, over the fields, and in the neighbourhood, and occasionally to go to M—, a few miles distant. On these occasions we often had parties of ladies and gentlemen; when some of the best people in the district visited us. I had one of the happiest homes a girl could have.

When I was out riding one day at—, in passing through the town, my pony took fright, and threatened to throw me off, when a young gentleman who was near rode up to my assistance. He rode by my side till we came to a hotel in town, when we both dismounted. Leaving the horses with the hostlers, we had some refreshment. I took out my purse to pay the expenses, but he would not let me and paid for me. We both mounted and proceeded towards my home. On his coming to the door of the house, I invited him

[162] **Guienne**: in the region of Bordeaux, France, noted for its wines.

[163] **Geoffrey Chaucer's pen**: Chaucer, 1343–1400, famous for *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of verse narratives whose form Morris copied in *The Earthly Paradise*. For several years in the 1380s Chaucer was Controller of Taxes on wines and other goods in the Port of London.

to come in, which he did. I introduced him to my papa and mamma, and mentioned the kind service he had done to me. His horse was put up in our stables, and he remained for some time, and had supper with us, when he returned to —. He was very wealthy, resided in London, and only visited M—occasionally with his servants.

I was then attending a boarding-school at B—, and was about fifteen years of age. A few days after this I left home and returned to B—. We corresponded by letter for nearly twelve months.

From the moment he rode up to me at M—I was deeply interested in him, and the attachment increased by the correspondence. He also appeared to be very fond of me. He sometimes came and visited me at home during my school holidays for the next twelve months. One day in the month of May—in summer—he came to our house in his carriage, and we invited him to dinner. He remained with us for the night, and slept with one of my brothers. We were then engaged to each other, and were to be married, so soon as I was eighteen years of age.

The next day he asked my parents if I might go out with him in his carriage. My mamma consented. She asked if any of our servants would go with us, but he thought there was no occasion for this, as his coachman and footman went along with us. We proceeded to B— Railway Station. He left his carriage with the coachman and footman, and pressed me to go with him to London. He pretended to my parents he was only going out for a short drive. I was very fond of him, and reluctantly consented to go with him to London.

He first brought me to Simpson's hotel in the Strand,[164] where we had dinner, then took me to the opera. We went to Scott's supper rooms in the Haymarket.[165] On coming out we walked up and down the Haymarket. He then took me to several of the cafés, where we had wine and refreshments. About four o'clock in the morning he called a Hansom,[166] and drove me to his house; and there seduced me by violence in spite of my resistance. I screamed out, but none of the servants in the house came to assist me. He told his servants I was his young wife he had just brought up from the country.

I wanted to go home in the morning, and began to cry, but he would not let me go. He said I must remain in London with him. I still insisted on going home, and he promised to marry me. He then bought me a watch and chain, rings and bracelets, and presented me with several dresses. After this I lived with him in his house, as though I had been his wife, and rode out with him in his brougham. I often insisted upon being married. He promised to do so, but delayed from time to time. He generally drove out every day over the finest streets, thoroughfares, and parks of the metropolis; and in the

[164] **Simpson's … Strand**: opened as a chess club and coffee house in 1828.

[165] **Haymarket**: theatre district; sex-workers would solicit for business there.

[166] **Hansom**: horse-drawn carriage, patented in 1834 by Joseph **Hansom**.

evenings he took me to the Argyle Room[167] and to the Casino at Holborn.[168] I generally went there very well dressed, and was much noticed on account of my youthful appearance. We also went to the fashionable theatres in the West-end, and several subscription balls. I often rode along Rotten Row[169] with him, and along the drives in Hyde Park. We also went to the seaside, where we lived in the best hotels.

This lasted for two years, when his conduct changed towards me. One evening I went with him to the Assembly Room[170] at Holborn to a masked ball. I was dressed in the character of a fairy queen. My hair was in long curls hanging down my back. He left me in the supper-room for a short time, when a well-dressed man came up to me. When my paramour came in he saw the young man sitting by my side speaking to me. He told him I was his wife, and inquired what he meant by it, to which he gave no reply. He then asked me if I knew him. I replied no. He asked the gentleman to rise, which he did, apologising for his seating himself beside me, and thereby giving offence. On the latter showing him his card, which I did not see, they sat down and had wine together.

We came out of the supper-room, and we had a quarrel about the matter. We walked up and down the ball-room for some time, and at last drove home.

When we got home he quarrelled again with me, struck me, and gave me two black eyes. I was also bruised on other parts of the body, and wanted to leave him that night, but he would not let me. In the morning we went out as usual after breakfast for a drive. Next evening we went to the Casino at Holborn. Many of the gentlemen were staring at me, and he did not like it. I had on a thick Maltese veil to conceal my blackened eyes. The gentleman who had accosted me the previous night came up and spoke to me and my paramour (whom we shall call S.), and had some wine with us. He asked the reason I did not raise my veil. S. said because I did not like to do it in this place. The gentleman caught sight of my eyes, and said they did not look so brilliant as the night before. S. was indignant, and told him he took great liberty in speaking of his wife in this manner. The other remarked that no one could help noticing such a girl, adding that I was too young to be his wife, and that he should not take me to such a place if he did not wish me to be looked at. He told him he ought to take better care of me than to bring me there.

[167] **Argyle Rooms**: (properly 'Argyll'), entertainment venue near Regent Street, opened 1808 and rebuilt 1818.

[168] **Casino at Holborn**: popular venue for dances.

[169] **Rotten Row**: broad track along the south side of Hyde Park, a little less than a mile long, used by fashionable horse riders in the C18–19th. Established by William III in 1690 as the first illuminated road in Britain, its name *Route Du Roi* was corrupted into **Rotten Row**.

[170] **Assembly Rooms**: meeting places, especially for balls, for members of the upper classes.

When we got home we had another quarrel, and he struck me severely on the side. We did not sleep in the same bed that night. On coming down stairs to breakfast next morning I was taken very ill, and a medical man was sent for. The doctor said I was in a fever, and must have had a severe blow or a heavy fall. I was ill and confined to my bed for three months. He went out every night and left me with a nurse and the servants, and seldom returned till three or four o'clock in the morning. He used to return home drunk; generally came into my bedroom and asked if I was better; kissed me and went downstairs to bed.

When I got well he was kind to me, and said I looked more charming than ever. For three or four months after he took me out as usual. The same gentleman met me again in the Holborn one night while S. had gone out for a short time, leaving me alone. He came up and shook hands with me, said he was happy to see me, and wished me to meet him. I told him I could not. S. was meanwhile watching our movements. The gentleman asked me if I was married, when I said that I was. He admired my rings. Pointing to a diamond ring on his finger, he asked me if I would like it. I said no. He said your rings are not so pretty. I still refused it; but he took the ring off his finger and put it on one of mine, and said, "See how well it looks," adding, "Keep it as a memento; it may make you think of me when I am far away." He told me not to mention it to my husband.

Meantime S. was watching me, and came up when the man had gone away, and asked what he had been saying to me. I told him the truth, that the same man had spoken to me again. He asked me what had passed between us, and I told him all, with the exception of the ring. He noticed the ring on my finger, and asked me where I had got it. I declined at first to answer. He then said I was not true to him, and if I would not tell him who gave me the ring he would leave me. I told him the man had insisted on my having it. He thereupon rushed along the room after him, but did not find him. On coming back he insisted on my going home without him. He took me outside to his brougham,[171] handed me in it, and then left me. I went home and sat in the drawing-room till he returned, which was about three o'clock in the morning. He quarrelled with me again for not being true to him. I said I was, and had never left his side for a moment from the time I rose in the morning till I lay down at night. I then told him I would go home and tell my friends all about it, and he was afraid. Soon after he said to me he was going out of town for a week, and wished me to stop at home. I did not like to remain in the house without a woman, and wished to go with him. He said he could not allow me, as he was to be engaged in family matters. He was absent for a week. I remained at home for three nights, and was very dull and wearied, having no one to speak to. I went to my bedroom, washed and dressed, ordered the carriage to be got ready, and went to the Holborn. Who should

[171] **brougham**: four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage, designed in 1839 for Henry Brougham.

I see there but this gentleman again. He was astonished to see me there alone; came up and offered me his arm. I told him I was wearied at home in the absence of S., and came out for a little relaxation. He then asked to see me home, which I declined. I remained till the dancing was nearly over. He got into the brougham with me and drove to Sally's,[172] where we had supper, after which he saw me home. He bade me "good-bye," and said he hoped to see me at the Holborn again some other night. Meantime S. had been keeping watch over me, it appears, and heard of this. When he came home he asked me about it. I told him. He swore the gentleman had connexion with me. I said he had not. He then hit me in the face and shook me, and threatened to lock me up. After breakfast he went out to walk, and I refused to go with him.

When he had gone away I packed up all my things, told the servant to bring a cab, wrote a note and left it on the table. I asked the cabman if he knew any nice apartments a long way off from C—, where I was living. He drove me to Pimlico,[173] and took me to apartments in —, where I have ever since resided.

When I went there I had my purse full of gold, and my dresses and jewellery, which were worth about £300.

One evening soon after I went to the Holborn and met my old friend again, and told him what had occurred. He was astonished, and said he would write to my relations, and have S. pulled up for it. After this he saw me occasionally at my lodgings, and made me presents. He met S. one day in the City, and threatened to write to my friends to let them know how I had been treated. I still went to the Holborn occasionally. One evening I met S., who wished me to go home with him again, but I refused, after the ill-usage he had given me. I generally spent the day in my apartments, and in the evening went to the Argyle, until my money was gone. I now and then got something from the man who had taken my part; but he did not give me so much as I had been accustomed to, and I used to have strange friends against my own wish. Before I received them I had spouted [*pawned*] most of my jewellery, and some of my dresses. When I lived with S. he allowed me £10 a week, but when I went on the loose I did not get so much.

After I had parted with my jewellery and most of my clothes I walked in the Haymarket, and went to the Turkish divans,[174] 'Sally's,' and other cafés and restaurants.

[172] **Sally's**: a supper-room and clip-joint in the Haymarket, frequented by sex-workers and their clients.

[173] **Pimlico**: in the City of Westminster, developed during the Regency as an extension to Belgravia.

[174] **Turkish divans**: where gentlemen, recumbent on a divan, could smoke a cigar and drink coffee; see [**3.25**].

Soon after I became unfortunate, and had to part with the remainder of my dresses. Since then I have been more shabby in appearance, and not so much noticed.

3.44 Thomas De Quincey: "Preliminary Confessions"

For a Note on ***De Quincey*** *see* [**3.19 HN**]. *His* Confessions of an English Opium Eater *was first published in* The London Magazine *(October 1821) and became immensely popular. In it he recounts that while suffering illness and in a miserable condition, he squatted in an empty house in London. He was befriended by a sex-worker*, though he insisted their relationship was chaste. Below is his account of how she saved his life.

From Confessions of an English Opium Eater *(1822)*

[…] For many weeks I had walked at nights with this poor friendless girl up and down Oxford Street, or had rested with her on steps and under the shelter of porticoes. She could not be so old as myself; she told me, indeed, that she had not completed her sixteenth year […] One night, when we were pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt more than usually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square. Thither we went, and we sat down on the steps of a house, which to this hour I never pass without a pang of grief and an inner act of homage to the spirit of that unhappy girl, in memory of the noble action which she there performed. Suddenly, as we sat, I grew much worse. I had been leaning my head against her bosom, and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind, that without some powerful and reviving stimulus I should either have died on the spot, or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all re-ascent under my friendless circumstances would soon have become hopeless. Then it was, at this crisis of my fate, that my poor orphan companion, who had herself met with little but injuries in this world, stretched out a saving hand to me. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment's delay, she ran off into Oxford Street, and in less time than could be imagined returned to me with a glass of port wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach, which at that time would have rejected all solid food, with an instantaneous power of restoration; and for this glass the generous girl without a murmur paid out of her humble purse at a time—be it remembered!—when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase the bare necessaries of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her.

3.45 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: "Jenny"

Dante Gabriel Rossetti *(1828–1882), the son of political refugees from Italy, was from childhood active as a painter and poet. As a poet he was influenced especially by William Blake and John Keats and as a painter by those who rebelled against the 'grand style' favoured by the Royal Academy. In 1848 he became, with John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a movement generally regarded as a revolt against middle-class prudential values and materialism. The movement had the important support of John Ruskin but was criticised by some for seeming to idealise feudalistic medievalism and for privileging sensuality over morals. Rossetti, having published in 1870* "Jenny," *about a London sex-worker*, where the speaker addresses Jenny in her London room, was attacked in 1871 by Robert Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry". This pamphlet, typifying mid-*Victorian narrow-mindedness, greatly distressed Rossetti, but in the next generation his reputation recovered and he was seen as a fore-runner of the Aesthetic Movement. The epitaph on his grave at Birchington-on-Sea in Kent reads "Honoured among Painters as a Painter and Among Poets as a Poet."*

From "Jenny" (1870, written in 1843), lines 111–153

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?
Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
Like winter on the garden-bed
But you had roses left in May, –
They were not gone too. Jenny, nay,
But must your roses die, and those
Their purfled[175] buds that should unclose?
Even so, the leaves are curled apart
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns.

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
As yet of winter Sickness here
Or want alone could waken fear, –
Except when there may rise unsought
Haply at times a passing thought
Of the old days which seem to be
Much older than any history
That is written in any book,
When she would lie in fields and look
Along the ground through the blown grass,
And wonder where the city was.
Far out of sight, whose broil and bale
They told her then for a child's tale.

[175] **purfled**: with a decorative edging.

Jenny, you know the city now,
A child can tell the tale there, how
Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market-night in the Haymarket.[176]
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe,
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue, and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone, and there,
Round the long park, across the bridge,
The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fierce serpent for your heart.

3.46 Christina Rossetti, 'In an Artist's Studio'

Christina Rossetti *(1830–1894) was born in London at Charlotte Street, Portland Place, the youngest child of an Italian patriot refugee, Gabriele Rossetti, and his wife, Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori, also of Italian descent. Christina early began to write poetry, exchanging* bouts rimés *sonnets with her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) while still a teenager. At the same time, with her mother and sister, she became intensely involved with the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England, and much of her subsequent poetry was imbued with her faith. Her first book of poetry was privately printed in 1847, she contributed to the Pre-Raphaelite magazine* The Germ *in 1850, and subsequently came to write many poems and stories, although some were not published during her life-time;* Goblin Market *(1862, revised and amplified in 1879), was the last substantial volume of her poetry to be published while she was still alive. She suffered from serious ill-health from the 1870s onwards, and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1892.*

She sat as a model to her brother Dante Gabriel (see [**3.45 HN**]*) several times, and had a close knowledge of both his painting and his poetry; she understood too the entanglements of his personal life. The poem which we print here—*'In an Artist's Studio'*—was written in 1856 but not published until 1896, after her death. Her brother William Michael Rossetti commented that it concerned Dante Gabriel's studio in London, with its 'constantly repeated heads of the lady whom he afterwards married, Miss Siddal'. Elizabeth ('Lizzie') Siddal, 1829–1862, and Dante Gabriel were married in 1860; Elizabeth committed suicide in 1862.*

[176] **Haymarket**: London street frequented by sex-workers.

'In an Artist's Studio'
One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel; – every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

3.47 Thomas Hardy: "The Ruined Maid"

Thomas Hardy *(1840–1928) was an architect in Dorchester and London before he took to writing. He achieved fame with his many novels, particularly those set in the part of south-western England that he called Wessex (Dorset, Devon, Wiltshire, Somerset, Hampshire and parts of Berkshire). Among these novels are popular favourites like* Far from the Madding Crowd *(1874) and* Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented *(1891), the story of another ruined 'maid'. However, he always regarded himself primarily as a poet. This poem pokes some savage fun at Victorian hypocrisy, which saw a woman's 'ruin' as an irredeemable fall from grace, but a man's ruin as a mere financial downturn. The irony is that while a ruined man loses money and a degree of autonomy, a 'ruined' woman like Amelia may partly gain these things.*

From Poems of the Past and the Present *(1902; written 1866)*

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?[177]
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty"? –
"Oh, didn't you know I'd been ruined"? said she.

"You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding [*digging*] up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!" –
"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.

[177] **in Town**: in London (since ca. 1700).

"At home in the barton [*farm-yard*] you said 'thee' and 'thou,'
And 'thik oon,' and 'theäs oon,' and 't'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny" –
"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

"Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!" –
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

"You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; [*sigh loudly*] but at present you seem
To know not of megrims [*low spirits*] or melancho-ly!" –
"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

"I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" –
"My dear – a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't[178] ruined," said she.

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[178] **ain't**: both dialectal (fitting the old Amelia) and fashionable slang (fitting the new one).

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CHAPTER 4

Period 4: London—Capital of Empire, 1871–1914

INTRODUCTION

This introduction develops the theme of London's rapid expansion and transformation into a modern city, with improved transportation by Underground Railway, electric trams and the omnibus, and unimaginably fast communication via the telegraph and (later) the telephone. It considers the dissemination of literature through the development of periodical publication and the 'railway novel', and the rise of free public libraries established through the Public Libraries Act of 1850. The introduction also contemplates London's morally ambivalent role as the capital of an empire covering a quarter of the globe (as highlighted by the Diamond Jubilee of 1897), and social developments such as the 'scandalous' rise of the 'New Woman' and the struggle for female suffrage.

Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century had witnessed several significant reforms. Among these were the Election Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867, which had lessened the power of the landed gentry and widened the electorate to include middle-class and upper-working-class men. Almost as important was the Secret Ballot Act of 1872 which in effect ensured that electors could no longer be swayed by bribes. In support of these reforms came another which had marked consequences for literature as well as politics: this was the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which made elementary education compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 12. Secondary education also expanded, local day-schools usually charging only modest fees or offering scholarships, and these began to take a respectable place beside the longer-established elite private ('Public') schools. London after 1836 had its own university, and during the latter half of the century several other tertiary institutions were founded. London had always been the hub of the

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nation's commerce. Now, with Gresham College [2.12 n.67], the ancient Inns of Court for lawyers, and the teaching hospitals for physicians and surgeons, London was also now a centre of learning and research.

These reforms were for the benefit of London's ever-increasing population: between 1871 and 1918 it grew rapidly and in 1901 was roughly double what it had been in 1851. London continued to absorb the towns and villages on its borders, and in 1889 this was formalised by the establishment of the County of London, corresponding to what is now termed Inner London. Such a conurbation required improved amenities for its citizens, and some of these, such as Parks and Theatres, are noted in this section of the anthology.[1]

The population also needed better transportation, and in the second half of the century this was developed or expanded. There were now twelve main-line railways that terminated in London (see [3.20]). As Donald J. Olsen writes: "The railway made possible the existence of a larger London, greater even than Greater London, by facilitating not only residence, but employment, business and play at distant parts of the kingdom" (1979, 313). In addition, the Underground opened in 1863, the first subterranean railway in the world, and soon had lines to all parts of the capital. Buses proliferated, with privately-owned licensed and 'pirate' enterprises flourishing until stronger regulation came with public ownership under the London Transport Board, set up in 1933. By the end of the century there were also electric trams.

Communications had been enhanced after the introduction of pre-paid postage in 1840, allowing for three deliveries of mail every working day in central London. The electric telegraph was increasingly employed, especially after it had shown its utility in 1852 with the completion of a cable between London and Paris. The wonders of the telegraph, however, paled beside those of the telephone, the first London exchange being established in 1879.

These changes had their effect on the conditions of authorship. Railways, for example, led to the emergence of the 'railway novel,' a cheap, slim, six-penny paper-backed volume that could be slipped into a traveller's overcoat pocket. Privately-owned lending libraries helped feed the demand for fiction, and made possible the continued popularity of the three-volume novel. There was a plethora of magazines and these encouraged a demand for short stories as well as serialized novels. London Clubs in Pall Mall (see [4.6]) subscribed to the fiction-carrying journals and reviews such as the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, *Belgravia*, *Frazer's*, *Blackwood's* and the *Cornhill*. Most of the novelists featured in Period IV fashioned their works to fit these out-lets. George Gissing's *New Grub Street* [4.13] is especially illuminating on these matters.

