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THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CAUSE: GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE AND THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORICAL NOVEL

by

NICOLA MINOTT-AHL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Abstract

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CAUSE

by

Nicola Minott-Ahl

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This dissertation argues for the existence of the architectural novel as distinct from the historical or Gothic novel, yet partaking of essential elements of both. This category of novel consists of those works expressly written with the preservation and restoration of specific Gothic buildings and the popularization of a national history, (a necessary component of the argument in favor of preserving medieval buildings) as major goals. The authors of such novels place buildings, rather than a particular character, in the central role and, in doing so, permit them to determine the way the narrative unfolds. Because novels written this way necessarily focus on setting, history, and plot, this dissertation also argues that certain works by Victor Hugo and William Harrison Ainsworth, whose novels have been dismissed as an unsuccessful combination of Gothic novel and guidebook, must be looked at again with the stated

and implied goals of their respective authors in mind. The category is a narrow one, but it is carefully defined and made to serve a specific purpose.

One of the ways in which this project approaches the definition of the architectural novel is to show how other authors responded to the opportunities and limitations posed by it. Alexandre Dumas uses the architectural perspective of Hugo and Ainsworth, even modeling his narrative on nineteenth century notions of the structure of a Gothic edifice to create a novel that moves in the direction of the restoration of the novel form itself by positing and then rejecting the conventions of Gothic fiction. In the process, he also creates a novel that makes national history the intellectual property of ordinary people. Jane Austen, mentioned last though she was published first, shows the reading public, and potential authors alike, a way beyond the Gothic novel and its devices that does not lead to architecture but which still embraces the complex political and philosophical debates that are inspired by the presence of the Gothic edifice in the other novels examined here. She restores the novel or points the way to its restoration by presenting the Gothic novel stripped of Gothicism and ready to take on subjects formerly reserved for academic treatises in a way that engages a larger proportion of readers. All four novelists recognize the power and potential of the novel as the disseminator of ideas, and as a force that can galvanize readers into action, rather than as mindless entertainment.

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Natalie, who cheered me on, even in the midst of her own struggles

Fred, the love of my life, who carried me when I couldn't go on. Fred, who would
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Chapter One

Nineteenth Century Historiography and its Foundation

In this study I wish to explore some critical works of four nineteenth-century novelists writing in England and France: William Harrison Ainsworth, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and Jane Austen. These novelists, I will argue, deconstruct and then reconstruct what were, in their day, widely accepted notions of national history and of fictional narrative by taking architectural structures, rather than characters or events, as the subjects of some of their most important novels: Old St. Paul's, The Tower Of London, Windsor Castle, Notre Dame De Paris, The Count Of Monte Cristo, and Northanger Abbey.

To grasp what they hoped to achieve, however, it is essential to understand not only the historical context in which these novels were produced, but also their conceptual universe. Some parts of this universe are familiar to us. But many of the common intellectual currents of their epoch, the early to mid-nineteenth century, have now fallen so far out of favor as to be virtually forgotten.

Because they lived in the same century, though they did not all live in the same country, these novelists shared much common ground and it is to this common foundation that I shall turn in this opening chapter, leaving the particular ideas that affected each novelist individually to be discussed in subsequent chapters. A full discussion of the ideas on which each of these novelists drew would easily make a book in itself. I shall therefore focus here only on those particulars that have bearing on my argument and I shall deal with those particulars only as they help to clarify the work of the novelists themselves.

I will concentrate on six thinkers who stand at the heart of issues such as the development of philosophies of history, new methods of historiography, and the uses to which history could be put: R.G. Collingwood, whose ideas on history will serve as a means of illustrating how Victorians conceptualized the progress of historical thought; Giambattista Vico, Adam Ferguson, and Dugald Stewart, whose philosophies of history were, I will argue, of crucial importance to all kinds of historical narrative; Sir Walter Scott, who taught the century how to write historical fiction; and on the subject of the Gothic in art, a topic that emerges from and engages with the historical thought of the nineteenth century and permeates the works discussed in this study, A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin. With the exception of those of Collingwood and Ruskin, the ideas of all of these figures inform the ideas of history the four novelists imbibe from their intellectual environment, and that very environment made it possible for them to examine and question those ideas and put them to use in ways their original proponents may not have foreseen.