Sir Herbert Maxwell, in *Sixty Years a Queen*, was rather uneasy about the tastes of the enlarged readership:

[1] For London parks see [4.8], [4.13] and [4.16]; for theatres see [4.14] and [4.25].

> As to the impulse given to the demand for literature by the extension of education, there need be no doubt whatever; the enormous supply continually pouring from the press of the country is sufficient proof of that. In respect of books, the returns from the numerous public libraries in the country show that works of fiction are in request far beyond all the other branches of literature put together. Some sinister conclusions have been drawn from that fact, but it is not always remembered that most of those who frequent free libraries are hard-working people, who turn to books for recreation rather than instruction. On the whole, English fiction remains wholesome, a result which, notwithstanding the democratic nature of our Constitution, is owing, undoubtedly, in large measure to the tone maintained in her Court by our present Monarch. (182)

However, what Maxwell would regard as unwholesome literature certainly flourished in the late Victorian Age, even if it had to be hunted down furtively, as in the opening pages of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* [4.28]. But Maxwell was essentially correct to assert that "on the whole, English fiction remains wholesome" (182): this was because middle-class readers usually subscribed to lending libraries, especially Mudie's, whose owner, Charles Mudie (1818–1890) acted as a censor and banned unseemly books from his shelves. For example, he refused to circulate three novels of George Moore (see [4.4 **HN**] and [4.12 **HN**]; these were also banned by W. H. Smith,[2] whose company managed railway book-stalls.

The influence of the lending libraries was indeed great, and they had been largely instrumental in keeping up the demand for the three-decker novel, using which they could satisfy three borrowers with one novel—if the three borrowers were prepared to wait in line. But in the mid-1890s these libraries changed their policy. Bernard Bergonzi comments in his edition of George Gissing's *New Grub Street*: "the circulating libraries, which for so long had buttressed the three-decker, turned abruptly against it, and informed publishers that they would no longer be ordering it" (15). The consequences were clear: "in 1894, 184 three-volume novels appeared, in 1897 only four […] novels became shorter and cheaper" (Bergonzi 1968, 16). Furthermore, an author's work would now be rewarded by a royalty system rather than by outright purchase. These would become the arrangements that would generally obtain in the twentieth century.

Whether Maxwell would have thought the novels of Gissing "wholesome" is doubtful. Though they are quoted generously in this anthology, they were not usually very popular, being written in too unromantic a vein—for Gissing has no rival amongst English novelists as a Realist. As the fiction writer and journalist W. Pett Ridge commented: "Gissing's books could not, I imagine, have had a wide circulation, but the circulation was fit, and no man who wrote so gloomily about gloomy people could expect to have a very large number of readers" (1923, 23).

[2]W. H. Smith (1825–1891) became an MP in 1869 and First Lord of the Admiralty in 1874; he was satirised as Sir Joseph Porter in Gilbert and Sullivan's *H M S Pinafore*.

Pett Ridge's own novels, by contrast, were extremely popular in their day, though they are unread now, and he had happy memories of the period 1871 to 1914:

> It would be difficult to make a comparison in value of all the changes London has seen in forty years, and it will be discreet not to make the attempt. The electric light made its bluish, ghost-like appearance outside the old Gaiety Theatre[3] in '78; a chairman of a gas company said, "When the Paris Exhibition" – then being held – "closes, the electric light will close with it!"
>
> Motor-drawn vehicles I first saw in the 'nineties with a man ahead carrying a cautionary red flag, and under the four miles an hour limit. Exemption from these rules came in '96, and there was a drive London to Brighton; few of the starters lasted the distance. The motor bicycle came in, lumberingly at first, with the new century; it did not achieve popularity until '06. The telephone service was adopted by the Postmaster-General in '05. London saw the X-rays[4] in '96, and radium[5] was talked about in '03. (1923, 225)

Here Pett Ridge, writing in 1926, is recalling London as it was before the First World War, and he speaks as if London had then been on the verge of entering a new Golden Age. In 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, there were many to claim that the Golden Age had already arrived. Queen Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India in 1874, and London could well regard itself as the greatest city in the world, at the centre of the greatest empire that had ever existed, embracing a quarter of the globe and a quarter of its people. It celebrated accordingly:

> On the evening of June 22, and for two or three days following, London was ablaze with illuminations. In the city especially these were on a scale of unparalleled magnificence. The Bank of England was fringed and festooned with myriads of many-coloured lamps, while from the parapet of the corner which looks towards Cheapside there glowed and scintillated a dazzling fan-shaped device of huge size. Over the chief entrance appeared the following inscription in letters of living fire: "She Wrought Her People Lasting Good." The pillars of the Mansion House[6] and the Royal Exchange were entwined with bands of light, and every detail of their architecture was accentuated by rows of tiny lamps. In this, the very heart of London, it was as light as day. It may be mentioned that 35,000 gas jets were used in decorating the Mansion House alone. (Maxwell 1897, 219)

But these lavish and expensive illuminations did not prove that Britain's world dominance was merited. Great power should be accompanied by

[3] **Gaiety Theatre**: established as the Strand Musick Theatre in 1864.

[4] **X-rays**: discovered in 1895 by William Conrad Roentgen.

[5] **radium**: the first radioactive element to be discovered (by Marie Curie in 1898).

[6] **Mansion House**: official residence of the Lord Mayor of London.

dutiful responsibility, as Rudyard Kipling wrote in "Recessional", where he warned against imperial boasting, subtitling his poem "1897." He reminded his readers that great empires such as Nineveh and great trading cities such as Tyre were now forgotten or of no account:

> Far-called, our navies melt away –
> On dune and headland sinks the fire –
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
> Judge of the Nations, spare us yet.
> Lest we forget – lest we forget! [13–18]

Likewise it is against the Jubilee's presentation of London as a fount of light that we should place the opening of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [4.20], first published in 1899. True, in one sense the title refers to central Africa, but it also suggests that London has had, and still has, its own dark phases. Furthermore, Conrad's *The Secret Agent* [4.28] reflects some of the discontents that were flourishing away from the lights of London and that were seeking to bring down London and the Empire.

Conrad is rather contemptuous of his would-be revolutionaries, depicting them as careless of the human pain their actions might cause. There were, however, activists, often Socialists, who hoped to bring about political change by peaceful means. They were cruelly disappointed when the two largest demonstrations of the 1880s in London ended in violence. These were the Black Monday Riot of 8 February 1886 (in which William Morris [3.42 **HN**] was involved) and the Bloody Sunday Riot of 13 November 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.[7] Both were brutally quashed by the police and military, but the reform movement survived: the Independent Labour Party was formed in 1893 and in 1906 was affiliated with the Labour Party, which in due course would become one of the two major political parties in Britain.

A political issue that demanded public attention throughout this period concerned the rights of women. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 had given married women limited rights to own property, and these rights were extended by the Act of 1882 which allowed women to keep any money that they earned and any property that they inherited, and to bequeath it as they wished. However, there was continuing agitation for women to be given the vote, to be treated under the law as the equals of men, and to receive full respect as thinking and feeling creatures. Some writers—Margaret Oliphant [4.22], Mary Ward [4.24] and Lady St Helier [4.25]—depicted women exercising considerable influence on male politicians though they themselves had no voting rights. There were, of course, individual approaches to this

[7] The Golden Jubilee is the setting for Gissing's novel of domestic disenchantment *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894).

issue—George Eliot [4.21 **HN**] did not favour it and Mary Ward strenuously opposed it. But these and others—Gissing [4.23], Zangwill [4.29] and Levy [4.31]—were alike keen for women's voices to be heard, louder and clearer. Their aspirations would not be fully satisfied: in particular a woman's right to vote would not be recognised until 1918.[8] But by 1914 many more women enjoyed economic independence than had been the case in 1871.

Sir Herbert Maxwell gives no consideration to the rights of women in *Sixty Years a Queen*. He also overlooks or ignores in his account of the Jubilee celebrations the Irish Question—whether Ireland should recover the power of self-government which it had lost in 1801 when its Parliament was abolished. This problem would come to a bloody climax at the end of our Period 4. For the moment the Irish writers Wilde [4.7] and Moore [4.4], exercising clever mockery, were content to show Londoners to themselves, without directly advocating social reforms, let alone Irish independence.

In any case, it was questionable whether those in power had any deep desire for social change. In Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) there is an elderly American, Mr Touchett, who has resided in England for thirty years; he declares—and this may well be James's own opinion—that such a peer of the realm as the character Lord Warburton merely flirts with the idea of reform:

> Their radical views are a kind of amusement; they've got to have some amusement, and they might have coarser tastes than that. You see they're very luxurious, and these progressive ideas are about their biggest luxury. They make them feel moral and yet don't damage their position. They think a great deal of their position; don't let one of them ever persuade you he doesn't, for if you were to proceed on that basis you'd be pulled up very short. (Vol. 1, ch. 8)

The protagonist of another James novel, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886: [4.2] and [4.19]), involves himself in revolutionary politics, but approaches the workaday and tawdry aspects of London rather as an aesthete or a dilettante might. There is a strong suspicion that he loves London as it is, not as it might be.

Indeed, our writers do not often rhapsodise about the perfections of London. On the other hand, unlike what we have frequently seen in Period III, in Period IV we rarely find trenchant criticism of the capital. Rather, there is sometimes gentle and even loving satire, as in W. S. Gilbert [4.14] or C. W. Murphy [4.18]. There is also a curious and recurring fascination with London's murkiness, its mists, grime and inconvenience, as in Emily Cook [4.5], Henry James [4.6] and Anthony Trollope [4.15]. Occasionally there are even glimpses of London as a waste land, as in George Moore [4.4]:

[8]To vote, a woman had to be aged 30 or more and to satisfy certain property conditions; full adult suffrage for women did not come until 1928.

"They passed bits of common with cows and a stray horse, also a little rural cemetery; but London suddenly began again – parish after parish, the same blue roofs, the same tenement houses."

In any case, writers who saw the need for reform were not confident that it would come. H. G. Wells, for example, presents two Londoners as rather comical, even inane, dreamers: "He likened the Serpentine to Life, and found Meaning in the dark banks of Kensington Gardens and the remote bright lights. 'The long struggle,' he said, 'and the lights at the end,' – though he really did not know what he meant by the lights at the end" [4.8].

D. H. Lawrence [4.30] goes further and shows the distress of London's outcasts as virtually insurmountable.

William Morris [3.42], intensely aware of London's social problems, favoured in later life a kind of Socialism that would replace the factory system and mechanised manufacturing generally with small work-shops, where goods would be produced by workers who would approach their tasks with the values of craftsmen, as he imagined had been the case in Chaucer's time.

Ruskin in his old age viewed London rather as Morris did. Though he used trains and trams he thought earlier modes of transport had more romance and poetry in them: "How much happier the privilege of entering a mediaeval city […] than the free ingress of being jammed between a dray and a tram-car at a railroad station!"[9]

Virginia Woolf at the opening of *The Voyage Out* [4.33], through her central character Mrs Ambrose, depicts Thames-side London very much as some of our previous writers do, the murky river flanked by famous monuments, against a background of regimented traffic and a city that has seen better times. But the viewer is now an isolated figure, experiencing depression and alienation.

Only one of our writers, however, goes so far as to wish London away. This is Richard Jefferies, who in *After London* [4.35] takes imaginative delight in picturing a London, full of unnatural, inhuman and ghastly filth, and with no compensating beauties, lying at the bottom of a lake. Jefferies belongs to an English tradition that prefers the country to the town. But most of our other writers, even William Cobbett who describes London as the Great Wen [3.4], have faith in London's ability to renew, refresh and redeem itself.

Beatrix Potter, our final writer [4.35], is perhaps the most balanced of them all. As she says, "One place suits one person, another place suits another person. For my part I prefer to live in the country, like Timmy Willie." But her titular hero, Johnny Town-mouse, would rather agree with Dr Johnson [2.18]: "there is in London all that life can afford."

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[9] *Praeterita*, Vol. 1, ch. 6, Section 132. See also [3.11 **HN**].

AN OPENING MISCELLANY

4.1 Thomas Hardy, "Snow in the Suburbs"

For a note on ***Thomas Hardy*** *see* [3.47 **HN**]. *When Hardy gave up writing novels and concentrated on poetry, he published many poems that were written a generation before. "Snow in the Suburbs," for example, was first published in 1925 but had been written 45 or so years earlier, when he and his wife lived in Upper Tooting. The poem exhibits Hardy's ability to create a poetic form nicely fitting the subject matter, as in lines six and seven, where the gentle behaviour of the snowflakes is delicately supported by the metre. Hardy's acute observation of, and sympathy for, natural phenomena are very clear – for example, the sparrow, the cat, and even the twigs on the branches of the trees.*

From Human Shows *(1925) (written 1878–1881)*

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute:
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back upward, when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and descend again.
The palings are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
And overturns him,
And near inurns him,
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

4.2 Henry James, a Saturday Evening Stroll

Henry James *(1843–1916) was born in New York but migrated to Europe in 1875 and spent 20 years in London. He wrote over 100 short stories and articles and over 25 novels and novellas. The protagonist in* The Princess Casamassima, *Hyacinth Robinson, grew up in London as an impoverished 'urchin.' As an adult he becomes involved in revolutionary politics, encouraged by his friend Paul Muniment (see* [4.19]*). As he walks from his lodgings in*

north London he is absorbed in the sights afforded on a Saturday evening in the 'vulgar' districts of the humble tradesmen and other workers, with whom he feels an affinity.

From The Princess Casamassima *(1886), Bk 1, ch. 5*

[… Hyacinth …] liked the streets at all times, but especially at nightfall in the autumn, of a Saturday, when in the vulgar districts the smaller shops and open-air industries were doubly active, and big clumsy torches flared and smoked over handcarts and costermongers'[10] barrows drawn up in the gutters. Hyacinth had roamed through the great city since he was an urchin, but his imagination had never ceased to be stirred by the preparations for Sunday that went on in the evening among the toilers and spinners, his brothers and sisters, and he lost himself in all the quickened crowding and pushing and staring at lighted windows and chaffering at the stalls of fishmongers and hucksters. He liked the people who looked as if they had got their week's wage and were prepared to lay it out discreetly; and even those whose use of it would plainly be extravagant and intemperate; and best of all, those who evidently hadn't received it at all and who wandered about, disinterestedly, vaguely, with their hands in empty pockets, watching others make their bargains and fill their satchels, or staring at the striated sides of bacon, at the golden cubes and triangles of cheese, at the graceful festoons of sausage, in the most brilliant of the windows. He liked the reflection of the lamps on the wet pavements, the feeling and smell of the carboniferous London damp; the way the winter fog[11] blurred and suffused the whole place, made it seem bigger and more crowded, produced halos and dim radiations, trickles, and evaporations on the plates of glass.

4.3 Lionel Johnson: "By the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross"

The equestrian statue of Charles I was cast in bronze by Hubert Le Sueur in 1633. It was hidden during the Commonwealth (1649–60) but later purchased by Charles II. It was erected at Charing Cross in 1675 where it still remains. It is sited so that it faces the royal palace of Whitehall, adjacent to the Banqueting House outside which Charles had been executed in 1649, becoming, in the eyes of royalists, a martyr and saint (see [1.27]*).*

Lionel Pigot Johnson *(1867–1902) was educated at Winchester and Oxford and lived mainly in London. He was a member of the "The Rhymers' Club" in Fleet Street, an informal group of poets, among them W B Yeats, who much admired Johnson's work as poet and critic. He became a Catholic convert in 1891. According to the* Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, *"[h]is own homosexuality, always strictly repressed, may well have added to his sense of isolation and consciousness of 'the Dark Angel' [of melancholia]." His early death at 35 was hastened by alcoholism.*

[10] **costermongers**: costermongers sold fruit and vegetables in the street.

[11] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

From Poems *(1895)*

To William Watson[12]

Sombre and rich, the skies;
Great glooms, and starry plains.
Gently the night wind sighs;
Else a vast silence reigns.

The splendid silence clings
Around me: and around
The saddest of all kings
Crowned, and again discrowned.

Comely and calm, he rides
Hard by his own Whitehall:
Only the night wind glides:
No crowds, nor rebels, brawl.

Gone, too, his Court: and yet,
The stars his courtiers are:
Stars in their stations set;
And every wandering star.

Alone he rides, alone,
The fair and fatal king:
Dark night is all his own,
That strange and solemn thing.

Which are more full of fate:
The stars; or those sad eyes?
Which are more still and great:
Those brows; or the dark skies?

Although his whole heart yearn
In passionate tragedy:
Never was face so stern
With sweet austerity.[13]

Vanquished in life, his death
By beauty made amends:
The passing of his breath
Won his defeated ends.

[12] ***To William Watson***: William Watson (1858–1935), a popular poet of the 1890s; twice passed over as Poet Laureate, in favour of Alfred Austin (now all but forgotten) in 1886 and Robert Bridges in 1913.

[13] Marvell also paid tribute to the dignified demeanour of Charles on the scaffold; see [1.27].

Brief life, and hapless? Nay:
Through death, life grew sublime.
Speak after sentence?[14] Yea:
And to the end of time.

Armoured he rides, his head
Bare to the stars of doom:
He triumphs now, the dead,
Beholding London's gloom.

Our wearier spirit faints,
Vexed in the world's employ:
His soul was of the saints;
And art to him was joy.[15]

King, tried in fires of woe!
Men hunger for thy grace:
And through the night I go,
Loving thy mournful face.

Yet, when the city sleeps;
When all the cries are still:
The stars and heavenly deeps
Work out a perfect will.

4.4 George Moore: A Train Journey

George Moore *(1852–1933) was a novelist, poet, and dramatist. He studied art in London and Paris with little success, before turning to literature of the realist style. His novels caused much controversy: they contained what was regarded as salacious, immoral, and radically unconventional. After a decade in Ireland, where he was born, he lived mainly in London. In his* Esther Waters *the heroine is an uneducated servant and has a child by William Latch, a footman in the household in which she works. The two eventually marry, but he is an inveterate gambler, which accounts for them taking the train from London to Epsom to watch (and bet on) the Derby. The novel is set in the 1870s. For a note on the building of railways see* [3.20].

From Esther Waters *(1894), ch. 31*

They rolled out of the grey station into the raw sunlight. The plate-glass drew the rays together till they burnt the face and hands. They sped alongside of

[14] ***Speak after sentence?***: After sentence had been passed on Charles at his trial in Westminster Hall the President, John Bradshaw, forbade him to speak.

[15] **art to him was joy**: Charles built up a huge art collection at Whitehall, which was largely dispersed in the Commonwealth. He also commissioned the magnificent ceiling by Rubens in the Banqueting House.

the upper windows nearly on a level with the red and yellow chimney pots; they passed open spaces filled with cranes, old iron, and stacks of railway sleepers, pictorial advertisements, sky signs, great gasometers rising round and black in their iron cages over-topping or nearly the slender spires, and behind them the great London plain of the roofs dim with morning mist, broken here and there with a fringe of foliage, the trees of some distant park. A train steamed along a hundred-arched viaduct; and along a black embankment other trains rushed by in a whirl of wheels, bringing thousands of clerks up from the suburbs to their city toil.

The excursion jogged on, stopping for long intervals before strips of sordid garden where shirts and pink petticoats were blowing. Little streets ascended the hillsides; no more trams; 'buses, too, had disappeared, and afoot the folk hurried among the lonely pavements of their suburbs. At Clapham Junction betting men had crowded the platform; they all wore grey overcoats with race-glasses slung over their shoulders. And the train still rolled through the brick wilderness which old John said was all country forty years ago […]

They passed bits of common with cows and a stray horse, also a little rural cemetery; but London suddenly began again—parish after parish, the same blue roofs, the same tenement houses. But this last parish was the last. The train had passed the first cedar and the first tennis lawn. And knowing it to be a Derby excursion the players paused in their play and looked up. Again the line was blocked; the train stopped again and again. But it had left London behind, and the last stoppage was in front of a beautiful June landscape. A thick meadow with a square weather-beaten church showing between the spreading trees; miles of green corn, with birds flying in the bright air, and lazy clouds going out, making way for the endless blue of a long summer's day.

DELIGHTS AND BEAUTIES

4.5 Emily Constance Cook: The Respectable Grime of Ages

The long-standing tradition of celebratory descriptions of London's impressive architecture, its imposing topographical features, and the renowned grandeur of its buildings, gave rise to a sub-genre of less serious, sometimes highly romanticized, accounts of the city. These became enormously popular at the turn of the century (roughly 1890–1910). Their authors felt free to offer personal, even eccentric opinions. They were often less interested in commonplace facts than in curiosities—out-of-the-way taverns, street games, pavement artists, and customs that had survived from a bygone London. Charles W. Heckethorn's London Souvenirs *(1899) was notable as one of these, and another (slightly more serious) was E V Lucas's* A Wanderer in London *(1905). In the extract below,* ***Emily Constance Cook*** *(1857–1903) surprises the reader with her whimsical appreciation of the dirt of London's buildings.*

From Highways and Byways of London *(1902), ch. 2*

[…] This same blue-grey mist of London, especially near the river, is rarely ever entirely absent. Chemists may tell you that it is merely carbon, a product of the soot, but what does that matter? In its own place and way it is beautiful. The heresy has before now been ventured, that London would not be half so picturesque if it were cleaner; and from the river this fact is driven home more than ever to the lover of the beautiful. Blackened wharves, that through the dimmed light take on all the air of "magic casements"[16]—great bridges, invisible till close at hand, that loom down suddenly on the passing steamer with the roar of many feet, a rattle of many wheels, a rumble of many trains; vast Charing Cross vaguely seen overhead—immense, grandiose, darkening all the stream; the Venetian white tower of St Magnus,[17] gleaming all at once before blackened St Paul's; and, most popular of all London views, the tall Clock Tower of the Houses of Parliament [2.31, n.144], with its long terraced wall, reflecting its shining lines in the broad waters. As ivy and creepers adorn a building, so does the respectable grime of ages clothe London stones as with a garment of beauty.[18]

4.6 Henry James: The Appeal of the Great City

For a note on ***Henry James*** *see* [4.2 **HN**]. *One of the major preoccupations of James was the differences he observed between the European and American ways of life – the old world and the new. Here, while acknowledging the ugliness and sordidness of certain parts of London, he evokes the singular attractions that the city holds for him.*

From "London" 6, in The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine *57 (November–April 1888–1889)*

And yet I should not go so far as to say that it is a condition of such geniality to close one's eyes upon the immense misery; on the contrary, I think it is partly because we are irremediably conscious of that dark gulf that the most general appeal of the great city remains exactly what it is, the largest chapter of human accidents. I have no idea of what the future evolution of the strangely mingled monster may be; whether the poor will improve away the rich, or the rich will expropriate the poor, or they will continue to dwell together on their present imperfect terms of intercourse. Certain it is, at any rate, that the impression of suffering is a part of the general response; it is

[16] **"magic casements"**: Quoted from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," St. 7. A **casement** is a window (in Keats' case, "opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

[17] **St Magnus:** St Magnus the Martyr, in Lower Thames St. Medieval in origin, it was rebuilt by Wren after the Great Fire, as an "Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold" (T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 1922).

[18] **garment of beauty:** Possibly alluding to Wordsworth, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," line 4 [3.12].

one of the things that mingle with all the others to make the sound that is supremely dear to the consistent London-lover—the rumble of the tremendous human mill. This is the note which, in all its modulations, haunts and fascinates and inspires him. And whether or no he may succeed in keeping the misery out of the picture, he will freely confess that the latter is not spoiled for him by some of its duskiest shades. We do not like London well enough till we like its defects: the dense darkness of much of its winter, the soot in the chimney-pots,—and everywhere else,—the early lamplight, the brown blur of the houses, the splashing of hansoms in Oxford Street or the Strand on December afternoons.

There is still something to me that recalls the enchantments of children – the anticipation of Christmas, the delight of a holiday walk—in the way the shop-fronts shine into the fog. It makes each of them seem a little world of light and warmth, and I can still waste time in looking at them, with dirty Bloomsbury on one side and dirtier Soho on the other. There are winter effects, not intrinsically sweet, it would appear, which somehow touch the chords of memory, and even the fount of tears, in absence: as, for instance, the front of the British Museum on a black afternoon, or the portico, when the weather is vile, of one of the big square clubs in Pall Mall. I can give no adequate account of the subtle poetry of such reminiscences; it depends upon associations of which we have often lost the thread. The wide colonnade of the Museum, its symmetrical wings, the high iron fence, in its granite setting, the sense of the misty halls within, where all the treasures lie—these things loom through a thickness of atmosphere which doesn't make them dreary, but on the contrary imparts to them something of a cheer of red lights in a storm. I think the romance of a winter afternoon in London arises partly from the fact that, when it is not altogether smothered, the general lamplight takes this hue of hospitality. Such is the colour of the interior glow of the clubs in Pall Mall, which I positively like best when the fog loiters upon their monumental staircases.

4.7 Oscar Wilde, "Impression du Matin"

This was an early poem by ***Oscar Wilde*** *(1854–1900). Wilde was born in Dublin and was a brilliant classical scholar at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was heavily influenced by the aesthetic theories of John Ruskin (1819–1900)* [3.11 **HN**] *and Walter Pater (1839–1894) (see* [4.10 **HN**]*). He settled in London and became well known for his witty conversation, outrageous iconoclasm, and flamboyance in dress and manners. He wrote one highly successful novel* (The Picture of Dorian Gray, *1891), many articles, and (in the last decade of his life) several equally successful plays, including* The Importance of being Earnest *(1895). In 1895 the homosexuality that he had refused to conceal led to his imprisonment for "committing acts of gross indecency with certain male persons." At the end of his two-year gaol sentence he moved to France, where he died in poverty (as 'Sebastian Melmoth') some three years later.*

His "Impression du Matin," written in the In Memoriam *stanza (see* [3.6]*) and influenced by that poem ("suddenly arose the clang / Of waking life" recalls Tennyson's "The noise of life begins again"), also owes much to the paintings ("Nocturnes") of London at night by James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), whom he knew. The subtly changing shades and occasional splashes of colour are certainly reminiscent of some of Whistler's "Nocturnes." The last stanza comes as a surprise: the sudden appearance of the sex-worker (see also* [3.45]*)—who is a creature of both departing night and coming day—is a reminder of the sordid reality that co-exists with the slightly romanticized view of the Thames and London.*

From Poems *(1881)*

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold
Changed to a harmony in grey;
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropped [*left*] from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog[19] came creeping down
The bridges, till the houses' walls
Seemed changed to shadows, and St Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang
Of waking life; the streets were stirred
With country wagons; and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
The daylight kissing her wan hair,
Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

4.8 H. G. Wells: An Evening in Hyde Park

H. G. Wells *(1866–1946) was a prolific writer of novels and short stories on a great variety of subjects, particularly science fiction and romance, history, politics and social disadvantage. Early in his career he became a socialist and many of his works of fiction and history reflect his political outlook. His realistic accounts of lower-middle-class life often have a comic element:* Love and Mr Lewisham *is one of these. In this extract Lewisham and his wife Ethel on their honeymoon, full of love's rapture, are inspired by the quiet scenery of Hyde Park.*

[19] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

From Love and Mr Lewisham *(1900), ch. 22*

On Sunday evening they went for a long rambling walk through the quiet streets, coming out at last into Hyde Park. The early spring night was mild and clear and the kindly moonlight was about them. They went to the bridge and looked down the Serpentine, with the lights of Paddington yellow and remote. They stood there, dim little figures and very close together. They whispered and became silent.

Presently it seemed that something passed, and Lewisham began talking in his magnificent vein. He likened the Serpentine to Life, and found Meaning in the dark banks of Kensington Gardens and the remote bright lights. "The long struggle," he said, "and the lights at the end,"—though he really did not know what he meant by the lights at the end. Neither did Ethel, though the emotion was indisputable. "We are Fighting the World," he said, finding great satisfaction in the thought, "All the world is against us – and we are fighting it all."

"We will not be beaten," said Ethel.

"How could we be beaten – together"? said Lewisham. "For you I would fight a dozen worlds."

It seemed a very sweet and noble thing to them under the sympathetic moonlight, almost indeed too easy for their courage, to be merely fighting the world.

4.9 Robert Bridges, "London Snow"

This poem is the most anthologized of all those by ***Robert Bridges*** *(1844–1930), although his long* Testament of Beauty *(1929) is his finest work – the culmination of his poetic career. Bridges began his working life as a physician but, even before his early retirement through ill health in 1881, he wrote poetry and plays, becoming Poet Laureate in 1913. He was interested in phonetics, grammar, and prosody and was co-founder of the Society for Pure English. "London Snow," in the avant-garde form of 'opened' iambic pentameter (see Groves* 2011*), is a vivid evocation of the beauty of the city under a night's snow and the responses to it of the Londoners, who wake to appreciate a new and marvellous world.*

From Poems. Third Series *(1880)*

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof, and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare;
The eye marvelled – marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;
The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
"O look at the trees!" they cried, "O look at the trees!"

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asunder:
When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken.

THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

4.10 Oscar Wilde: "London Models"

The Aesthetic Movement was a mid-nineteenth century artistic reaction to the materialistic and conservative Victorian traditions. In England it flourished in the 1880s. It was indebted to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement and the artistic theories of John Ruskin (1819–1900) and Walter Pater (1839–94). Writers such as ***Oscar Wilde*** *(1854–1900) and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) emphasized the superiority of aesthetic values rather than political, social, or moral subject matter. The commonly used phrase 'art for art's sake' encapsulated the theory that appreciation of literature (or any of the arts) lay in recognizing the beauty of the art form alone when it was divorced from any deeper meaning. Taste and discrimination were encouraged by the Movement's exponents at the expense of didacticism and practicality. Freedom of creative expression led to extravagant and eccentric behaviour among the aesthetes who were frequently ridiculed—in* Punch *and in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera,* Patience *(1881).*

Wilde's article, "London Models" is a witty reflection on the difference between how female and male models appear in paintings as opposed to their actual life, behaviour, and indeed intellectual capacity. It is a comic exposé of the art of posing—at which Wilde himself of course excelled. See also [4.7 **HN**].

From The English Illustrated Magazine *6 (January 1889)*

[…] As a rule the model, nowadays, is a pretty girl, from about twelve to twenty-five years of age, who knows nothing about art, cares less, and is merely anxious to earn seven or eight shillings a day without much trouble. English models rarely look at a picture, and never venture on any aesthetic theories. In fact they realize very completely Mr Whistler's idea of the function of an art critic, for they pass no criticisms at all.[20] They accept all schools of art with the grand catholicity[21] of the auctioneer, and sit to a fantastic young impressionist as readily as to a learned and laborious academician. They are neither for the Whistlerites, nor against them; the quarrel between the school of facts and the school of effects[22] touches them not; idealistic and naturalistic are words that convey no meaning to their ears; they merely desire that the studio shall be warm, and the lunch hot, for all charming artists give their models lunch.

As to what they are asked to do they are equally indifferent. On Monday they will don the rags of a beggar-girl for Mr Pumper, whose pathetic pictures of modern life draw such tears from the public, and on Tuesday they will pose in a peplum[23] for Mr Phoebus, who thinks that all really artistic subjects are necessarily B.C. They career gaily through all centuries and through all costumes, and like actors, are only interesting when they are not themselves. They are extremely good-natured, and very accommodating. "What do you sit for"? said a young artist to a model who had sent him in her card (all models by the way have cards and a small black bag). "Oh, for anything you like, sir," said the girl; "landscape if necessary!"

Intellectually, it must be acknowledged, they are Philistines, but physically they are perfect—at least some are. Though none of them can talk Greek, many can look Greek, which to a nineteenth-century painter is naturally of great importance. If they are allowed, they chatter a great deal, but they never say anything. Their observations are the only *banalités* heard in Bohemia. However, though they cannot appreciate the artist as an artist, they are quite ready to appreciate the artist as a man. They are very sensitive to kindness, respect, and generosity […]

[20] **Mr Whistler's idea … at all:** James McNeill **Whistler** (1834–1903) was a friend of Wilde and an advocate of the Aesthetic Movement until the mid-1880s, when he became hostile to both—hence Wilde's sarcasm.

[21] **catholicity**: inclusiveness, indifference to distinctions.

[22] **school of facts … effects:** Alluding to the opposing theories of whether the subject or the depiction of it is the more important.

[23] **peplum:** embroidered robe worn by women in ancient Greece.

When they are tired a wise artist gives them a rest. Then they sit in a chair and read penny-dreadfuls, till they are roused from the tragedy of literature to take their place again in the tragedy of art. A few of them smoke cigarettes. This, however, is regarded by the other models as showing a want of seriousness, and is not generally approved of. They are engaged by the day and by the half-day. The tariff is a shilling an hour, to which great artists usually add an omnibus[24] fare. The two best things about them are their extraordinary prettiness, and their extreme respectability. As a class they are very well behaved, particularly those who sit for the figure, a fact which is curious or natural according to the view one takes of human nature. They usually marry well, and sometimes they marry the artist. In neither case do they ever sit again. For an artist to marry his model is as fatal as for a *gourmet* to marry his cook, the one gets no sittings, and the other gets no dinners […]

[…] Then there is the true Academy model. He is usually a man of thirty, rarely good-looking, but a perfect miracle of muscles. In fact he is the apotheosis of anatomy, and is so conscious of his own splendour that he tells you of his tibia and his thorax, as if no one else had anything of the kind. Then come the Oriental models. The supply of these is limited, but there are always about a dozen in London. They are very much sought after as they can remain immobile for hours, and generally possess lovely costumes. However, they have a poor opinion of English art, which they regard as something between a vulgar personality and a commonplace photograph. Next we have the Italian youth who has either come over specially to be a model, or takes to it when his organ is out of repair.[25] He is often quite charming with his large melancholy eyes, his crisp hair, and his slim brown figure. It is true he eats garlic, but then he can stand like a faun and couch like a leopard, so he is forgiven. He is always full of pretty compliments, and has been known to have kind words of encouragement for even our greatest artists. As for the English lad of the same age, he never sits at all. Apparently he does not regard the career of a model as a serious profession. In any case he is rarely if ever to be got hold of. English boys too are difficult to find. Sometimes an ex-model who has a son will curl his hair, and wash his face, and bring him the round of the studios, all soap and shininess. The young school don't like him, but the older school do, and when he appears on the walls of the Royal Academy he is called *The Infant Samuel*.[26] Occasionally also an artist catches a couple of *gamins* [*street-urchins*] in the gutter and asks them to come to his studio. The first time they always appear, but after that they don't keep their appointments. They dislike sitting still, and have a strong and perhaps natural

[24] **omnibus**: see [3.21], n.82.

[25] **when his organ is out of repair**: Wilde implies that **an Italian youth** is likely to be a busking **organ**-grinder by trade (see [4.29], n.79); he may also intend a sly allusion to the youth's penis, implying an alternative source of income.

[26] ***The Infant Samuel***: See 1 Samuel 3.

objection to looking pathetic. Besides they are always under the impression that the artist is laughing at them. It is a sad fact, but there is no doubt that the poor are completely unconscious of their own picturesqueness. Those of them who can be induced to sit do so with the idea that the artist is merely a benevolent philanthropist who has chosen an eccentric method of distributing alms to the undeserving. Perhaps the School Board will teach the London *gamin* his own artistic value, and then they will be better models than they are now. One remarkable privilege belongs to the Academic model, that of extorting a sovereign from any newly elected Associate or R.A. They wait at Burlington House[27] till the announcement is made, and then race to the hapless artist's house. The one who arrives first receives the money. They have of late been much troubled at the long distances they have had to run, and they look with strong disfavour on the election of artists who live at Hampstead or at Bedford Park, for it is considered a point of honour not to employ the underground railway, omnibuses, or any artificial means of locomotion. The race is to the swift.[28]

Besides the professional posers of the studio there are the posers of the Row, the posers at afternoon teas, the posers in politics, and the circus-posers […]

4.11 Vernon Lee: The Mazes of Aesthetic London

Vernon Lee *was the pseudonym of* ***Violet Paget*** *(1856–1935), novelist, playwright, travel-writer and scholar of aesthetics and cultural history, who was born in France and spent much of her life in Europe, acquiring a fluent command of four languages. She was a feminist, socialist and pacifist who disdained stereotypical female roles and Victorian heteronormativity. As a writer she was prolific and various: her early work includes academic works such as* Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy *(1880) and* Euphorion, Being Studies of the Antique and the Mediaeval in the Renaissance *(1884), a biography (*The Countess of Albany, *1884) and a novel (*Miss Brown, *1884), which is a satire on the aesthetic movement. The beautiful Anne Brown is adopted by the poet Hamlin as his protégée: he gives her financial support and introductions to his fellow aesthetes in London in the hope that she will become an aesthete herself and marry him. The practical and serious Anne, however, remains sceptical and indeed wonders whether Hamlin "cares for her only as a sort of live picture." While she ultimately marries him it is not for his aesthetic ideals.*

From Miss Brown *(1884), Vol. 1, Bk 4, ch. 4*

[… S]he found herself being led about, passively, half unconsciously, through the mazes of aesthetic London. It was all very hazy: Anne was informed that this and that person was coming to dinner or lunch at Hammersmith; that

[27] **Burlington House**: see [4.22], n.52 **Bookmark not defined**.

[28] **The race is to the swift:** An allusion to Ecclesiastes 9:11: "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

this or that person hoped she would come and dine or take tea somewhere or other; that such or such a lady was going to take her to see someone or other's studio, or to introduce her at some other person's house. She knew that they were all either distinguished poets, or critics, or painters, or musicians, or distinguished relations and friends of the above; that they all received her as if they had heard of her from their earliest infancy; that they pressed her to have tea, and strawberries, and claret-cup,[29] and cakes, and asked her what she thought of this picture or that poem; that they lived in grim, smut-engrained houses in Bloomsbury, or rose-grown cottages at Hampstead, with just the same sort of weird furniture, partly Japanese, partly Queen Anne, partly medieval; with blue-and-white china and embroidered chasubles[30] stuck upon the walls if they were rich, and twopenny screens and ninepenny pots if they were poor, but with no further differences; and finally, that they were all intimately acquainted, and spoke of each other as being, or just having missed being, the most brilliant or promising specimens of whatever they happened to be.

At first Anne felt very shy and puzzled; but after a few days the very vagueness which she felt about all these men and women, these artists, critics, poets, and relatives, who were perpetually reappearing as on a merry-go-round,—nay, the very cloudiness as to the identity of these familiar faces—the very confusion as to whether they were one, two, or three different individuals,—produced in Miss Brown an indifference, an ease, almost a familiarity, like that which we may experience towards the vague, unindividual company met on a steamer or at a hotel.

And little by little, out of this crowd of people who seemed to look, and to dress, and to talk very much alike,—venerable bearded men, who were the heads of great schools of painting, or poetry, or criticism, or were the papas of great offspring; elderly, quaintly dressed ladies, who were somebody's wife, or mother, or sister; youngish men, with manners at once exotically courteous, and curiously free and easy, in velveteen[31] coats and mustard-coloured shooting-jackets, or elegiac-looking dress-coats, all rising in poetry, or art, or criticism; young ladies, varying from sixteen to six-and-thirty, with hair cut like medieval pages, or tousled like mœnads,[32] or tucked away under caps like eighteenth-century housekeepers, habited in limp and stayless[33] garments,

[29] **claret-cup**: "a mixture of iced claret with lemonade and various flavouring ingredients" (*OED*).

[30] **chasuble**: "an ecclesiastical vestment, a kind of sleeveless mantle covering the body and shoulders" (*OED*).

[31] **velveteen**: "a fabric having the appearance or surface of velvet, but made from cotton in place of silk" (*OED*).

[32] **mœnads**: (more usually *maenad*s) Bacchantes, frenzied priestesses of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, theatre and religious ecstasy.