The moment at which the works of the four novelists were being published was a period in which, more than ever before, all ideas were being discussed and challenged and in which, therefore, new ideas—many of which were to lead to social, political, and other changes—were being formed and taking root. Not only was this an era of change, it was, as Walter Houghton observes,ⁱ the first time in human history that an age was conscious of being in the process of transformation. Although “all ages are ages of transition, never before,” writes Houghton, “had men thought of their own time as an era of change *from* the past *to* the future. Indeed, in England that idea and the Victorian period began together.” Several factors brought these changes

about, among them revolution (both industrial and political) and mass literacy, which broadened the reading public and altered its demographics in ways the authors studied in this project would learn to exploit for their own profit and for the good of those who read their works.

Perhaps of even greater importance than the challenges being made to accepted ideas is the fact that all ideas were being discussed not only by a small community of what we might call the intelligentsia but increasingly by the middle class, itself a group rapidly growing and increasingly literate.¹ They would eventually constitute a new reading public that authors could address in new ways. The members of this group could, like their social superiors, become consumers of journals, newspapers, and books and could also become active participants in literary, social, and even in political debate.² Such intellectual engagement, made possible through literacy, could translate into action. The literate members of the lower classes could also become producers of written material that could influence public sentiment and action. In France, an informed and determined populace, many of whose members belonged not only to the middle class but also to the lower classes, were literate and had used their literacy to produce and read radical propaganda – had

¹ G. M. Young also points out that the rise in literacy meant in real terms that: "The middle classes were becoming more and more literary. & the lower classes were learning to read.... There was thus an enlarging field to be harvested by the publishers of newspapers and magazines." [Early Victorian England, 1830-1865, vol.ii. London, Oxford UP, 1963. 3] With the exception of Jane Austen, the authors discussed in this study all published their novels in magazines in monthly installments. This method of publication made literature comparatively inexpensive and therefore more readily available to the lower classes than books had been in the past.

² Indeed, Schiller asserts that becoming involved in such debate, at least for him, was essential: "Expectantly the gaze of philosopher and man of the world alike is fixed on the political scene, where now, so it is believed, the very fate of mankind is being debated. Does it not betray a culpable indifference to the common weal not to take part in this general debate?" (Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, eds. and trans. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1982. 3)

indeed brought down a monarchy. Once this occurred, France became the laboratory and model for the people of other nations.

Ironically, the literacy of the lower classes in France was a result of the efforts of at least one of the major institutions that lost power in the aftermath of the French revolution. The burden of the education of the French public rested with the Church and passed from it³ to the State with the advent of the Revolution. Until 1789, schools mainly served the purpose of religious education and inculcation of basic reading skills. The teachers were not well paid and were likely to be undereducated themselves. Yet, unlike in England during the same period, there was a structure in place for the education of the underprivileged, so some people did in fact learn to read. The main problems were that there weren't enough competently run elementary schools running in country parishes nor were there enough of any kind in the South and West of the country as a whole.ⁱⁱ Joseph Moody points out that the dependence on the Church to provide ordinary people with an adequate education and to indoctrinate conservatism in service of Church and monarchy gradually changed after that fateful year, 1789:

The revolutionary period did not aim to shape the Christian or even the man, but the citizen, the patriot, the republican. The school should lead the nation along the path of realism and progress.ⁱⁱⁱ

³ State intervention in educational affairs seems to have been virtually nonexistent in spite of the fact that in 1698 Louis XIV had decreed that every child over the age of seven years was to be instructed by his parish school in reading and writing as well as in the Catholic religion until the age of fourteen. H.C. Barnard tells us (in Education and the French Revolution, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p.2) that this dictum was reaffirmed in 1724 and was still ineffectual: "It can therefore be said that prior to the Revolution the intervention of the State in the field of education had been more apparent than real" and that "the educational system of France remained almost entirely under the control of the Church."

As inherently subversive as literacy was, reading and revolution in eighteenth and nineteenth century France were also intentionally interconnected by the effort to inculcate the values of patriotism, republicanism, and social reform espoused by the revolution and legitimized by the ideas that impelled it. State control of education in revolutionary France meant almost the reverse of what was feared in England, as we shall see. It meant that the public would be informed and indoctrinated with revolutionary ideas, but it was indoctrination nevertheless. Moreover, once those ideas held sway, state control of education could serve a new set of conservative ends by providing an opportunity to inoculate the people against royalist sentiments likely to arise in times of political and economic difficulty.