[33] **stayless**: without 'stays,' or stiffened corsets, to give shape to the garments.

picturesque and economical, with Japanese chintzes for brocade, and flannel instead of stamped velvets—most of which young ladies appeared at one period, past, present, or future, to own a connection with the Slade School,[34] and all of whom, when not poets or painters themselves, were the belongings of some such, or madly in love with the great sonneteer such a one, or the great colourist such another;—out of all this confusion there began gradually to detach themselves and assume consistency in Anne's mind one or two personalities, some of whom attracted, and some of whom repelled her […]

4.12 George Moore: Bohemian Life in Mayfair

For a note on ***George Moore*** *(1852–1933) see* [4.4 **HN**]. *He lived in various parts of London after he returned from Paris, where he had studied art. Here he describes his Bohemian days in Curzon Street, Mayfair.*

From Confessions of a Young Man *(1886), ch. 16*

Fortunately for my life and my sanity, my interests were, about this time, attracted into other ways—ways that led into London life, and were suitable for me to tread. In a restaurant where low-necked dresses and evening clothes crushed with loud exclamations, where there was ever an odour of cigarette and brandy-and-soda, I was introduced to a Jew[35] of whom I had heard much, a man who had newspapers and racehorses. The bright witty glances of his brown eyes at once prejudiced me in his favour, and it was not long before I knew that I had found another friend. His house was what was wanted, for it was so trenchant in character, so different from all I knew of, that I was forced to accept it, without likening it to any French memory and thereby weakening the impression. It was a house of champagne, late hours, and evening clothes, of literature and art, of passionate discussions. So this house was not so alien to me as all else I had seen in London; and perhaps the cosmopolitanism of this charming Jew, his Hellenism, in fact, was a sort of plank whereon I might pass and enter again into English life. I found in Curzon Street another 'Nouvelle Athènes,' a Bohemianism of titles that went back to the Conquest, a Bohemianism of the ten sovereigns always jingling in the trousers pocket, of scrupulous cleanliness, of hansom cabs, of ladies' pet names; of triumphant champagne, of debts, gaslight, supper-parties, morning light, coaching; a fabulous Bohemianism; a Bohemianism of eternal hard-upishness and eternal squandering of money,—money that rose at no discoverable well-head and flowed into a sea of boudoirs and restaurants, a sort of whirlpool of sovereigns in which we were caught, and sent eddying

[34] **Slade School:** The Slade School of Fine Art was founded as part of University College, London, in 1871 and soon became famous world-wide.

[35] **Jew**: "Owen Hall" (pen-name of Jimmy Davis), a musical comedy scriptwriter, born in Ireland.

through music halls [4.25 **HN**], bright shoulders, tresses of hair, and slang; and I joined in the adorable game of Bohemianism that was played round and about Piccadilly Circus, with Curzon Street for a magnificent rallying point.

After dinner a general 'clear' was made in the direction of halls and theatres, a few friends would drop in about twelve, and continue their drinking till three or four; but Saturday night was gala night—at half-past eleven the lords drove up in their hansoms, then a genius or two would arrive, and supper and singing went merrily until the chimney sweeps began to go by. Then we took chairs and bottles into the street and entered into discussion with the policeman. Twelve hours later we struggled out of our beds, and to the sound of church bells we commenced writing. The paper appeared on Tuesday. Our host sat in a small room off the dining-room from which he occasionally emerged to stimulate our lagging pens.

4.13 George Gissing: A Struggling Writer

George Gissing *(1857–1903) was born in England but spent some time, poverty-stricken, in America before settling in London. He observed working* ***class*** *life at first hand and his (nearly 20) novels describe with pessimistic resignation the impoverished and uneducated populace: see also* [4.16 **HN**] and [4.23 **HN**]. *In* New Grub Street *Gissing examines the life of Edward Reardon, who aspires to produce works that satisfy his aesthetic criteria in a world where success usually comes only to those who put commercial considerations first. His wife Amy does not give him moral support and after his death will marry Jasper Milvain, a writer who knows how to satisfy popular taste. This extract is from the description of Reardon at work in a house near Regent's Park.*

From New Grub Street *(1891), Part 1, ch. 4*

Eight flights of stairs, consisting alternately of eight and nine steps. Amy had made the calculation, and wondered what was the cause of this arrangement. The ascent was trying, but then no one could contest the respectability of the abode. In the flat immediately beneath resided a successful musician, whose carriage and pair came at a regular hour each afternoon to take him and his wife for a most respectable drive. In this special building no one else seemed at present to keep a carriage, but all the tenants were gentlefolk.

And as to living up at the very top, why, there were distinct advantages—as so many people of moderate income are nowadays hastening to discover. The noise from the street was diminished at this height; no possible tramplers could establish themselves above your head; the air was bound to be purer than that of inferior strata; finally, one had the flat roof whereon to sit or expatiate in sunny weather. True that a gentle rain of soot was wont to interfere with one's comfort out there in the open, but such minutiae are easily forgotten in the fervour of domestic description. It was undeniable that on a fine day one enjoyed extensive views. The green ridge from Hampstead

to Highgate, with Primrose Hill and the foliage of Regent's Park[36] in the foreground; the suburban spaces of St John's Wood, Maida Vale, Kilburn; Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament,[37] lying low by the side of the hidden river, and a glassy gleam on far-off hills which meant the Crystal Palace; then the clouded majesty of eastern London, crowned by St Paul's dome. These things one's friends were expected to admire. Sunset often afforded rich effects, but they were for solitary musing.

A sitting-room, a bedroom, a kitchen. But the kitchen was called dining-room, or even parlour at need; for the cooking-range lent itself to concealment behind an ornamental screen, the walls displayed pictures and bookcases, and a tiny scullery[38] which lay apart sufficed for the coarser domestic operations. This was Amy's territory during the hours when her husband was working, or endeavouring to work. Of necessity, Edwin Reardon used the front room as his study. His writing-table stood against the window; each wall had its shelves of serried literature; vases, busts, engravings (all of the inexpensive kind) served for ornaments.

A maid-servant, recently emancipated from the Board school,[39] came at half-past seven each morning, and remained until two o'clock, by which time the Reardons had dined; on special occasions, her services were enlisted for later hours. But it was Reardon's habit to begin the serious work of the day at about three o'clock, and to continue with brief interruptions until ten or eleven; in many respects an awkward arrangement, but enforced by the man's temperament and his poverty.

One evening he sat at his desk with a slip of manuscript paper before him. It was the hour of sunset. His outlook was upon the backs of certain large houses skirting Regent's Park, and lights had begun to show here and there in the windows: in one room a man was discoverable dressing for dinner—he had not thought it worth while to lower the blind; in another, some people were playing billiards. The higher windows reflected a rich glow from the western sky.

For two or three hours Reardon had been seated in much the same attitude. Occasionally he dipped his pen into the ink and seemed about to write: but each time the effort was abortive. At the head of the paper was inscribed "Chapter 3," but that was all.

And now the sky was dusking over; darkness would soon fall.

He looked something older than his years, which were two-and-thirty; on his face was the pallor of mental suffering. Often he fell into a fit of absence, and gazed at vacancy with wide, miserable eyes. Returning to consciousness, he fidgeted nervously on his chair, dipped his pen for the hundredth time,

[36] **Regent's Park**: A Royal Park, situated in north-western London.

[37] **Houses of Parliament**: see [2.31], n.144.

[38] **scullery**: a small back-kitchen for washing dishes.

[39] **Board school**: a school set up under the Elementary Education Act of 1870 and regulated by the School Board of London to provide education for children aged between 5 and 12.

bent forward in feverish determination to work. Useless; he scarcely knew what he wished to put into words, and his brain refused to construct the simplest sentence.

The colours faded from the sky, and night came quickly. Reardon threw his arms upon the desk, let his head fall forward, and remained so, as if asleep.

*

He stood and regarded her. His expression was one of pained perplexity.

"You mustn't forget, Amy, that it needs a particular kind of faculty to write stories of this sort. The invention of a plot is just the thing I find most difficult."

"But the plot may be as silly as you like, providing it holds the attention of vulgar readers. Think of *The Hollow Statue*, what could be more idiotic? Yet it sells by thousands."

"I don't think I can bring myself to that," Reardon said, in a low voice.

"Very well, then will you tell me what you propose to do"?

"I might perhaps manage a novel in two volumes, instead of three."

He seated himself at the writing-table, and stared at the blank sheets of paper in an anguish of hopelessness.

"It will take you till Christmas," said Amy, "and then you will get perhaps fifty pounds for it."

"I must do my best. I'll go out and try to get some ideas. I – "

He broke off and looked steadily at his wife.

"What is it"? she asked.

"Suppose I were to propose to you to leave this flat and take cheaper rooms"?

He uttered it in a shamefaced way, his eyes falling. Amy kept silence.

"We might sublet it," he continued, in the same tone, "for the last year of the lease."

"And where do you propose to live"? Amy inquired, coldly.

"There's no need to be in such a dear neighbourhood. We could go to one of the outer districts. One might find three unfurnished rooms for about eight-and-sixpence a week – less than half our rent here."

"You must do as seems good to you."

"For Heaven's sake, Amy, don't speak to me in that way! I can't stand that! Surely you can see that I am driven to think of every possible resource. To speak like that is to abandon me. Say you can't or won't do it, but don't treat me as if you had no share in my miseries!"

She was touched for the moment.

"I didn't mean to speak unkindly, dear. But think what it means, to give up our home and position. That is open confession of failure. It would be horrible."

"I won't think of it. I have three months before Christmas, and I will finish a book!"

"I really can't see why you shouldn't. Just do a certain number of pages every day. Good or bad, never mind; let the pages be finished. Now you have got two chapters –"

"No; that won't do. I must think of a better subject."

Amy made a gesture of impatience.

"There you are! What does the subject matter? Get this book finished and sold, and then do something better next time."

"Give me to-night, just to think. Perhaps one of the old stories I have thrown aside will come back in a clearer light. I'll go out for an hour; you don't mind being left alone"?

"You mustn't think of such trifles as that."

"But nothing that concerns you in the slightest way is a trifle to me – nothing! I can't bear that you should forget that. Have patience with me, darling, a little longer."

He knelt by her, and looked up into her face.

"Say only one or two kind words – like you used to!"

She passed her hand lightly over his hair, and murmured something with a faint smile.

Then Reardon took his hat and stick and descended the eight flights of stone steps, and walked in the darkness round the outer circle of Regent's Park, racking his fagged brain in a hopeless search for characters, situations, motives.

INSTITUTIONS

4.14 William S. Gilbert: The House of Peers

William S. Gilbert *(1836–1911) wrote a great many plays and poems, both serious and comic, but is best known for the 13 comic operas (the Savoy Operas) which he produced in collaboration with Arthur Sullivan between 1875 and 1896. Gilbert's comedy often had a satirical edge and in various operas he made fun of figures of authority and established institutions, including the navy, the law, the police, and the Houses of Parliament. In* Iolanthe *(first performed in 1882) the House of Peers is subjected to his satirical wit.*

"When Britain really ruled the waves," in Songs of a Savoyard *(1890)*

When Britain really ruled the waves –
(In good Queen Bess's time)
The House of Peers made no pretence
To intellectual eminence,
Or scholarship sublime;
Yet Britain won her proudest bays
In good Queen Bess's glorious days!

When Wellington thrashed Bonaparte,
As every child can tell,
The House of Peers, throughout the war,
Did nothing in particular,
And did it very well:
Yet Britain set the world a-blaze
In good King George's glorious days!

And while the House of Peers withholds
Its legislative hand,
And noble statesmen do not itch
To interfere with matters which
They do not understand,
As bright will shine Great Britain's rays
As in King George's glorious days!

4.15 Anthony Trollope: The House of Commons

The Way We Live Now *is a long novel by* ***Anthony Trollope*** *(1815–1882), a writer both prolific and immensely popular (see* [3.25]*). The novel condemns dishonesty and corruption, particularly in the world of finance and personal relations. Augustus Melmotte is a wealthy financier with a shady past who moves to London and makes a great impression on society by entertaining lavishly, meanwhile planning a large-scale swindle in America. He is, however, humbled by the niceties of acceptable behaviour in the House of Commons, of which he is a new member. Trollope's treatment of the ruling class here may be compared with Disraeli's in* [3.24] *and Dickens's in* [3.31].

From The Way We Live Now *(1875), ch. 69*

In the meantime a scene of a different kind was going on in the House of Commons. Melmotte had been seated on one of the back Conservative benches, and there he remained for a considerable time unnoticed and forgotten. The little emotion that had attended his entrance had passed away, and Melmotte was now no more than anyone else. At first he had taken his hat off, but as soon as he observed that the majority of members were covered, he put it on again. Then he sat motionless for an hour, looking round him and wondering. He had never hitherto been even in the gallery of the House. The place was very much smaller that he had thought, and much less tremendous. The Speaker did not strike him with the awe which he had expected, and it seemed to him that they who spoke were talking much like other people in other places. For the first hour he hardly caught the meaning of a sentence that was said, nor did he try to do so. One man got up very quickly after another, some of them barely rising on their legs to say the few words that they uttered. It seemed to him to be a very commonplace affair […]

[*Melmotte determines to make a speech in response to an error made by a Mr Brown, whom he dislikes, and is immediately overawed by the ceremoniousness and strict decorum expected of members.*]

But the courage of the man was too high to allow him to be altogether quelled at once. The hum was prolonged; and though he was red in the face, perspiring, and utterly confused, he was determined to make a dash at the matter with the first words which would occur to him. "Mr Brown is all wrong," he said. He had not even taken off his hat as he rose. Mr Brown turned slowly round and looked up at him. Someone, whom he could not exactly hear, touching him behind, suggested that he should take off his hat. There was a cry of order, which of course he did not understand. "Yes, you are," said Melmotte, nodding his head, and frowning angrily at poor Mr Brown.

"The honourable member," said the Speaker, with the most good-natured voice which he could assume, "is not perhaps as yet aware that he should not call another member by his name. He should speak of the gentleman to whom he alluded as the honourable member for Whitechapel. And in speaking he should address, not another honourable member, but the chair."

"You should take your hat off," said the good-natured gentleman behind.

In such a position how should any man understand so many and such complicated instructions at once, and at the same time remember the gist of the argument to be produced? He did take off his hat, and was of course made hotter and more confused by doing so. "What he said was all wrong," continued Melmotte; "and I should have thought a man out of the City, like Mr Brown, ought to have known better." Then there were repeated calls of order, and a violent ebullition of laughter from both sides of the House. The man stood for a while glaring around him, summoning his own pluck for a renewal of his attack on Mr Brown, determined that he would be appalled and put down neither by the ridicule of those around him, nor by his want of familiarity with the place; but still utterly unable to find words with which to carry on the combat. "I ought to know something about it," said Melmotte sitting down and hiding his indignation and his shame under his hat.

"We are sure that the honourable member for Westminster does understand the subject," said the leader of the House, "and we shall be very glad to hear his remarks. The House I am sure will pardon ignorance of its rules in so young a member."

But Mr Melmotte would not rise again. He had made a great effort, and had at any rate exhibited his courage. Though they might all say that he had not displayed much eloquence, they would be driven to admit that he had not been ashamed to show himself. He kept his seat till the regular stampede was made for dinner, and then walked out with as stately a demeanour as he could assume.

4.16 George Gissing: The Crystal Palace Park

In The Nether World *the newly married Bob Hewett and Pennyloaf Candy, together with their friends, enjoy an outing to the Crystal Palace. After the Great Exhibition of 1851 (see* [3.21]*) the Crystal Palace was moved across the river to Sydenham and became part of an amusement park with fairground entertainment, tea rooms, concerts, and fireworks. For further notes on* ***Gissing*** *see also* [4.13 **HN**] and [4.23 **HN**].

From The Nether World *(1889), ch. 12*

Thus early in the day the grounds were of course preferred to the interior of the glass House. Bob and Pennyloaf bent their steps to the fair. Here already was gathered much goodly company; above their heads hung a thick white wavering cloud of dust. Swing-boats and merry-go-rounds are from of old the chief features of these rural festivities; they soared and dipped and circled to the joyous music of organs which played the same tune automatically for any number of hours, whilst raucous voices invited all and sundry to take their turn. Should this delight pall, behold on every hand such sports as are dearest to the Briton, those which call for strength of sinew and exactitude of aim. The philosophic mind would have noted with interest how ingeniously these games were made to appeal to the patriotism of the throng. Did you choose to 'shy' sticks in the contest for coconuts, behold your object was a wooden model of the treacherous Afghan or the base African. If you took up the mallet to smite upon a spring and make proof of how far you could send a ball flying upwards, your blow descended upon the head of some other recent foeman. Try your fist at the indicator of muscularity, and with zeal you smote full in the stomach of a guy [*dummy*] made to represent a Russian.[40] If you essayed the pop-gun, the mark set you was on the flank of a wooden donkey, so contrived that it would kick when hit in the true spot. What a joy to observe the tendency of all these diversions! How characteristic of a high-spirited people that nowhere could be found any amusement appealing to the mere mind, or calculated to effeminate by encouraging a love of beauty […]

As the dusk descends there is a general setting of the throng towards the open air; all the pathways swarm with groups which have a tendency to disintegrate into couples; universal is the protecting arm. Relief from the sweltering atmosphere of the hours of sunshine causes a revival of hilarity; those who have hitherto only bemused themselves with liquor now pass into the stage of jovial recklessness, and others, determined to prolong a flagging merriment, begin to depend upon their companions for guidance. On the terraces dancing

[40] Tension rose sharply between Britain and Russia over the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), giving rise to the catch-cry "The Russians shall not have Constantinople".

has commenced; the players of violins, concertinas, and penny-whistles do a brisk trade among the groups for a rough-and-tumble valse; so do the pick-pockets. Vigorous and varied is the jollity that occupies the external galleries, filling now in expectation of the fireworks; indescribable the mingled tumult that roars heavenwards. Girls linked by the half-dozen arm-in-arm leap along with shrieks like grotesque mænads [4.11, n.32]; a rougher horseplay finds favour among the youths, occasionally leading to fisticuffs. Thick voices bellow in in fragmentary chorus; from every side comes the yell, the catcall, the ear-rending whistle; and as the bass, the never-ceasing accompaniment, sounds myriad-footed tramp, tramp along the wooden flooring. A fight, a scene of bestial drunkenness, a tender whispering between two lovers, proceed concurrently in a space of five square yards.—Above them glimmers the dawn of starlight.

4.17 Arnold Bennett: A London Bank

Arnold Bennett *(1867–1931) was born in Staffordshire but settled in London where he lived as a journalist. Thereafter he wrote many short stories and novels, the best known of which are set in the Potteries (the 'Five Towns'), where he was born. He spent most of his life in London except for 10 years in France. In* Teresa of Watling Street *Richard Redgrave, an amateur detective who has recently made friends with Lord Dolmer, a director of the British and Scottish Banking Company, is invited by him to investigate some mysteries regarding the Bank's employees. In the opening scene the Bank has every appearance of the opulence and solidity of an old traditional establishment.*

From Teresa of Watling Street *(1904), ch. 1*

Since money is the fount of all modern romantic adventure, the City of London, which holds more money to the square yard than any other place in the world, is the most romantic of cities. This is a profound truth, but people will not recognize it. There is no more prosaic person than your bank clerk, who ladles out romance from nine to four with a copper trowel without knowing it. There is no more prosaic building than your stone-faced banking office, which hums with romance all day, and never guesses what a palace of wonders it is. The truth, however, remains; and sometime in the future it will be universally admitted. And if the City, as a whole, is romantic, its banks are doubly and trebly romantic. Nothing is more marvellous than the rapid growth of our banking system, which is twice as great now as it was twenty years ago—and it was great enough then […]

Mr Richard Redgrave stepped that way, and presently found himself in front of a mahogany door, on which was painted the legend, "Directors' Parlour"—not "Board Room," but "Directors' Parlour." The British and Scottish was not an ancient corporation with a century or two of traditions; it was merely a joint-stock company some thirty years of age. But it had prospered exceedingly, and the directors, especially Mr Simon Lock, liked to seem quaint and old-fashioned in trifles. Such harmless affectations helped

to impress customers and to increase business. The official [*who was ushering in Redgrave*] knocked, and entered the parlour with as much solemnity as though he had been entering a mosque or the tomb of Napoleon. Fifty millions of deposits were manoeuvred from day to day in that parlour, and the careers of eight hundred clerks depended on words spoken therein. Then Mr Richard Redgrave was invited to enter. His foot sank into the deep pile of a Persian carpet. The official closed the door. The specialist [Redgrave] was alone with three of the directors of the British and Scottish Bank.

"Please take a seat, Redgrave," said Lord Dolmer, the only one of the trio with whom Richard was personally acquainted, and to whom he owed this introduction. "We shall not keep you waiting more than a minute or two."

The other directors did not look up. All three were rapidly signing papers.

Richard occupied a chair upholstered in red leather, next the door, and surveyed the room. It was a large and lofty apartment, simply but massively furnished in mahogany. A table of superb solidity and vast acreage filled the middle space—such a table as only a bank director could comfortably sit at. As Richard gazed at that article of furniture and listened to the busy scratching of pens, he saw, with the prophetic vision characteristic of all men who are born to success, that a crisis in his life was at hand. He had steadily risen throughout his brief life, but he had never before risen so high as a bank parlour, and the parlour of such a bank!

4.18 C. W. Murphy: "I Live in Trafalgar Square"

The nineteenth-century music hall evolved from popular singing in taverns and public houses in earlier times; however, only from the 1850s might music halls be regarded as an institution. Purpose-built halls were then being established to entertain audiences with popular songs and a variety of (usually comic) acts. This form of entertainment became immensely popular, particularly among the working classes, and provided opportunities for talented writers and singers, such as Gus Elen, Harry Champion, George Robey, and Marie Lloyd. "I Live in Trafalgar Square" was written by ***C. W. Murphy*** *(1875–1913) and sung by Morny Cash (1875–1938), the Lancashire comedian. It appealed to the civic pride of the Londoner, who would also have been alive to the comic absurdity of inverted snobbery—the outcast who is defiantly proud of his social status. See Howard (1970) for more information.*

From "I live in Trafalgar Square" (1902)

Today I've been busy removing,
And I'm all of a fidgety-fidge;
My last digs were on the Embankment,
The third seat from Waterloo Bridge.

But the cooking, and oh! the attendance [*service*]
Didn't happen to suit me so well,
So I ordered my man to pack up, and
Look out for another hotel.

He did, and the new place is 'extra,' I vow,
Just wait till I tell you where I'm staying now.

Chorus. *I live in Trafalgar Square*
With four lions to guard me;
Fountains and statues all over the place,
And the 'Metropole'[41] *staring me right in the face.*
I'll own it's a trifle draughty,
But I look at it this way, you see:
If it's good enough for Nelson
It's quite good enough for me.

The beds ain't so soft as they might be,
Still, the temperature's never too high,
And it's nice to see swells who are passing
Look on you with envious eye;

And then when you wake in the morning,
Just fancy how nice it would be
To have a good walk for your breakfast,
And the same for your dinner and tea;

There's many a swell up in Park Lane tonight
Who'd be glad if he only had my appetite.

THE THAMES

4.19 Henry James: A Steamer Down the Thames

In The Princess Casamassima *by* ***Henry James*** *(1843–1916) the hero Hyacinth Robinson, a young orphan boy in London, is strangely attracted to scenes of working class life with which he feels an affinity (see* [4.2]*). He and his friend Paul Muniment take a steamer down the Thames to Greenwich. The boat passes the ugliness of wharves and warehouses, the grimy signs of maritime industries, the busyness and dirt of small boats and barges, all described in naturalistic detail, but these are not enough to qualify the "deep beguilement" that the Thames holds for Hyacinth.*

From The Princess Casamassima *(1886), Bk 4, ch. 35*

[…] The boat was densely crowded, and they leaned, rather squeezed together, in the fore part of it, against the rail of the deck, and watched the big black fringe of the yellow stream. The river was always fascinating to Hyacinth. The mystified entertainment, which, as a child, he had found in

[41] '***Metropole***': a luxury hotel between Trafalgar Square and the Thames Embankment, which opened in 1885 (now called the Corinthia Hotel).

all the aspects of London came back to him from the murky scenery of its banks and the sordid agitation of its bosom: the great arches and pillars of the bridges, where the water rushed, and the funnels tipped, and sounds made an echo, and there seemed an overhanging of interminable processions; the miles of ugly wharves and warehouses; the lean protrusions of chimney, mast, and crane; the painted signs of grimy industries, staring from shore to shore; the strange, flat, obstructive barges, straining and bumping on some business as to which everything was vague but that it was remarkably dirty; the clumsy coasters and colliers, which thickened as one went down; the small, loafing boats, whose occupants, somehow, looking up from their oars at the steamer, as they rocked in the oily undulations of its wake, appeared profane and sarcastic; in short, all the grinding, puffing, smoking, splashing activity of the turbid flood.

4.20 Joseph Conrad: Sunset on the Thames

***Joseph Conrad** (**Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski**) (1857–1924) was born in Poland and went to sea at the age of 17. In 1878 he joined his first English ship and became a naturalized British subject in 1886. He settled in London in 1896, and then turned to writing. In 1890 he had taken a steamboat up the Congo River and his experiences there formed the basis for* Heart of Darkness, *which was first published in serial form in 1899. This novella exposed the brutal and squalid operations of the Belgian Empire in the Congo, but Conrad was careful to show that London, in 1899 the greatest city on earth, at the heart of the greatest empire on earth, was once itself at the "heart of darkness," and that later some of its most intrepid voyagers might be epitomised as hunters and adventurers. This passage hints that all empires have their days in the brilliant light of the sun, but that their glory may go out suddenly, "stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men."*

From Heart of Darkness *(1902), ch. 1*

The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made,[42] the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to[43] and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas, sharply peaked with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above

[42] **the flood had made**: the flood tide had begun to rise.

[43] **come to**: come to a standstill.

Gravesend,[44] and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth […]

[…] The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically, the sky without a speck was a benign immensity of unstained light, the very mist on the Essex marsh was like a gauzy and radiant fabric hung from the wooded rises inland and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west brooding over the upper reaches became more sombre every minute as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last in its curved and imperceptible fall the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men.

Forthwith a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound. The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it has borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake[45] to Sir John Franklin,[46] knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests—and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith—the adventurers and settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change [*maritime business*]; Captains, Admirals, the dark 'interlopers' of the Eastern trade,[47] and

[44] **Gravesend:** a town 26 miles downstream from London.

[45] **Sir Francis Drake** (?1545–1596) circumnavigated the world in his ship ***The Golden Hind*** and brought home immense treasure plundered from Spanish ships; he was knighted by Elizabeth.

[46] **Sir John Franklin** (1786–1847) in the ***Erebus*** and ***Terror*** searched for a route to the Pacific through the Arctic Ocean (the fabled 'Northwest Passage'), but at some time in 1846–1848 his ships became icebound and were lost with all hands. In 2014, the ***Erebus*** was found west of O'Reilly Island, and the ***Terror*** south of King William Island in 2016.

[47] **'interlopers' … trade:** ships that poached the authorized trading of the East India Company.

the commissioned 'generals'[48] of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth? […] The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mudflat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

MIDDLE CLASS LIFE

4.21 George Eliot: A House by the Thames

Daniel Deronda *was the last novel by* ***George Eliot****—the* nom de plume *of* ***Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans*** *(1819–1880). She was a prolific journalist before writing her major novels in the 1850s and thereafter. Many of the major characters of* Daniel Deronda *suffer various agonizing problems—unhappy marriage, concerns about parentage and religious heritage, and the loss of relatives. In contrast the Meyricks do not live such complex lives. They are secure in their identity as a loving family, living happily and without pretension. After this passage Deronda, who has saved a young woman, Mirah Lapidoth, from committing suicide, asks his friends the Meyricks to take her into their household, where she is welcomed.*

From Daniel Deronda *(1876), ch. 18*

Mrs Meyrick's house was not noisy: the front parlour looked on the river, and the back on gardens, so that though she was reading aloud to her daughters, the window could be left open to freshen the air of the small double room where a lamp and two candles were burning. The candles were on a table apart for Kate, who was drawing illustrations for a publisher; the lamp was not only for the reader but for Amy and Mab, who were embroidering satin cushions for "the great world."

Outside, the house looked very narrow and shabby, the bright light through the holland blind[49] showing the heavy old-fashioned window frame; but it is pleasant to know that many such grim-walled slices of space in our foggy London have been, and still are the homes of a culture the more spotlessly free from vulgarity, because poverty has rendered

[48] **commissioned 'generals'**: authorized trading ships carrying general merchandise.

[49] **holland blind**: a kind of slatted window-covering with small spaces between the slats.

everything like display an impersonal question, and all the grand shows of the world simply a spectacle which rouses no petty rivalry or vain effort after possession.

The Meyricks' was a home of that kind; and they all clung to this particular house in a row because its interior was filled with objects always in the same places, which for the mother held memories of her marriage time, and for the young ones seemed as necessary and uncriticised a part of their world as the stars of the Great Bear seen from the back windows. Mrs Meyrick had borne much stint of other matters that she might be able to keep some engravings specially cherished by her husband; and the narrow spaces of wall held a world-history in scenes and heads which the children had early learned by heart. The chairs and tables were also old friends preferred to new. But in these two little parlours with no furniture that a broker would have cared to cheapen except the prints and piano, there was space and apparatus for a wide-glancing, nicely-select life, open to the highest things in music, painting, and poetry. I am not sure that in the times of greatest scarcity, before Kate could get paid work, these ladies had always had a servant to light their fires and sweep their rooms; yet they were fastidious in some points, and could not believe that the manners of ladies in the fashionable world were so full of coarse selfishness, petty quarrelling, and slang as they are represented to be in what are called literary photographs. The Meyricks had their little oddities, streaks of eccentricity from the mother's blood as well as the father's, their minds being like medieval houses with unexpected recesses and opening from this into that, flights of steps and sudden outlooks.

But mother and daughters were all united by a triple bond—family love; admiration for the finest work, the best action; and habitual industry.

4.22 Margaret Oliphant: The Painter and the Philistine

***Margaret Oliphan**t (1828–1897), born in Scotland, published her first novel there in 1849. After her marriage in 1852 to her cousin Francis Oliphant, an artist who worked chiefly in stained glass, she moved to London. Early widowed, throughout her career she had to support her family, especially her ineffectual sons, by means of her writing, producing more than a hundred articles for* Blackwood's Magazine, *several short stories and many novels. Of the latter the best known are the six in the series* The Chronicles of Carlingford*; this includes* Miss Marjoribanks, *a highly accomplished work that some have compared with Jane Austen's* Emma *(1816) and George Eliot's* Middlemarch *(1872) for its presentation of an anti-heroine. Of her non-fiction* A Literary History of England from 1760 to 1825 *(1885) and* William Blackwood and his Sons *(1897) are still worth consulting. Oliphant was as industrious a novelist as any in the nineteenth century, but because of her gender she was undervalued, at least in monetary terms: Anthony Trollope, with whom Margaret Oliphant is often compared, would typically receive for a novel four times the amount paid to Oliphant.*

From one of Oliphant's London novels we have selected a passage in At His Gates,[50] *which studies the marriage of the artist Robert Drummond and his "semi-Philistine" wife.*

From At His Gates *(1872), ch. 1*

Mr and Mrs Robert Drummond lived in a pretty house in the Kensington district; a house, the very external aspect of which informed the passer-by who they were, or at least what the husband was. The house was embowered in its little garden; and in spring, with its lilacs and laburnums, looked like a great bouquet of bloom—as such houses often do. But built out from the house, and occupying a large slice of the garden at the side, was a long room, lighted with sky windows, and not by any means charming to look at outside, though the creepers, which had not long been planted, were beginning to climb upon the walls. It was connected with the house by a passage which acted as a conservatory, and was full of flowers; and everything had been done that could be done to render the new studio as beautiful in aspect as it was in meaning. But it was new, and had scarcely yet begun, as its proprietor said, to "compose" with its surroundings. Robert Drummond, accordingly, was a painter, a painter producing, in the mean time, pictures of the class called 'genre'[51]; but intending to be historical, and to take to the highest school of art as soon as life and fame would permit. He was a very good painter; his subjects were truly 'felt' and exquisitely manipulated; but there was no energy of emotion, no originality of genius about them. A great many people admired them very much; other painters lingered over them lovingly, with that true professional admiration of 'good work' which counteracts the jealousy of trade in every honest mind. They were very saleable articles, indeed, and had procured a considerable amount of prosperity for the young painter. It was almost certain that he would be made an Associate at the next vacancy, and an Academician[52] in time. But with all this, he was well aware that he was no genius, and so was his wife.

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Her great characteristic was what the French call 'distinction'; a quality to which in point of truth she had no claim—for Helen, it must be remembered, was no long-descended lady. She was the produce of three generations

[50] ***At His Gates***: serialised in *Good Words* January–December 1872; published in book form by Tinsley Bros; its title is taken from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Luke 16: 19–31.

[51] **genre**: genre painting, hugely popular and **very saleable** in the Victorian period, depicted scenes from everyday life, modern or historical, often with a hint of a more-or-less sentimental narrative, like William F. Yeames' famous "And When Did You Last See Your Father?" (1878), showing the young son of a Royalist officer being questioned by Roundheads during the Civil War.

[52] **Associate … Academician**: The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by George III in 1766, to raise the professional status of artists and promote contemporary art, with a membership limited to 34 **Academicians**, selected from the ranks of **Associate** Members of the Academy. Its headquarters are in Burlington House on Piccadilly.

of money, and a race which could be called nothing but Philistine[53] and from whence came her highbred look, her fanciful pride, her unrealisable ambition, it would be difficult to say.

She went over the house with a little sigh after Robert was gone, professedly in the ordinary way of a housewife's duty, but really with reference to his last words. Yes, the house might be made a great deal better. The drawing-room was a very pretty one—quite enough for all their wants—but the dining-room was occupied by Drummond as his studio, according to an arrangement very common among painters. This, it will be perceived, was before the day of the new studio. The dining-room was thus occupied, and a smaller room, such as in most suburban houses is appropriated generally to the often scanty books of the family, was the eating-room of the Drummonds. It was one of those things which made Helen's pride wince—a very petty subject for pride, you will say—but, then, pride is not above petty things; and it wounded her to be obliged to say apologetically to her cousin—"The real dining-room of the house is Mr Drummond's studio. We content ourselves with this in the mean time." "Oh, yes; I see; of course he must want space and light," Reginald Burton had replied with patronising complacency, and a recollection of his own banqueting-hall at Dura. How Helen hated him at that moment, and how much aggravated she felt with poor Robert smiling opposite to her, and feeling quite comfortable on the subject! "We painters are troublesome things," he even said, as if it was a thing to smile at. Helen went and looked in at the studio on this particular morning, and made a rapid calculation how it could be "made better." It would have to be improved off the face of the earth, in the first place, as a studio; and then carpeted, and tabled, and mirrored, and ornamented to suit its new destination. It would take a good deal of money to do it, but that was not the first consideration. The thing was, where was Robert to go? She, for her part, would have been reconciled to it easily, could he have made up his mind to have a studio apart from the house, and come home when his work was done. That would be an advantage in every way. It would secure that in the evening, at least, his profession should be banished. He would have to spend the evening as gentlemen usually do, yawning his head off if he pleased, but not professional for ever. It would no longer be possible for him to put on an old coat, and steal away into that atmosphere of paint, and moon over his effects, as he loved to do now. He liked Helen to go with him, and she did so often, and was tried almost beyond her strength by his affectionate lingerings over the canvas, which, in her soul, she felt would never be any better, and his appeals to her to suggest and to approve. Nothing would teach him not to appeal to her. Though he divined what she felt, though it had eaten into his very life, yet still he would try again. Perhaps this time she might like it better—perhaps […]

[53] **Philistine**: indifferent or hostile to the arts.

"If he would only have his studio out of doors," Helen reflected. She was too sure of him to be checked by the thought that his heart might perhaps learn to live out of doors too as well as his pictures, did she succeed in driving them out. No such doubt ever crossed her mind. He loved her, and nobody else, she knew. His mind had never admitted another idea but hers. She was a woman who would have scorned to be jealous in any circumstances—but she had no temptation to be jealous. He was only a moderate painter. He would never be as splendid as Titian, with a prince to pick up his pencil[54]—which is what Helen's semi-Philistine pride would have prized. But he loved her so as no man had ever surpassed. She knew that, and was vaguely pleased by it; yet not as she might have been had there ever been any doubt about the matter. She was utterly sure of him, and it did not excite her one way or another. But his words had put a little gentle agitation in her mind. She put down her calculation on paper when she went back to the drawing-room after her morning occupations were over, and called Norah to her music. Sideboard so much, old carved oak, to please him, though for herself she thought it gloomy; curtains, for these luxuries he had not admitted to spoil his light; a much larger carpet—she made her list with some pleasure while Norah played her scales. And that was the day on which the painter's commercial career began.

4.23 George Gissing: The Women's Movement

George Gissing *(1857–1903) in his earlier works concentrated on the underbelly of society; later, he portrayed social issues centring on the English middle classes. In* The Odd Women *he studies the gathering momentum of the Women's Movement. The women of the title are odd because they are as yet a small minority, odd because not mart of a pair in marriage, and odd because widely considered abnormal. Here, Mary Barfoot, who teaches secretarial skills to unmarried women in London, talks earnestly to thirteen of them under her tutelage, arguing for women's emancipation and independence in their choice of career. For further notes on Gissing see* [4.13 **HN**] *and* [4.16 **HN**].

From The Odd Women *(1893), ch. 13*

"Follow me carefully. A governess, a nurse, may be the most admirable of women. I will dissuade no one from following those careers who is distinctly fitted for them. But these are only a few out of the vast number of girls who must, if they are not to be despicable persons, somehow find serious work. Because I myself have had an education in clerkship, and have most capacity for such employment, I look about for girls of like mind, and do my best to prepare them for work in offices. And (here I must become emphatic once

[54]**Titian**: (ca. 1488–1576), one of the greatest painters of the Venetian school. While he was painting for the Emperor Charles V he dropped his pencil; the emperor picked it up, saying "To wait on Titian is service for an emperor" (see Anon. 1859, 269).

more) I am *glad* to have entered on this course. I am *glad* that I can show girls the way to a career which my opponents call unwomanly.

"Now see why. 'Womanly' and 'womanish' are two very different words; but the latter, as the world uses it, has become practically synonymous with the former. A womanly occupation means, practically, an occupation that a man disdains. And here is the root of the matter. I repeat that I am not first of all anxious to keep you supplied with daily bread. I am a troublesome, aggressive, revolutionary person. I want to do away with that common confusion of the words 'womanly' and 'womanish', and I see very clearly that this can only be effected by an armed movement, an invasion by women of the spheres which men have always forbidden us to enter […]

"An excellent governess, a perfect hospital nurse, do work which is invaluable; but for our cause of emancipation they are no good—nay, they are harmful. Men point to them, and say, 'Imitate these, keep to your proper world.' Our proper world is the world of intelligence, of honest effort, of moral strength. The old types of womanly perfection are no longer helpful to us. Like the Church service, which to all but one person in a thousand has become meaningless gabble by dint of repetition, these types have lost their effect. They are no longer educational. We have to ask ourselves, 'What course of training will wake women up, make them conscious of their souls, startle them into healthy activity'?

"It must be something new, something free from the reproach of womanliness. I don't care whether we crowd out the men or not. I don't care *what* results, if only women are made strong and self-reliant and nobly independent! The world must look to its concerns. Most likely we shall have a revolution in the social order greater than any that yet seems possible. Let it come, and let us help its coming. When I think of the contemptible wretchedness of women enslaved by custom, by their weakness, by their desires, I am ready to cry, Let the world perish in tumult rather than things go in this way!"