With the re-establishment of the throne of France the picture changed. Under Louis-Philippe, moral and spiritual instruction again became the aim of education, with “some reference to practical needs and with primary emphasis on order and social stability.”^{iv} By the time of the Empire, however, the thrust of state education in France became the creation of ideal citizens, participants in the economy, and competent civil servants:

The Third Republic completed the secular process by removing the religious objective and organizing compulsory education for the purpose of integrating the individual into society and to inculcate faith in science. The Republicans were confident that the school would remove social injustice, immorality, and delinquency.^v

Thus the idea of being literate and informed was now to be separated from the revolutionary impulse and intimately connected with the image of the loyal citizen, of one who understood and appreciated the sacrifices of those who had been instrumental in the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy. To remain ignorant would

be to resume the yolk of the *ancien regime* and accept the social injustices that had been perpetrated against the lower classes for centuries. Literacy in France during this period essentially translates into a political voice and often into political action.

The development of large-scale literacy In England was much different. Here, it was viewed as a road to the blurring of social boundaries and eventual societal instability. The topic of reading amongst the lower classes is raised in the political context created by the French revolution and is therefore viewed through the lens of popular uprising, the overthrow of the aristocracy and the government's fervent desire to prevent these things from happening in England. Lawmakers and conservative members of society viewed any initiative that would tend to bring about the removal of social injustice as something to be feared. Barely concealed under the concept of "social station" and all of the stratification and stagnation that such an expression implies, the class system was woven into the fabric of English society through centuries-old habit and had therefore proven its right to remain in place. If the masses must be educated, they must be taught to believe that a rigid class system was the natural social structure in England. If they must read, they must be exposed only to reading matter that would tend to reinforce this idea. After all, the working classes could imbibe revolutionary ideas through periodicals and pamphlets and become violent, as the French had done. Through their literacy they might become resentful of those above them in social station and financial status and seek to redress what, in the present political climate, they would inevitably view as injustice. Far from conveying the impression of contributing to England's overall improvement, the

presence of a lower class reading public was seen by the middle and upper classes as a threat to the stability of the government and even to their lives.

One possible way to combat this kind of subversive reading is through universal education funded by the state. Such a plan would allow state control of what is taught to, and therefore what is read by, the newly literate. Yet, as Patrick Brantlinger points out, in 1807 a bill that would provide two years of education to all poor British children was defeated largely on the grounds that to educate the poor "would be...prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life...it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity".^{vi} The rationale certainly illustrates the degree to which the subject of literacy was considered in political terms. Mass literacy could lead to mass discontent, which could in turn lead to revolution in England; it must therefore be stopped – or narrowly controlled.

The population in general, and therefore the literate population as well, began to grow and develop nevertheless. The progress of literacy was slow at first but gained momentum as the nineteenth century unfolded. Writers had a potentially larger and more varied public than their predecessors could count on. As Richard Altick asserts, acknowledging that the mass reading public developed in nineteenth-century England against a backdrop of profound social change: "In the first half of the nineteenth century the population doubled (from 8.9 million to 17.9 million)...Meanwhile, the population of Scotland, which formed an important market for English books and periodicals, grew from 2.09 million in 1821 to 4.5 million in 1901. The reservoir from which the reading public was drawn therefore became

larger and larger."^{vii} However, because reading instruction was inadequate and because of the opposition of elite members of society to mass literacy, the development of the English reading public was somewhat impeded.

Altick points out that day schools that were sponsored by various philanthropic groups produced readers who could barely make their way through a paragraph and frequently did not understand what they read. Moreover, access to reading matter was so limited as to create a situation in which "many children who went to the typical common school in the earlier nineteenth century never even touched a book."^{viii} In pre-Revolutionary France, students of the *petits écoles* did not fare much better but the existence of a larger system overseen by a single institution, the Church, ensured the existence of a significant population of individuals who possessed some degree of literacy on which they could build.

Once the existence in England of a lower class reading public seemed inevitable, the next effort on the part of the upper classes was to prescribe the matter that people read; since they could not prevent the spread of literacy, they could at least make sure people were exposed only to material that would reinforce society in its present state and induce the lower classes to reverence and uphold authority. In addition being viewed as a potentially subversive activity, reading therefore came to be seen, in England as in France, as a device for the indoctrination of the masses. The power of the printed word, once acknowledged, had to be harnessed.

The works of creative writers living in this intellectual environment must surely have been subjected to intense scrutiny for any material that may be considered objectionable. Indeed, the works of all of the novelists discussed here were targets of

harsh criticism due to their content or simply due to the fact that they were novels. Altick points out that "evangelical denominations had a passionate suspicion of imaginative literature: a suspicion which fatefully determined the reading experience of millions of people during the whole century."^{ix} Due to a variety of factors, including efforts on the part of religious groups and social and political reformers to give the members of the working class a constructive means of recreation, tracts, pamphlets, and periodicals became ubiquitous by mid-century and the inclination of the lower classes to read developed in spite of a growing Victorian trend toward "pure" literature, which, devoid as it was of anything that could remotely be considered objectionable, made for dry reading indeed. G.M. Young asserts that nineteenth century reformers were confident that all that was necessary to create progress was a literate population whose reading material was carefully chosen.^x Reading, in itself, was neither good nor bad but if the wrong thing were read, impressionable minds could be corrupted. Dangerous literature could ultimately slow progress and destabilize society. In an environment such as this, in which reading was so closely scrutinized, writers must have developed a heightened awareness of the potential effects their works could have on the reading public.

Hannah More attempted to write novels whose moral underpinnings could counteract some of the more morally ambiguous creations of her contemporaries. Through her literary efforts and her copious output of tracts and pamphlets, she and other like-minded individuals made great strides in forcing literature to serve the conservative interests of the middle class.^{xi} Yet, there were still others who as members of the gentry sought to further their class interests without creating the

species of morally instructive novel that resulted from extreme evangelicalism. Patrick Brantlinger's illustration^{xiii} of the upper class reaction to the idea of mass literacy is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Marked by somewhat greater subtlety than the works of Hannah More, this novel presents the paradigm of the uneducated reader whose ignorant mind is nourished on subversive literature. The monster created in this novel becomes a force of unbridled hostility to a humanity it supposes to have excluded it from a normal and fulfilling existence. It can certainly be argued that this was the position of the masses in Britain during the nineteenth century. The sense of disenfranchisement they felt could be intensified, justified, and given a name through the books they read. Yet other novelists saw their works as so many opportunities to educate their readers' tastes, sensibilities, and intellects in ways that could render such heavy-handed insistence on conservative values rather beside the point. Once properly educated, the reader could reach the decision on his or her own that the society in which he or she lived was worthy of being defended and improved, but not destroyed.

One may easily conclude that writers of the early to mid-nineteenth century were acutely aware of the power they had once they were able to garner public attention. Their works were viewed as having the potential to exert profound influence on youth, on women, and on the working classes as a whole. As Altick points out, the desire for self-improvement (one of the hallmarks of the Victorian era in particular), the need to keep up with the changes occurring in the world, and the desire to remain abreast of the social unrest and drastic remedies for social ills as presented in radical propaganda caused many of the lower classes to turn to

reading.^{xiii} This circumstance contributed to the shifting demographics of the reading population. Though the working classes were largely illiterate, many of their ranks had begun to see reading as a means to a variety of ends and consequently were determined to achieve literacy. Historical novelists in particular understood that there was a whole group who sought empowerment and education in what they read, and therefore took great pains to ensure accuracy. As we shall see, they used their opportunity to mold the minds of the public to draw attention to issues they felt were of concern to everyone.

Members of the lower echelons of society in England were also beginning to use their ability to read and write as a means of expressing their grievances and generating support for their causes. A by-product of this activism through literacy is the creation of a new and complex reading public that was growing accustomed to being informed through print and galvanized into action on behalf of a cause. This is a condition that the novelists who are discussed in this study would eventually exploit on behalf of Gothic buildings and the many things they stood for. However, when the tendency first became evident, it was a source of unease, for even in England, revolution was not out of the question. Walter Houghton points out that in the wake of the upheaval in France, it was not unthinkable that revolution could occur in England. "The possibility," he writes, that such a thing "might happen" across the channel "was abundantly supported, a priori, by the spread of radical propaganda, both political and religious, among the working classes, the two most influential books" being "Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*."^{xiv} The masses could not vote, but the revolution in France made England and all of Europe

aware that they had become a political force and a force in the making of history. Working class people all over Europe were becoming aware of the march of history, to use a favorite nineteenth century image (reflected in the title of George Eliot's Middle March, which sees England in the nineteenth century in the middle of this march), and of their disadvantaged place in it.^{xv} For the first time in modern history, the underprivileged had a powerful voice that they were willing and able to use.