4.24 Mary Augusta Ward: A Politician and His Wife

Mary August Ward *(1851–1920)—***Mrs Humphry Ward***—was the grand-daughter of Dr Thomas Arnold and a niece of Matthew Arnold (see* [3.13 **HN**]*). Born in Tasmania, where her father was an Inspector of Schools, she came to England when she was six but did not live with her immediate family until she was twelve. In 1872 she married Thomas Humphry Ward, an Oxford don. In 1888 she published her most famous work,* Robert Elsmere*, a novel of faith and doubt set mainly in Oxford, loosely based on her father's spiritual conversions, first to Catholicism, then back to Anglicanism and finally again to Catholicism. She is now remembered unfavourably for campaigning against women's suffrage, but she worked tirelessly to improve educational opportunities for women and working people generally; London's Passmore Edwards Settlement is a monument to her. In addition to* Robert Elsmere, Marcella *(1894),* Helbeck of Bannisdale *(1898) and* The Marriage of William Ashe *(1905) deserve special attention. The latter deals with the strains encountered in a marriage, against a background of political intrigue and ambition. According to Mary Ward it was based loosely on "William Lamb, his*

flighty madcap wife, her flirtation with Byron, the publication of Glenarvon, *and his early death" (5). Kitty, the wife of William Ashe, was suggested by the "flighty madcap wife," Lady Caroline Lamb.*[55] *The allusion to Madame de Longueville foreshadows the influence of aristocratic ladies on politics in Mary Ward's time.*

From The Marriage of William Ashe *(1905), ch. 7*

The Ashes had been settled since their marriage in a house in Hill Street[56]—a house to which Kitty had lost her heart at first sight. It was old and distinguished, covered here and there with eighteenth-century decoration, once, no doubt, a little florid and coarse beside the finer work of the period, but now agreeably blunted and mellowed by time. Kitty had had her impetuous and decided way with the furnishing of it; and, though Lady Tranmore professed to admire it, the result was, in truth, too French and too pagan for her taste. Her own room reflected the rising worship of Morris and Burne-Jones,[57] of which, indeed, she had been an adept from the beginning. Her walls were covered by the well-known pomegranate or jasmine or sunflower patterns; her hangings were of a mystic greenish-blue; her pictures were drawn either from the Italian primitives[58] or their modern followers. Celtic romance, Christian symbolism, all that was touching, other-worldly, and obscure—our late English form, in fact, of the great Romantic reaction—it was amid influences of this kind that Lady Tranmore lived and fed her own imagination. The dim, suggestive, and pathetic; twilight rather than dawn, autumn rather than spring; yearning rather than fulfilment; "the gleam" rather than noon-day: it was in this half-lit, richly coloured sphere that she and most of her friends saw the tent of Beauty pitched.

But Kitty would have none of it. She quoted French sceptical remarks about the legs and joints of the Burne-Jones knights; she declared that so much pattern made her dizzy; and that the French were the only nation in the world who understood a *salon*, whether as upholstery or conversation. Accordingly, in days when these things were rare, the girl of eighteen made her new husband provide her with white-panelled walls, lightly gilt, and with a Persian carpet of which the mass was of a plain, blackish grey, and only the border was allowed to flower. A few Louis-Quinze[59] girandoles[60] on the walls, a Vernis-Martin[61] screen, an old French clock, two or three inlaid

[55] **Lady Caroline Lamb**: (1783–1828), best known for her affair with Lord Byron in 1812; her novel *Glenarvon*, based on this, depicted Byron as Lord Ruthven. Her husband, William Lamb, later became Lord Melbourne, Prime Minister in 1834 and 1835–1841.

[56] **Hill Street**: In Mayfair, developed in the nineteenth-century with expensive mansions.

[57] **Morris and Burne-Jones**: William **Morris** (1834–1896; see [3.42 **HN**]) and Edward **Burne-Jones** (1833–1898), a painter associated with the Pre-Raphaelites, who worked closely with Morris.

[58] **Italian primitives**: painters such as Giotto and Fra Angelico who flourished 'pre-Raphael.'

[59] **Louis-Quinze**: style of architecture and decorative art characteristic of early to mid eighteenth-century France.

[60] **girandoles**: ornamental branched candle-sticks.

[61] **Vernis-Martin**: a type of japanning or imitation lacquer.

cabinets, and a collection of lightly built chairs and settees in the French mode—this was all she would allow; and while Lady Tranmore's room was always crowded, Kitty's, which was much smaller, had always an air of space. French books were scattered here and there; and only one picture was admitted. That was a Watteau sketch of a group from *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*.[62] Kitty adored it; Lady Tranmore thought it absurd and disagreeable.

As she entered the room now, on this May afternoon, she looked round it with her usual distaste. On several of the chairs large illustrated books were lying. They contained pictures of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century costume—one of them displayed a coloured engraving of a brilliant Madame de Pompadour,[63] by Boucher.[64]

The maid who followed her into the room began to remove the books.

"Her ladyship has been choosing her costume, my lady," she explained, as she closed some of the volumes.

"Is it settled?" said Lady Tranmore.

The maid replied that she believed so, and, bringing a volume which had been laid aside with a mark in it, she opened on a fantastic plate of Madame de Longueville, as Diana, in a gorgeous hunting-dress.[65]

Lady Tranmore looked at it in silence; she thought it unseemly, with its bare ankles and sandalled feet, and likely to be extremely expensive. For this Diana of the Fronde sparkled with jewels from top to toe, and Lady Tranmore felt certain that Kitty had already made William promise her the counterpart of the magnificent diamond crescent that shone in the coiffure of the goddess.

4.25 Lady St Helier: Politics and the Music-Hall

***Lady St Helier** (**Mary Jeune**, 1845–1931), a London County Councillor for many years, was a philanthropist and essayist who advocated greater political freedom for women. She wrote more than fifty articles on social issues, some of which were collected in* The Revolt of Daughters *in 1894. An energetic London hostess, she continued the tradition of London peeresses influencing the direction of party politics, as depicted in Disraeli's Sybil (see* [3.21]*). She also encouraged artists and writers and was a close friend of the novelist Edith Wharton. Her* Memories of Fifty Years *was published in London (Arnold) in 1909 and is a valuable record of upper-middle-class life in London. She was created a Dame of the Order of the British Empire in 1925.*

[62] ***L'Embarquement pour Cythère***: painted by Watteau in 1717, depicting a *fête galante*.

[63] **Madame de Pompadour**: 1721–1764, chief mistress of Louis XV of France from 1745–1751.

[64] **Boucher**: François Boucher, 1703–1770, French painter of the Rococo period.

[65] **Madame de Longueville**: Anne Geneviève de Bourbon (1619–1679), daughter of Henri de Bourbon; married Henri II d'Orléans in 1642; mistress of the Duke of La Rochefoucauld and then of the Duke of Nemours; famed for her beauty, she posed as Diana and other goddesses. She exercised great political influence during the Fronde and later protected the Jansenists.

From Memories of Fifty Years *(1909), ch. 13*

Theatres and music-halls [4.18 **HN**] in later years have entered keenly into the political and public questions of the day. The controversies which accompany political life have generally supplied themes on which the leading artists, certainly of the music-hall stage, have quickly seized; although, except on celebrated occasions, the effect produced has been ephemeral. Formerly topical songs and political allusions were little heard, but during the period of Mr Gladstone's Government (1868–1873), when Lord Sherbrooke (Mr Lowe) was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr Ayrton the First Commissioner of Works, the power of the stage made itself first. Mr Lowe had incurred great unpopularity by reason of his match-tax. Mr Ayrton, who had a singularly unattractive appearance and a rough manner, had contrived to irritate a very large section of the community, especially the middle classes of London; and the Court Theatre, at which a piece called "The Happy Land" was then being performed, seized the occasion to make a great demonstration against the Government. All sorts of jokes and caricatures were made, encouraged by the evident approval of the large audience which came nightly to see the performance. A dance was introduced into the last act of the play, in which Mr Gladstone, Mr Lowe, and Mr Ayrton performed in character a *pas de trois*[66] to the words of a song which dealt with the faults and peculiarities of the three Ministers, Mr Lowe being particularly blamed for the match-tax, and Mr Ayrton for his rudeness and incivility. The refrain of Mr Ayrton's song, which consisted of a repetition of all the insolence of which he was thought guilty, generally brought the house down. The play lasted for two or three months, but the caricatures of the three Ministers were withdrawn, by order of the Lord Chamberlain. The theatre was crowded, the songs were repeated in the streets, and the feeling of anger against the Government grew daily instead of diminishing. Lady Waldegrave, who was no bad judge of the power of public opinion, always declared that Mr Gladstone's downfall was due to the burlesque of "The Happy Land".

4.26 George and Weedon Grossmith: Nobody Is Invited to a Ball

George Grossmith (1847–1912) and his brother Weedon (1852–1919) were both involved in London theatre life and collaborated to produce The Diary of a Nobody, *with illustrations by Weedon. The novel is in the form of a diary written over a period of 15 months by Mr Charles Pooter, a self-important and undistinguished clerk, who meticulously records the events of his mundane lower-middle-class life. He lives in Brickfield Terrace, Holloway, a particularly drab London suburb. Much of the book's comedy is derived from Pooter's naïve simplicity, his physical and social awkwardness, and his jealously guarded respectability in*

[66] ***pas de trois***: a dance for three people.

the face of many humiliating circumstances. There is social satire on his and his wife Carrie's scorn of those whom they consider "vulgar," while they themselves lack sophistication and aspire to be accepted by higher, "fashionable" society.

From The Diary of a Nobody *(1892), ch. 4*

April 30.—Perfectly astounded at receiving an invitation for Carrie and myself[67] from the Lord and Lady Mayoress to the Mansion House,[68] to "meet the Representatives of Trades and Commerce." My heart beat like that of a schoolboy. Carrie and I read the invitation over two or three times. I could scarcely eat my breakfast. I said—and I felt it from the bottom of my heart—"Carrie darling, I was a proud man when I led you down the aisle of the church on our wedding day; that pride will be equalled, if not surpassed, when I lead my dear, pretty wife up to the Lord and Lady Mayoress at the Mansion House." I saw the tears in Carrie's eyes, and she said: "Charlie dear, it is *I* who have to be proud of you. And I am very, very proud of you. You have called me pretty; and as long as I am pretty in your eyes, I am happy. You, dear old Charlie, are *not* handsome, but you are *good*, which is far more noble." I gave her a kiss, and she said: "I wonder if there will be any dancing? I have not danced with you for years."

I cannot tell what induced me to do it, but I seized her round the waist, and we were silly enough to be executing a wild kind of polka[69] when Sarah entered, grinning, and said: "There is a man, mum, at the door who wants to know if you want any good coals." Most annoyed at this. Spent the evening in answering, and tearing up again, the reply to the Mansion House, having left word with Sarah if Gowing and Cummings called we were not at home. Must consult Mr Perkupp[70] how to answer the Lord Mayor's invitation.

May 1.—Carrie said: "I should like to send mother the invitation to look at." I consented, as soon as I had answered it. I told Mr Perkupp, at the office, with a feeling of pride, that we had received an invitation to the Mansion House; and he said, to my astonishment, that he himself gave in my name to the Lord Mayor's secretary. I felt this rather discounted the value of the invitation, but I thanked him; and in reply to me, he described how I was to answer it. I felt the reply was too simple; but of course Mr Perkupp knows best.

May 2.—Sent my dress-coat and trousers to the little tailor's round the corner, to have the creases taken out. Told Gowing not to call next Monday, as we were going to the Mansion House. Sent similar note to Cummings.

[67] **myself**: this ungrammatical use of *myself* to avoid saying *me*, now (it seems) almost normalised, may then have suggested a certain social pretentiousness.

[68] **the Mansion House**: the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London, a grand Palladian mansion used for official City functions.

[69] **polka**: a lively Czech folk-dance in 2/4 time, popular throughout Europe from the 1840s; the Pooters are a little behind the fashion.

[70] **Mr Perkupp**: The principal of the firm in which Pooter is a clerk.

May 3.—Carrie went to Mrs James,[71] at Sutton, to consult about her dress for next Monday. While speaking incidentally to Spotch, one of our head clerks, about the Mansion House, he said: "Oh, I'm asked, but don't think I shall go." When a vulgar man like Spotch is asked I feel my invitation is considerably discounted. In the evening, while I was out, the little tailor brought round my coat and trousers, and because Sarah had not a shilling to pay for the pressing, he took them away again.

May 4.—Carrie's mother returned the Lord Mayor's invitation, which was sent to her to look at, with apologies for having upset a glass of port over it. I was too angry to say anything.

May 5.—Bought a pair of lavender kid-gloves for next Monday, and two white ties, in case one got spoiled in the tying.

May 6, **Sunday.**—A very dull sermon, during which, I regret to say, I twice thought of the Mansion House reception tomorrow.

WORKING-CLASS LIFE

4.27 George Gissing: Supreme Ugliness in the Caledonian Road

For brief biographical notes on ***George Gissing*** *see* [4.13 **HN**], [4.16 **HN**] *and* [4.23 **HN**]. *Exemplifying the development of Realism in England, Gissing's work is free of sentiment and pathos, and its rare moments of humour are sardonic and ironic. His settings are chiefly among the working- and lower-middle classes, and his central characters tend to be ordinary and undistinguished, and are placed in plots that counter their aspirations towards joy and thwart their hopes for self-fulfilment. In* Thyrza *Gissing pictures Caledonian Road as the perfect* ambiance *for constricted lives.*

From Thyrza *(1887), ch. 27*

Caledonian Road is a great channel of traffic running directly north from King's Cross to Holloway. It is doubtful whether London can show any thoroughfare of importance more offensive to eye and ear and nostril. You stand at the entrance to it, and gaze into a region of supreme ugliness; every house front is marked with meanness and inveterate grime; every shop seems breaking forth with mould or dry-rot; the people who walk here appear one and all to be employed in labour that soils body and spirit. Journey on the top of a tram-car from King's Cross to Holloway, and civilization has taught you its ultimate achievement in ignoble hideousness. You look off into narrow side-channels where unconscious degradation has made its inexpugnable[72] home, and sits veiled with refuse. You pass above lines of railway,

[71] **Mrs James** is regarded by the Pooters as a fashionable woman of taste.

[72] **inexpugnable**: impossible to evict.

which cleave the region with black-breathing fissure. You see the pavements half occupied with the paltriest and most sordid wares; the sign of the pawnbroker is on every hand; the public-houses look and reek more intolerably than in other places. The population is dense, the poverty is undisguised. All this northward-bearing tract, between Camden Town on the one hand and Islington on the other, is the valley of the shadow of vilest servitude. Its public monument is a cyclopean prison[73]: save for the desert around the Great Northern Goods Depot, its only open ground is a malodorous cattle market. In comparison, Lambeth is picturesque and venerable, St Giles is romantic, Hoxton is clean and suggestive of domesticity, Whitechapel is full of poetry, Limehouse is sweet with sea-breathings.[74]

4.28 Joseph Conrad: Bombs and Pornography

For a brief biographical note on ***Joseph Conrad*** *(1857–1924) see* [4.20 **HN**]. *Conrad's father had plotted to try to bring about the overthrow of Russian rule in Poland, so Joseph understood well the appeal of patriotism and nationalism. At the same time he abhorred the selfishness of conspirators who undermined social cohesion. In* The Secret Agent *he is particularly severe on Mr Verloc who works for revolutionary causes without any apparent risk to his own domestic comforts. Verloc's shop in Soho is squalid and sordid, and a fitting cover for his character, which is thoroughly self-centred, indolent, and parasitic. The anarchists and "visionaries" who gather at his shop after hours are hardly more admirable than Verloc himself, or indeed than the timid day-time customers who leaf through his range of scrofulous* risqué *publications. The true motives of night-time and day-time patrons alike are swathed in secrecy, as are the inner lives of Mr Verloc and his wife Winnie.*

From The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale *(1907), ch. 1*

Mr Verloc, going out in the morning, left his shop nominally in charge of his brother-in-law. It could be done, because there was very little business at any time, and practically none at all before the evening. Mr Verloc cared but little about his ostensible business. And, moreover, his wife was in charge of his brother-in-law.

The shop was small, and so was the house. It was one of those grimy brick houses which existed in large quantities before the era of reconstruction[75] dawned upon London. The shop was a square box of a place, with the

[73] **cyclopean prison**: Pentonville model prison, called **cyclopean** because it comprised a sort of panopticon, with corridors radiating from a central point so that one guard could theoretically oversee the whole (the classical Cyclops had only one eye).

[74] **Lambeth … Limehouse**: All these suburbs (or parts of them) had become impoverished and disreputable by the 1880s; **Limehouse**, once a busy shipbuilding centre, became overpopulated and known for its gambling and opium dens.

[75] **era of reconstruction**: "The City of London has always been in a state of more or less continuous rebuilding. There have, however, been three periods when the rebuilding was

front glazed in small panes. In the daytime the door remained closed; in the evening it stood discreetly but suspiciously ajar.

The window contained photographs of more or less undressed dancing girls; nondescript packages in wrappers like patent medicines; closed yellow paper envelopes, very flimsy, and marked two-and-six in heavy black figures; a few numbers of ancient French comic publications hung across a string as if to dry; a dingy blue china bowl, a casket of black wood, bottles of marking ink, and rubber stamps; a few books with titles hinting at impropriety; a few apparently old copies of obscure newspapers, badly printed, with titles like *The Torch, The Gong*—rousing titles. And the two gas jets inside the panes were always turned low, either for economy's sake or for the sake of the customers.

These customers were either very young men, who hung about the window for a time before slipping in suddenly; or men of a more mature age, but looking generally as if they were not in funds. Some of that last kind had the collars of their overcoats turned right up to their moustaches, and traces of mud on the bottom of their nether garments, which had the appearance of being much worn and not very valuable. And the legs inside them did not, as a general rule, seem of much account either. With their hands plunged deep in the side pockets of their coats, they dodged in sideways, one shoulder first, as if afraid to start the bell going.

The bell, hung on the door by means of a curved ribbon of steel, was difficult to circumvent. It was hopelessly cracked; but of an evening, at the slightest provocation, it clattered behind the customer with impudent virulence.

It clattered; and at that signal, through the dusty glass door behind the painted deal counter, Mr Verloc would issue hastily from the parlour at the back. His eyes were naturally heavy; he had an air of having wallowed, fully dressed, all day on an unmade bed. Another man would have felt such an appearance a distinct disadvantage. In a commercial transaction of the retail order much depends on the seller's engaging and amiable aspect. But Mr Verloc knew his business, and remained undisturbed by any sort of aesthetic doubt about his appearance. With a firm, steady-eyed impudence, which seemed to hold back the threat of some abominable menace, he would proceed to sell over the counter some object looking obviously and scandalously not worth the money which passed in the transaction: a small cardboard box with apparently nothing inside, for instance, or one of those carefully closed yellow flimsy envelopes, or a soiled volume in paper covers with a promising title. Now and then it happened that one of the faded, yellow dancing girls would get sold to an amateur, as though she had been alive and young.

especially rapid, intensive and visually transforming. The first was in the years after the Great Fire of 1666 [2.11]. The second was two hundred years later, when the City ceased to be the living place of a community and became an area almost exclusively of daytime business" (Summerson 1977, 163).

Sometimes it was Mrs Verloc who would appear at the call of the cracked bell. Winnie Verloc was a young woman with a full bust, in a tight bodice, and with broad hips. Her hair was very tidy. Steady-eyed like her husband, she preserved an air of unfathomable indifference behind the rampart of the counter. Then the customer of comparatively tender years would get suddenly disconcerted at having to deal with a woman, and with rage in his heart would proffer a request for a bottle of marking ink, retail value sixpence (price in Verloc's shop one-and-sixpence), which, once outside, he would drop stealthily into the gutter.

4.29 Israel Zangwill: A Child of the Ghetto

Israel Zangwill *(1864–1926) was born in London to Jewish immigrants from the Tsarist empire, who (like many such migrants) had settled in the working-class East End of London. He began as a teacher, but pursued a career in literature, writing novels and plays (as well as journalism) against antisemitism and other forms of racism, and in favour of assimilation and multiculturalism. His play* The Melting *Pot made a deep impression on Theodore Roosevelt. He was a leading British Zionist for a time, a pacifist, and an advocate of women's suffrage. This description of a child on her way to a soup kitchen with her pitcher is a vivid vignette of ghetto life but is not without its comic touches, reminiscent of Dickens.*

From Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People *(1892), Bk 1, ch. 1*

A dead and gone wag called the street 'Fashion Street,' and most of the people who live in it do not even see the joke. If it could exchange names with 'Rotten Row,'[76] both places would be more appropriately designated. It is a dull, squalid, narrow thoroughfare in the East End of London, connecting Spitalfields with Whitechapel, and branching off in blind alleys. In the days when little Esther Ansell trudged its unclean pavements, its extremities were within earshot of the blasphemies from some of the vilest quarters and filthiest rookeries[77] in the capital of the civilized world. Some of these clotted spiders' webs have since been swept away by the besom of the social reformer, and the spiders have scurried off into darker crannies.