However, it is no surprise that such an informed socially and politically active populace caused uneasiness all over Europe. The established governments of Europe found themselves forced to engage people they had long been accustomed to ignore and often they did not do it well. As Eric Hobsbawm has written^{xvi}: "Rarely has the incapacity of governments to hold up the course of history been more conclusively demonstrated than in the generation after 1815. To prevent a second French Revolution, or the even worse catastrophe of a general European revolution on the French model, was the supreme object of all the powers which had just spent more than twenty years in defeating the first." But no one could turn back the clock. The status quo could not be maintained regardless of the measures governments took. Neither military repression nor reactionary laws, two of the most common responses (and both of them attempted in England⁴), could halt political change at this point. The people had taken the initiative and entered history. Moreover, they had swept aside a significant number of those who had formerly dominated it, namely kings and aristocracy. The course of history would now be directed by the actions of people who had never before been allowed to participate directly in historically significant events.^{xvii}

⁴ The use of armed forces to put down the Chartists in 1839, for example.

Anyone able to harness the energy of this group and focus it on the reconstruction of the nation rather than on its destruction, on restoring its greatness rather than debasing it through cruelty and violence – or suffering it to be ruled by ruffians – would diffuse the threat the common people represented. Yet Hobsbawm's statement makes the assumption that the monarchies of Western Europe were chiefly employed in checking the natural flow of events, among other ways, by suppressing literacy or otherwise making education inaccessible to the working classes. Hobsbawm's idea that governments attempted to obstruct the course of history reflects the ideas of thinkers who lived during the volatile pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods, such as Kant^{xviii} and Marx who saw the course of history as inevitably violent yet moving toward a better, more rational existence for humankind. This became one of the prevailing views of history in the age we are concerned with and therefore influenced the way history was conceptualized, written, and read. This view also came to influence the way governments would approach the grievances arising from the middle and lower classes, for their complaints were inadvertently legitimized through the assumption that revolution was a natural occurrence on the road to the ideal society, a point made much of by Carlyle in his *History of the French Revolution*. Hobsbawm's remark also conveys the sense that by 1815, the overthrow of ancient and firmly entrenched dynastic governments by angry, ill-clothed, ill shod, and armed mobs had already become a constant threat that somehow had to be diffused. This in turn was a tacit acknowledgement that the issues of widespread poverty and exploitation of the underprivileged would not disappear and therefore had to be confronted. The ordinary people became a group that had to be

addressed, which also meant that in every sense of the word, they became an audience.

The fact that a growing number among the masses in late eighteenth century France and England were able to read, or to hear someone else read, and act upon inflammatory literature meant they could one day form mobs and instigate riots in response to the sentiments stirred up by pamphleteers. Those in power in England therefore saw literacy amongst the lower classes as a gateway to rebellion. After all, the tide of passions could be manipulated almost from one instant to the next merely through the circulation of subversive literature from countless printing presses.⁵

Indeed, in post-revolutionary France the press had a power and prestige that must have frightened the upper classes in the rest of Europe, certainly in England. G.M. Young points out that French journalists enjoyed much higher social status than their English counterparts^{nix} and this translated into a very real influence over the people and over those whose actions and opinions they reported. Balzac centers the novel *Illusions Perdues*⁶ on the world of the early to mid-nineteenth century Paris journalist and in the process illustrates in great and often harsh detail how the book and how ideas in the form of articles become commodities. He also illustrates how the pen of the journalist can create fame and generate wealth or destroy a person's chances of advancing in the social hierarchy -- provided, of course, that the writer had

⁵ G. M. Young informs us that "On the Tory side....fear of the Press may have been accentuated by the knowledge of the enormous influence exerted by French journalists in the twenties." (*Early Victorian England*, p.12)