There were the conventional touches about the London street-picture as Esther Ansell sped through the freezing mist of the December evening, with a pitcher in her hand, looking in her oriental colouring like a miniature of Rebecca going to the well.[78] A female street-singer, with a trail of infants of dubious maternity, troubled the air with a piercing melody; a pair of slatterns with arms akimbo reviled each other's relatives; a drunkard lurched

[76] **Rotten Row**: see [3.43, n.169].

[77] **rookeries**: slums; refuges for petty criminals.

[78] **Rebecca … well**: see Genesis 24:15–16, 45.

along, babbling amiably; an organ-grinder,[79] blue-nosed as his monkey, set some ragged children jigging under the watery rays of a street lamp. Esther drew her little plaid shawl tightly around her, and ran on without heeding these familiar details, her chilled feet absorbing the damp of the murky pavement through the worn soles of her cumbrous boots. They were masculine boots, kicked off by some intoxicated tramp, and picked up by Esther's father. Moses Ansell had a habit of lighting on windfalls, due, perhaps, to his meek manner of walking with bent head, as though literally bowed beneath the yoke of the Captivity.[80] Providence rewarded him for his humility by occasional treasure trove. Esther had received a pair of new boots from her school a week before, and the substitution of the tramp's footgear for her own resulted in a net profit of half a crown, and kept Esther's little brothers and sisters in bread for a week. At school, under her teacher's eye, Esther was very unobtrusive about the feet for the next fortnight, but as the fear of being found out died away, even her rather morbid conscience condoned the deception in view of the stomachic gain.

4.30 D. H. Lawrence: Outcasts of Waterloo Bridge

D. H. Lawrence *(1885–1930) was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire and most of his works are set in the Midlands, but he knew London well—he lived in or visited the city almost every year from 1908 to 1926. In his first novel,* The White Peacock*, the narrator Cyril Beardsall (an approximate self-portrait) and his friend George Saxton delight in viewing the "bewildering pageant of modern life" that London affords, until a socialist speaking at Marble Arch Corner reminds Cyril of the miseries of the poor in his Nottinghamshire home. Later that night they encounter the homeless sleeping under Waterloo Bridge.*

From The White Peacock *(1911), Part 3, ch. 5*

At night, after the theatre, we saw the outcasts sleep in a rank under the Waterloo Bridge, their heads to the wall, their feet lying out on the pavement: a long, black, ruffled heap at the foot of the wall. All the faces were covered but two, that of a peaked, pale little man, and that of a brutal woman. Over these two faces, floating like uneasy pale dreams on their obscurity, swept now and again the trailing light of the tram cars. We picked our way past the line of abandoned feet, shrinking from the sight of the thin bare ankles of a young man, from the draggled edge of the skirts of a bunched-up woman, from the pitiable sight of the men who had wrapped their legs in newspaper for a little warmth, and lay like worthless parcels. It was raining. Some men

[79] **organ-grinder**: an itinerant street musician playing a barrel organ or hurdy-gurdy, frequently accompanied by a monkey.

[80] **yoke … Captivity**: alluding to the Babylonian Captivity, when Nebuchadnezzar forced the Israelites into exile in Babylon in the C6th BCE.

stood at the edge of the causeway fixed in dreary misery, finding no room to sleep. Outside, on a seat in the blackness and the rain, a woman sat sleeping, while the water trickled and hung heavily at the ends of her loosened strands of hair. Her hands were pushed in the bosom of her jacket. She lurched forward in her sleep, started, and one of her hands fell out of her bosom. She sank again to sleep. George gripped my arm.

"Give her something," he whispered in panic. I was afraid. Then suddenly getting a florin from my pocket, I stiffened my nerves and slid it into her palm. Her hand was soft, and warm, and curled in sleep. She started violently, looking up at me, then down at her hand. I turned my face aside, terrified lest she should look in my eyes, and full of shame and grief I ran down the embankment to him. We hurried along under the plane trees in silence. The shining cars were drawing tall in the distance over Westminster Bridge, a fainter, yellow light running with them on the water below. The wet streets were spilled with golden liquor of light, and on the deep blackness of the river were the restless yellow slashes of the lamps.

4.31 Amy Levy: "Ballade of an Omnibus"

Amy Levy (1861–1889) was born in Clapham, London, into an Anglo-Jewish family that was active in intellectual and artistic life. "A precocious feminist" (DNB)*, she was one of the first women (and only the second Jewish woman) to be admitted to Cambridge University, where she matriculated at Newnham College. While still an undergraduate she published stories, articles and poems. In due course she published novels, notably* The Romance of a Shop *(1888) and* Reuben Sachs *(1888), and her work was admired by many contemporary writers, including Yeats and Wilde. Unlike most middle-class single women of that era, she travelled through London and abroad without a chaperon. Her most intense relationships were same-sex ones, and she formed a close friendship with Vernon Lee (see* [4.11 **HN**]*) and other writing women. She hints at these passionate involvements in some of her poems, such as* London in July. *Her collections of verse are* Xantippe and Other Verse *(1881)*, A Minor Poet and Other Verse *(1884) and* A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse *(1889). Critical of the materialism, philistinism and complacency of contemporary society, she particularly objected to what she considered racist stereotyping of 'Jews' by writers such as Charles Dickens and George Eliot. She suffered from serious bouts of depression and ended her own life aged 27.*

From A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse *(1889)*
"To see my love suffices me"[81] *(Ballades in Blue China)*

Some men to carriages aspire;
On some the costly hansoms wait;
Some seek a fly,[82] on job or hire;

[81] ***"To see my love suffices me"***: refrain from *Ballades in Blue China* by Andrew Lang.

[82] **fly**: "any one-horse covered carriage, as a cab or hansom, let out on hire" (*OED*).

Some mount the trotting steed, elate.
I envy not the rich and great,
A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
I am contented with my fate –
An omnibus[83] suffices me.

In winter days of rain and mire
I find within a corner straight[84];
The'busmen know me and my lyre
From Brompton[85] to the Bull-and-Gate.[86]
When summer comes, I mount in state
The topmost summit, whence I see
Croesus[87] look up, compassionate –
An omnibus suffices me.

I mark, untroubled by desire,
Lucullus[88] phaeton and its freight.
The scene whereof I cannot tire,
The human tale of love and hate,
The city pageant, early and late
Unfolds itself, rolls by, to be
A pleasure deep and delicate.
An omnibus suffices me.

Princess, your splendour you require,
I, my simplicity; agree
Neither to rate lower nor higher.
An omnibus suffices me.

*

London in July

What ails my senses thus to cheat?
What is it ails the place,
That all the people in the street
Should wear one woman's face?

[83] **omnibus**: see [3.21], n.82.

[84] **I … straight**: i.e. 'I immediately find a corner inside'.

[85] **Brompton**: At that time regarded as the artists' quarter.

[86] **Bull-and-Gate**: Public house in Kentish Town, rebuilt in 1871; formerly, in Tudor times, the 'Boulogne Gate.'

[87] **Croesus**: a rich man (from the semi-mythical King of Lydia, ca. 550 BCE).

[88] **Lucullus**: Wealthy Roman soldier and politician, 118–56 BC; generous patron of the arts.

The London trees are dusty-brown
Beneath the summer sky;
My love, she dwells in London town,
Nor leaves it in July.

O various and intricate[89] maze,
Wide waste of square and street;
Where, missing through unnumbered days,
We twain at last may meet!

And who cries out on crowd and mart?
Who prates of stream and sea?
The summer in the city's heart –
That is enough for me.

4.32 Arthur Morrison: A Slum

Arthur Morrison *(1863–1945) was born in the East End of London. He became a journalist in 1890, and wrote short stories and detective fiction as a side-line. He enjoyed literary success with* Tales of Mean Street *(1894)*, A Child of the Jago *(1896) and an historical novel* The Hole in the Wall *(1902). He published further collections of stories thereafter until 1933. He is best remembered now for his realist depiction of life in the East End.*

From A Child of the Jago *(1896), ch. 1*

It was past the mid of a summer night in the Old Jago.[90] The narrow street was all the blacker for the lurid sky; for there was a fire in a further part of Shoreditch, and the welkin was an infernal coppery glare. Below, the hot heavy air lay, a rank oppression, on the contorted forms of those who made for sleep on the pavement: and in it, and through it all, there rose from foul earth and grimed walls a close, mingled stink—the odour of the Jago.

From where, off Shoreditch High Street, a narrow passage, set across with posts, gave menacing entrance on one end of Old Jago Street, to where the other end lost itself in the black beyond Jago Row; from where Jago Row began south at Meakin Street, to where it ended north at Honey Lane; there the Jago, for one hundred years the blackest pit in London, lay and festered; and half way along Old Jago Street a narrow archway gave upon Jago Court, the blackest hole in all that pit.

A square of two hundred and fifty yards or less—that was all there was of the Jago. But in that square the human population swarmed in thousands.

[89] **intricate**: pronounced *inTRIcate*.

[90] **Old Jago**: a fictional name for the Old Nichol, a slum area between Shoreditch High Street and Bethnal Green Road.

Old Jago Street, New Jago Street, Half Jago street lay parallel, east and west; Jago Row at one end and Edge Lane at the other lay parallel also, stretching north and south: foul ways all. What was too vile for Kate Street,[91] Seven Dials,[92] and Ratcliff Highway[93] in its worst day, what was too useless, incapable and corrupt—all that teemed in the Old Jago.

Old Jago Street lay black and close under the quivering red sky; and slinking forms, as of great rats, followed one another quickly between the posts in the gut by the High Street, and scattered over the Jago. For the crowd about the fire was now small, the police was there in force, and every safe pocket had been tried. Soon the incursion ceased, and the sky, flickering and brightening no longer, settled to a sullen flush. On the pavement some writhed wearily, longing for sleep; others, despairing of it, sat and lolled, and a few talked. They were not there for lack of shelter, but because in this weather repose was less unlikely in the street than within doors; and the lodgings of the few who nevertheless abode at home were marked, here and there, by the lights visible from the windows. For in this place none ever slept without a light, because of three sorts of vermin that light in some sort keeps at bay: vermin which added to existence here a terror not to be guessed by the unafflicted, who object to being told of it. For on them that lay writhen and gasping on the pavement; on them that sat among them; on them that rolled and blasphemed in the lighted rooms; on every moving creature in this, the Old Jago, day and night, sleeping and waking, the third plague of Egypt,[94] and more, lay unceasing.

4.33 Baroness Emmuska Orczy: Death on the Tube

Baroness Emmuska Orczy *(1865–1947) was born in Hungary, the daughter of Baron Felix Orczy. In 1880, the 14-year-old Emma and her family moved to London, where they lodged at 162 Great Portland Street. After attending the West London School of Art and then Heatherley's School of Fine Art, she began a career as an artist and exhibited at the Royal Academy. At art school she met a young illustrator named Montague MacLean Barstow, the son of an English clergyman; they married in 1894. Soon after the birth of their son Emma Orczy started writing fiction, and enjoyed moderate success with a series of detective stories in the* Royal Magazine. *Eventually her crime mysteries would make her a rival to Arthur Conan Doyle. When she turned to writing novels she was most successful with the romantic historical* The Scarlet Pimpernel *(1905), its sequels, and other works in the same genre. The Pimpernel stories were adapted for stage and screen and made Baroness Orczy rich and famous.*

[91] **Kate Street**: in Victorian times a slum area in Balham; now demolished.

[92] **Seven Dials**: slum area in Covent Garden, notorious for filth and crime. See [2.18 **HN**].

[93] **Ratcliffe Highway**: runs east from the City of London to Limehouse; notorious for poverty and violent crime.

[94] **third plague of Egypt**: an infestation of lice or gnats; see Exodus 10: 12–29.

'The Mysterious Death on the Underground Railway' *is one of Orczy's best-known short stories and we have chosen extracts from sections. 1 and 2: these set up the mystery but we leave its solution to be discovered by readers elsewhere. The story is narrated to 'Polly' by 'the man in the corner'.*

From 'The Mysterious Death on the Underground Railway' (1901)

"In these days of tubes and motor traction of all kinds, the old-fashioned 'best, cheapest, and quickest route to City and West End' is often deserted, and the good old Metropolitan Railway[95] carriages cannot at any time be said to be overcrowded. Anyway, when that particular train steamed into Aldgate at about 4 p.m. on March 18th last, the first-class carriages were all but empty.

"The guard marched up and down the platform looking into all the carriages to see if anyone had left a halfpenny evening paper behind for him, and opening the door of one of the first-class compartments, he noticed a lady sitting in the further corner, with her head turned away towards the window, evidently oblivious of the fact that on this line Aldgate is the terminal station.

"'Where are you for, lady?' he said.

"The lady did not move, and the guard stepped into the carriage, thinking that perhaps the lady was asleep. He touched her arm lightly and looked into her face. In his own poetic language, he was 'struck all of a'eap.' In the glassy eyes, the ashen colour of the cheeks, the rigidity of the head, there was the unmistakable look of death.

"Hastily the guard, having carefully locked the carriage door, summoned a couple of porters, and sent one of them off to the police-station, and the other in search of the station-master.

"Fortunately at this time of day the up platform is not very crowded, all the traffic tending westward in the afternoon. It was only when an inspector and two police constables, accompanied by a detective in plain clothes and a medical officer, appeared upon the scene, and stood round a first-class railway compartment, that a few idlers realized that something unusual had occurred, and crowded round, eager and curious.

"Thus it was that the later editions of the evening papers, under the sensational heading, 'Mysterious Suicide on the Underground Railway,' had already an account of the extraordinary event. The medical officer had very soon come to the decision that the guard had not been mistaken, and that life was indeed extinct.

"The lady was young, and must have been very pretty before the look of fright and horror had so terribly distorted her features. She was very elegantly dressed, and the more frivolous papers were able to give their feminine readers a detailed account of the unfortunate woman's gown, her shoes, hat, and gloves.

[95] **Metropolitan Railway**: opened 1863 as an underground line, later with a branch from Baker Street.

"It appears that one of the latter, the one on the right hand, was partly off, leaving the thumb and wrist bare. That hand held a small satchel, which the police opened, with a view to the possible identification of the deceased, but which was found to contain only a little loose silver, some smelling-salts, and a small empty bottle, which was handed over to the medical officer for purposes of analysis.

"It was the presence of that small bottle which had caused the report to circulate freely that the mysterious case on the Underground Railway was one of suicide. Certain it was that neither about the lady's person, nor in the appearance of the railway carriage, was there the slightest sign of struggle or even of resistance. Only the look in the poor woman's eyes spoke of sudden terror, of the rapid vision of an unexpected and violent death, which probably only lasted an infinitesimal fraction of a second, but which had left its indelible mark upon the face, otherwise so placid and so still."

"The body of the deceased was conveyed to the mortuary. So far, of course, not a soul had been able to identify her, or to throw the slightest light upon the mystery which hung around her death.

"Against that, quite a crowd of idlers—genuinely interested or not—obtained admission to view the body, on the pretext of having lost or mislaid a relative or a friend. At about 8.30 p.m. a young man, very well dressed, drove up to the station in a hansom, and sent in his card to the superintendent. It was Mr Hazeldene, shipping agent, of 11, Crown Lane, E.C., and No. 19, Addison Row, Kensington.

"The young man looked in a pitiable state of mental distress; his hand clutched nervously a copy of the *St. James's Gazette*, which contained the fatal news. He said very little to the superintendent except that a person who was very dear to him had not returned home that evening.

"He had not felt really anxious until half an hour ago, when suddenly he thought of looking at his paper. The description of the deceased lady, though vague, had terribly alarmed him. He had jumped into a hansom, and now begged permission to view the body, in order that his worst fears might be allayed.

"You know what followed, of course," continued the man in the corner, "the grief of the young man was truly pitiable. In the woman lying there in a public mortuary before him, Mr Hazeldene had recognized his wife.

"I am waxing melodramatic," said the man in the corner, who looked up at Polly with a mild and gentle smile, while his nervous fingers vainly endeavoured to add another knot on the scrappy bit of string with which he was continually playing, "and I fear that the whole story savours of the penny novelette, but you must admit, and no doubt you remember, that it was an intensely pathetic and truly dramatic moment.

"The unfortunate young husband of the deceased lady was not much worried with questions that night. As a matter of fact, he was not in a fit condition to make any coherent statement. It was at the coroner's inquest on

the following day that certain facts came to light, which for the time being seemed to clear up the mystery surrounding Mrs. Hazeldene's death, only to plunge that same mystery, later on, into denser gloom than before.

"The first witness at the inquest was, of course, Mr Hazeldene himself. I think every one's sympathy went out to the young man as he stood before the coroner and tried to throw what light he could upon the mystery. He was well dressed, as he had been the day before, but he looked terribly ill and worried, and no doubt the fact that he had not shaved gave his face a care-worn and neglected air.

"It appears that he and the deceased had been married some six years or so, and that they had always been happy in their married life. They had no children. Mrs Hazeldene seemed to enjoy the best of health till lately, when she had had a slight attack of influenza, in which Dr Arthur Jones had attended her. The doctor was present at this moment, and would no doubt explain to the coroner and the jury whether he thought that Mrs Hazeldene had the slightest tendency to heart disease, which might have had a sudden and fatal ending.

"The coroner was, of course, very considerate to the bereaved husband. He tried by circumlocution to get at the point he wanted, namely, Mrs Hazeldene's mental condition lately. Mr Hazeldene seemed loath to talk about this. No doubt he had been warned as to the existence of the small bottle found in his wife's satchel.

"'It certainly did seem to me at times,' he at last reluctantly admitted, 'that my wife did not seem quite herself. She used to be very gay and bright, and lately I often saw her in the evening sitting, as if brooding over some matters, which evidently she did not care to communicate to me.'

"Still the coroner insisted, and suggested the small bottle.

"'I know, I know,' replied the young man, with a short, heavy sigh. 'You mean – the question of suicide – I cannot understand it at all – it seems so sudden and so terrible – she certainly had seemed listless and troubled lately – but only at times – and yesterday morning, when I went to business, she appeared quite herself again, and I suggested that we should go to the opera in the evening. She was delighted, I know, and told me she would do some shopping, and pay a few calls in the afternoon.'

"'Do you know at all where she intended to go when she got into the Underground Railway?'

"'Well, not with certainty. You see, she may have meant to get out at Baker Street, and go down to Bond Street to do her shopping. Then, again, she sometimes goes to a shop in St. Paul's Churchyard, in which case she would take a ticket to Aldersgate Street; but I cannot say.'

"'Now, Mr Hazeldene,' said the coroner at last very kindly, 'will you try to tell me if there was anything in Mrs. Hazeldene's life which you know of, and which might in some measure explain the cause of the distressed state of

mind, which you yourself had noticed? Did there exist any financial difficulty which might have preyed upon Mrs. Hazeldene's mind; was there any friend – to whose intercourse with Mrs. Hazeldene – you – er – at any time took exception? In fact,' added the coroner, as if thankful that he had got over an unpleasant moment, 'can you give me the slightest indication which would tend to confirm the suspicion that the unfortunate lady, in a moment of mental anxiety or derangement, may have wished to take her own life?'

"There was silence in the court for a few moments. Mr Hazeldene seemed to every one there present to be labouring under some terrible moral doubt. He looked very pale and wretched, and twice attempted to speak before he at last said in scarcely audible tones:

"'No; there were no financial difficulties of any sort. My wife had an independent fortune of her own – she had no extravagant tastes –'

"'Nor any friend you at any time objected to?' insisted the coroner.

"'Nor any friend, I – at any time objected to,' stammered the unfortunate young man, evidently speaking with an effort.

"I was present at the inquest," resumed the man in the corner, after he had drunk a glass of milk and ordered another, "and I can assure you that the most obtuse person there plainly realized that Mr Hazeldene was telling a lie. It was pretty plain to the meanest intelligence that the unfortunate lady had not fallen into a state of morbid dejection for nothing, and that perhaps there existed a third person who could throw more light on her strange and sudden death than the unhappy, bereaved young widower.

*

"I said there were three persons who understood the gravity of the two doctors' statements—the other two were, firstly, the detective who had originally examined the railway carriage, a young man of energy and plenty of misguided intelligence, the other was Mr Hazeldene.

"At this point the interesting element of the whole story was first introduced into the proceedings, and this was done through the humble channel of Emma Funnel, Mrs Hazeldene's maid, who, as far as was known then, was the last person who had seen the unfortunate lady alive and had spoken to her.

"'Mrs. Hazeldene lunched at home,' explained Emma, who was shy, and spoke almost in a whisper; 'she seemed well and cheerful. She went out at about half-past three, and told me she was going to Spence's, in St. Paul's Churchyard, to try on her new tailor-made gown. Mrs. Hazeldene had meant to go there in the morning, but was prevented as Mr. Errington called.'

"'Mr. Errington?' asked the coroner casually. 'Who is Mr. Errington?'

"But this Emma found difficult to explain. Mr Errington was—Mr Errington, that's all.

"'Mr. Errington was a friend of the family. He lived in a flat in the Albert Mansions. He very often came to Addison Row, and generally stayed late.'

"Pressed still further with questions, Emma at last stated that latterly Mrs Hazeldene had been to the theatre several times with Mr Errington, and that on those nights the master looked very gloomy, and was very cross.

"Recalled, the young widower was strangely reticent. He gave forth his answers very grudgingly, and the coroner was evidently absolutely satisfied with himself at the marvellous way in which, after a quarter of an hour of firm yet very kind questionings, he had elicited from the witness what information he wanted.

"Mr Errington was a friend of his wife. He was a gentleman of means, and seemed to have a great deal of time at his command. He himself did not particularly care about Mr Errington, but he certainly had never made any observations to his wife on the subject.

"'But who is Mr. Errington?' repeated the coroner once more. 'What does he do? What is his business or profession?'

"'He has no business or profession.

"'What is his occupation, then?

"He has no special occupation. He has ample private means. But he has a great and very absorbing hobby.'

"'What is that?'

"He spends all his time in chemical experiments, and is, I believe, as an amateur, a very distinguished toxicologist."

4.34 Virginia Woolf: Leaving London

Virginia Woolf *(1882–1914) was born in South Kensington and educated at home, where she benefitted from a rich cultural heritage. Her mother Julia (1846–1895) had sat as a model of beauty to her aunt, the distinguished photographer Julia Cameron, and also to Pre-Raphaelite painters. Virginia's father was Sir Leslie Stephen (1832–1904), mainly remembered now as the first editor of the* Dictionary of National Biography*; in 1865 he had married as his first wife Harriet Marian Thackeray (1840–1875), daughter of W. M. Thackeray (see* [3.9] *and* [3.33]*); he married Julia Duckworth, his second wife, in 1878. Virginia Woolf loosely depicts her parents as Mr and Mrs Ramsay in* To the Lighthouse *(1928). In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf (1880–1969), an essayist and novelist; together they founded the Hogarth Press in 1917. They formed the nucleus of the Bloomsbury Group, a gathering of writers, painters and critics that included John Maynard Keynes, E M Forster, Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry. On the fringe of that group was Vita Sackville-West,*[96] *the poet and novelist, with whom Virginia Woolf had a long-lasting same-sex love affair; she based the protagonist of* Orlando: a Biography *(1928) on her. Woolf was also an influential essayist, especially through* A Room of One's Own *(1929), where she sets out a plea for women writers to be given literal and figurative space in a male-dominated tradition. After suffering many periods of depression Woolf committed suicide in 1941.*

[96] **Vita Sackville-West**: lived 1892–1962; prolific poet and novelist, remembered especially for her long poem "The Land" (1926) and her novel *The Edwardians* (1930).

Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, *begun in 1912, was published, much revised, in 1915. Although not so experimental as works such as* Mrs Dalloway[97] *(1925) and* The Waves *(1931), it is recognizably modernist in the representation of the sensibility of its central character: Thames-side London is here registered through Mrs Ambrose's consciousness.*

From The Voyage Out *(1915), ch. 1*

Yes, she knew she must go back to all that, but at present she must weep. Screening her face she sobbed more steadily than she had yet done, her shoulders rising and falling with great regularity. It was this figure that her husband saw when, having reached the polished Sphinx,[98] having entangled himself with a man selling picture postcards, he turned; the stanza instantly stopped. He came up to her, laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, "Dearest." His voice was supplicating. But she shut her face away from him, as much as to say, "You can't possibly understand."

As he did not leave her, however, she had to wipe her eyes, and to raise them to the level of the factory chimneys on the other bank. She saw also the arches of Waterloo Bridge[99] and the carts moving across them, like the line of animals in a shooting gallery. They were seen blankly, but to see anything was of course to end her weeping and begin to walk.

"I would rather walk," she said, her husband having hailed a cab already occupied by two city men.

The fixity of her mood was broken by the action of walking. The shooting motor cars, more like spiders in the moon than terrestrial objects, the thundering drays, the jingling hansoms, and little black broughams, made her think of the world she lived in. Somewhere up there above the pinnacles where the smoke rose in a pointed hill, her children were now asking for her, and getting a soothing reply. As for the mass of streets, squares, and public buildings which parted them, she only felt at this moment how little London had done to make her love it, although thirty of her forty years had been spent in a street. She knew how to read the people who were passing her; there were the rich who were running to and from each others' houses at this hour; there were the bigoted workers driving in a straight line to their offices; there were the poor who were unhappy and rightly malignant. Already, though there was sunlight in the haze, tattered old men and women were nodding off to sleep upon the seats. When one gave up seeing the beauty that clothed things, this was the skeleton beneath.

A fine rain now made her still more dismal; vans with the odd names of those engaged in odd industries—Sprules, Manufacturer of Saw-dust; Grabb, to whom no piece of waste paper comes amiss—fell flat as a bad joke; bold

[97] **Mrs Dalloway**: Clarissa Dalloway appears in *A Voyage Out*.

[98] **Sphinx**: one of two placed in 1882 to flank Cleopatra's Needle, erected in 1878 on the Thames Embankment.

[99] **Waterloo Bridge**: designed by John Rennie; opened in 1817.

lovers, sheltered behind one cloak, seemed to her sordid, past their passion; the flower women, a contented company, whose talk is always worth hearing, were sodden hags; the red, yellow, and blue flowers, whose heads were pressed together, would not blaze. Moreover, her husband walking with a quick rhythmic stride, jerking his free hand occasionally, was either a Viking or a stricken Nelson; the sea-gulls had changed his note.

"Ridley, shall we drive? Shall we drive, Ridley?"

Mrs Ambrose had to speak sharply; by this time he was far away.

The cab, by trotting steadily along the same road, soon withdrew them from the West End, and plunged them into London. It appeared that this was a great manufacturing place, where the people were engaged in making things, as though the West End, with its electric lamps, its vast plate-glass windows all shining yellow, its carefully-finished houses, and tiny live figures trotting on the pavement, or bowled along on wheels in the road, was the finished work. It appeared to her a very small bit of work for such an enormous factory to have made. For some reason it appeared to her as a small golden tassel on the edge of a vast black cloak.

Observing that they passed no other hansom cab, but only vans and waggons, and that not one of the thousand men and women she saw was either a gentleman or a lady, Mrs Ambrose understood that after all it is the ordinary thing to be poor, and that London is the city of innumerable poor people. Startled by this discovery and seeing herself pacing a circle all the days of her life round Piccadilly Circus[100] she was greatly relieved to pass a building put up by the London County Council for Night Schools.[101]

"Lord, how gloomy it is!" her husband groaned. "Poor creatures!"

What with the misery for her children, the poor, and the rain, her mind was like a wound exposed to dry in the air.

At this point the cab stopped, for it was in danger of being crushed like an egg-shell. The wide Embankment which had had room for cannonballs and squadrons, had now shrunk to a cobbled lane steaming with smells of malt and oil and blocked by waggons. While her husband read the placards pasted on the brick announcing the hours at which certain ships would sail for Scotland, Mrs Ambrose did her best to find information. From a world exclusively occupied in feeding waggons with sacks, half obliterated too in a fine yellow fog,[102] they got neither help nor attention. It seemed a miracle when an old man approached, guessed their condition, and proposed to row them out to their ship in the little boat which he kept moored at the bottom of a flight of steps. With some hesitation they trusted themselves to him, took

[100] **Piccadilly Circus**: junction built in 1819 to connect Regent Street with Piccadilly.

[101] **London County Council … Night Schools**: the LCC was established in 1889; its responsibilities included the management of adult education.

[102] For London **fog**, see **General Introduction**, n.21.

their places, and were soon waving up and down upon the water, London having shrunk to two lines of buildings on either side of them, square buildings and oblong buildings placed in rows like a child's avenue of bricks.

The river, which had a certain amount of troubled yellow light in it, ran with great force; bulky barges floated down swiftly escorted by tugs; police boats shot past everything; the wind went with the current. The open rowing-boat in which they sat bobbed and curtseyed across the line of traffic. In mid-stream the old man stayed his hands upon the oars, and as the water rushed past them, remarked that once he had taken many passengers across, where now he took scarcely any. He seemed to recall an age when his boat, moored among rushes, carried delicate feet across to lawns at Rotherhithe.[103]

"They want bridges now," he said, indicating the monstrous outline of the Tower Bridge.[104] Mournfully Helen regarded him, who was putting water between her and her children. Mournfully she gazed at the ship they were approaching; anchored in the middle of the stream they could dimly read her name—"Euphrosyne".[105]

AFTER LONDON

4.35 Richard Jefferies: Drowned London

Richard Jefferies (1848–1887), a writer and naturalist born on a Wiltshire farm, wrote several works expressing his knowledge and love of the natural world. He is celebrated for Bevis *(1882), an evocation of his country boyhood,* The Story of My Heart *(1883), which expressed his quasi-mystical beliefs, and* After London *(1885), a vision of a future when London has disappeared below a poisonous lake, the ultimate apocalyptic fantasy prefigured by Gray's Babylon (p. 7) and Cobbett's Great Wen* [3.4].

From After London, or Wild England *(1885), Pt. 1, ch. 5*

At the eastern extremity the Lake narrows, and finally is lost in the vast marshes which cover the site of the ancient London. Through these, no doubt, in the days of the old world there flowed the river Thames. By changes of the sea level and the sand that was brought up there must have grown great banks, which obstructed the stream. I have formerly mentioned the vast quantities of timber, the wreckage of towns and bridges which was carried down by the various rivers, and by none more so than by the Thames. These added to the accumulation, which increased the faster because the foundations of the ancient bridges held it like piles driven in for the purpose.

[103] **Rotherhithe**: by Elizabethan times already a port serving Southwark, when ship's passengers would be rowed to and from London in ferry boats.

[104] **Tower Bridge**: built between 1886 and 1894.

[105] **Euphrosyne**: Greek goddess of joy and mirth.

And before this the river had become partially choked from the cloacæ [*sewers*] of the ancient city which poured into it through enormous subterranean aqueducts and drains.

After a time all these shallows and banks became well matted together by the growth of weeds, of willows, and flags, while the tide, ebbing lower at each drawing back, left still more mud and sand. Now it is believed that when this had gone on for a time, the waters of the river, unable to find a channel, began to overflow up into the deserted streets, and especially to fill the underground passages and drains, of which the number and extent was beyond all the power of words to describe. These, by the force of the water, were burst up, and the houses fell in.

For this marvellous city, of which such legends are related, was after all only of brick, and when the ivy grew over and trees and shrubs sprang up, and, lastly, the waters underneath burst in, this huge metropolis was soon overthrown. At this day all those parts which were built upon low ground are marshes and swamps. Those houses that were upon high ground were, of course, like the other towns, ransacked of all they contained by the remnant that was left; the iron, too, was extracted. Trees growing up by them in time cracked the walls, and they fell in. Trees and bushes covered them; ivy and nettles concealed the crumbling masses of brick.

*

Thus the low-lying parts of the mighty city of London became swamps, and the higher grounds were clad with bushes. The very largest of the buildings fell in, and there was nothing visible but trees and hawthorns on the upper lands, and willows, flags, reeds, and rushes on the lower. These crumbling ruins still more choked the stream, and almost, if not quite, turned it back. If any water ooze past, it is not perceptible, and there is no channel through to the salt ocean. It is a vast stagnant swamp, which no man dare enter, since death would be his inevitable fate.

There exhales from this oozy mass so fatal a vapour that no animal can endure it. The black water bears a greenish-brown floating scum, which for ever bubbles up from the putrid mud of the bottom. When the wind collects the miasma, and, as it were, presses it together, it becomes visible as a low cloud which hangs over the place. The cloud does not advance beyond the limit of the marsh, seeming to stay there by some constant attraction; and well it is for us that it does not, since at such times when the vapour is thickest, the very wildfowl leave the reeds, and fly from the poison. There are no fishes, neither can eels exist in the mud, nor even newts. It is dead.

The flags and reeds are coated with slime and noisome to the touch; there is one place where even these do not grow, and where there is nothing but an oily liquid, green and rank. It is plain there are no fishes in the water, for herons do not go thither, nor the kingfishers, not one of which approaches the spot. They say the sun is sometimes hidden by the vapour when it is thickest, but I do not see how any can tell this, since they could not enter the cloud, as to breathe

it when collected by the wind is immediately fatal. For all the rottenness of a thousand years and of many hundred millions of human beings is there festering under the stagnant water, which has sunk down into and penetrated the earth, and floated up to the surface the contents of the buried cloacæ.

*

The extent of these foul swamps is not known with certainty, but it is generally believed that they are, at the widest, twenty miles across, and that they reach in a winding line for nearly forty.[106] But the outside parts are much less fatal; it is only the interior which is avoided.

*

[The common people] say when they are stricken with ague or fever, that they must have unwittingly slept on the site of an ancient habitation. Nor can the ground be cultivated near the ancient towns, because it causes fever; and thus it is that, as I have already stated, the present places of the same name are often miles distant from the former locality. No sooner does the plough or the spade turn up an ancient site than those who work there are attacked with illness. And thus the cities of the old world, and their houses and habitations, are deserted and lost in the forest. If the hunters, about to pitch their camp for the night, should stumble on so much as a crumbling brick or a fragment of hewn stone, they at once remove at least a bowshot away.

EPILOGUE: TOWN *VERSUS* COUNTRY

4.36 Beatrix Potter: Town Mouse and Country Mouse

Beatrix Potter (1866–1943) was born in Kensington, London, and began her career as a writer with The Tale of Peter Rabbit, *published in 1902. Like all her subsequent books it was adorned with her own exquisitely painted illustrations. In 1913 she married William Heelis, and they lived on a farm in the Lake District, where she pursued her interest in land maintenance and in preserving a local breed of sheep which was in danger of extinction. Her charming story of Johnny Town-mouse and the field mouse Timmy Willie was planned in 1916 but not published until 1918; it gives an even-handed treatment of the traditional tension between Town and Country.*

From The Tale of Johnny Town-mouse *(1918)*

At last the cart stopped at a house, where the hamper was taken out, carried in, and set down. The cook gave the carrier sixpence; the back door banged, and the cart rumbled away. But there was no quiet; there seemed to be hundreds of carts passing. Dogs barked; boys whistled in the street; the cook laughed, the parlour maid ran up and down-stairs; and a canary sang like a steam engine.

[106] **twenty miles across … nearly forty**: in Jefferies's day, roughly the extent of London.

Timmy Willie, who had lived all his life in a garden, was almost frightened to death. Presently the cook opened the hamper and began to unpack the vegetables. Out sprang the terrified Timmy Willie. Up jumped the cook on a chair, exclaiming "A mouse! a mouse! Call the cat! Fetch me the poker, Sarah!" Timmy Willie did not wait for Sarah with the poker; he rushed along the skirting board till he came to a little hole, and in he popped.

He dropped half a foot, and crashed into the middle of a mouse dinner party, breaking three glasses.—"Who in the world is this?" inquired Johnny Town-mouse. But after the first exclamation of surprise he instantly recovered his manners. With the utmost politeness he introduced Timmy Willie to nine other mice, all with long tails and white neckties. Timmy Willie's own tail was insignificant. Johnny Town-mouse and his friends noticed it; but they were too well bred to make personal remarks; only one of them asked Timmy Willie if he had ever been in a trap?

The dinner was of eight courses; not much of anything, but truly elegant. All the dishes were unknown to Timmy Willie, who would have been a little afraid of tasting them; only he was very hungry, and very anxious to behave with company manners. The continual noise upstairs made him so nervous, that he dropped a plate. "Never mind, they don't belong to us," said Johnny.

"Why don't those youngsters come back with the dessert?" It should be explained that two young mice, who were waiting on the others, went skirmishing upstairs to the kitchen between courses. Several times they had come tumbling in, squeaking and laughing; Timmy Willie learnt with horror that they were being chased by the cat. His appetite failed, he felt faint. "Try some jelly?" said Johnny Town-mouse. "No? Would you rather go to bed? I will show you a most comfortable sofa pillow."

The sofa pillow had a hole in it. Johnny Town-mouse quite honestly recommended it as the best bed, kept exclusively for visitors. But the sofa smelt of cat. Timmy Willie preferred to spend a miserable night under the fender.

It was just the same next day. An excellent breakfast was provided–for mice accustomed to eat bacon[107]; but Timmy Willie had been reared on roots and salad. Johnny Town-mouse and his friends racketted about under the floors, and came boldly out all over the house in the evening. One particularly loud crash had been caused by Sarah tumbling downstairs with the tea-tray; there were crumbs and sugar and smears of jam to be collected, in spite of the cat.

Timmy Willie longed to be at home in his peaceful nest in a sunny bank. The food disagreed with him; the noise prevented him from sleeping. In a few days he grew so thin that Johnny Town-mouse noticed it, and questioned

[107] According to a German proverb, *Mit Speck fängt man Mäuse* ("with bacon you [can] catch mice").

him. He listened to Timmy Willie's story and inquired about the garden. "It sounds rather a dull place. What do you do when it rains?"

"When it rains, I sit in my little sandy burrow and shell corn and seeds from my Autumn store. I peep out at the throstles and blackbirds on the lawn, and my friend Cock Robin. And when the sun comes out again, you should see my garden and the flowers – roses and pinks and pansies – no noise except the birds and bees, and the lambs in the meadows."

"There goes that cat again!" exclaimed Johnny Town-mouse. When they had taken refuge in the coal-cellar he resumed the conversation; "I confess I am a little disappointed; we have endeavoured to entertain you, Timothy William."

"Oh yes, yes, you have been most kind; but I do feel so ill," said Timmy Willie.

*

So Timmy Willie said good-bye to his new friends, and hid in the hamper with a crumb of cake and a withered cabbage leaf; and after much jolting, he was set down safely in his own garden.

Sometimes on Saturdays he went to look at the hamper lying by the gate, but he knew better than to get in again. And nobody got out, though Johnny Town-mouse had half promised a visit. The winter passed; the sun came out again; Timmy Willie sat by his burrow warming his little fur coat and sniffing the smell of violets and spring grass. He had nearly forgotten his visit to town. When up the sandy path all spick and span with a brown leather bag came Johnny Town-mouse!

Timmy Willie received him with open arms. "You have come at the best of all the year, we will have herb pudding and sit in the sun."

"H'm'm! it is a little damp," said Johnny Town-mouse, who was carrying his tail under his arm, out of the mud. "What is that fearful noise"? he started violently.

"That?" said Timmy Willie, "that is only a cow; I will beg a little milk, they are quite harmless, unless they happen to lie down upon you. How are all our friends?"

Johnny's account was rather middling. He explained why he was paying his visit so early in the season; the family had gone to the sea-side for Easter; the cook was doing spring cleaning, on board wages, with particular instructions to clear out the mice. There were four kittens, and the cat had killed the canary.

"They say we did it; but I know better," said Johnny Town-mouse. "Whatever is that fearful racket?"

"That is only the lawn-mower; I will fetch some of the grass clippings presently to make your bed. I am sure you had better settle in the country, Johnny."

"H'mm – we shall see by Tuesday week; the hamper is stopped while they are at the sea-side."

"I am sure you will never want to live in town again," said Timmy Willie.

But he did. He went back in the very next hamper of vegetables; he said it was too quiet!!

One place suits one person, another place suits another person. For my part I prefer to live in the country, like Timmy Willie.

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Further Reading

Since this book is not a history of London but an anthology of literary extracts that the multifaceted nature of London and Londoners has inspired, the sections of 'Further Reading' have been set out in the following way. Works listed in Part 1 have been selected because they provide an historical context to extracts in the book. Those in Part 2 are modern editions of works from which the extracts have been chosen, thus enabling the reader to explore further their descriptions of London and London life. London is the place of publication unless otherwise stated.

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