⁶ He began this work, which he originally conceived as a sort of vignette of provincial life, in 1836. Its original form is testament to Balzac's original emphasis on his observations of the world around him, rather than on the creation of an imaginary work whose characters are of paramount importance. The novel in three parts that emerges in June of 1843 and begins to reach the public in July, combines elements of the character-driven novel with those of the vignette. Antoine Adam gives a detailed account of the development of this novel in his introduction to Garnier Freres' 1961 edition of *Illusions Perdues* and mentions that Balzac had at one time referred to it as "une nouvelle" (vii).

access to the technology that alone could amplify his voice. It is a world where that same pen, working in tandem with the printing press, can lift the impoverished writer who wields it to dizzying heights of wealth and influence. Balzac's duc de Rhetoré^{xx} points out that "la Restauration finira par avoir raison de la Presse, la seule puissance 'à craindre'". The main character, the aspiring literary giant and journalist Lucien, comes away from his conversation with the duke with the idea that "La Presse, l'Intelligence étaient donc le moyen de la société présente."^{xxi} Such power was possible only in a society whose people were literate and inclined to act on what they read.

The existence of a reading public amongst the lower classes caused the printing press to become revolution's most powerful weapon and European governments recognized this potential of the press to incite rebellion. Members of the governing classes everywhere understood that incendiary ideas could reach more people more quickly through its operation than through any other means then available. Moreover, we have observed that the ability to write and to read constituted a force for social and political change on a fairly large scale in the first third of the nineteenth century in part because of this awareness of the governing classes of the power of the printed word. We have also seen that few members of the general public were unaware of the fact that their literacy could give them a political voice. In fact, since literacy and revolution were so closely paired, one may say that the primary motivation for reading amongst the lower classes was their interest and involvement in political activities. Yet the pairing of reading and revolution could break down as soon as the political crisis were over. Richard Altick, speaking

primarily of England, has pointed out that “the major result of the surge of popular interest in reading during the 1790’s...” was not as yet a “permanent expansion of the reading audience.”^{xxii} Nevertheless, although more slowly and with any number of setbacks, once begun, the progress of literacy, documented by many including Richard Altick, G.M. Young, and Patrick Brantlinger, could not be stopped.

Those who were frightened of the development of mass literacy did not as readily see that the printing presses that could churn out any number of subversive pamphlets could also produce material capable of instructing the masses and imparting to them a sense of their importance to and involvement in the destiny of the state. Those who were less reactionary and, perhaps, more romantic in tendency than the Hannah Mores of their day could see the necessity and possibility of addressing the lower class literate population without reducing them to the intellectual level of children who needed heavy handed moral tales to influence them to behave well. The task of instilling that sense of involvement in the working class literate public would fall to historians as the guardians of the national identity and memory and, specifically, to those historians who were willing to address its members directly. Of this varied group, consisting of academics, amateurs, essayists, and novelists, the most effective were those who reached the widest audience. These were the historians whose medium was the novel.

The novelists to be discussed here took it upon themselves to make history accessible to this new emerging public, to entertain it certainly, but to educate it also, not only morally, as many Victorian novelists were doing, but to their new historical place and historical possibilities. One of the most fundamental and radical purposes

of these novels is to re-conceive history as something made by the people themselves and belonging to the people. Historians, both factual and fictional, seeking to address this new reading public in all its diversity and complexity understood the need to produce works that were as much about ordinary people as they were about kings and queens.

This is what Thomas Macaulay means when he asserts in the opening chapter of his History of England: "I should very imperfectly execute the task which I have undertaken if I were merely to treat of battles and sieges, of the rise and fall of administrations, of intrigues in the palace, and of debates in the Parliament." He goes on to discuss what will be included in his history, setting himself the task of integrating more diverse material than is expected of a historian and presenting it in the form of an enjoyable narrative: "It will be my endeavor to relate the history of the people as well as the history of the government, to trace the progress of useful and ornamental arts, to describe the rise of religious sects and the changes of literary taste, to portray the manners of successive generations, and not to pass by with neglect even the revolutions which have taken place in dress, furniture, repasts, and public amusements." Macaulay is clearly aware of the fact that his purpose is quite literally revolutionary in its intention to look at the past through the experience of ordinary people and everyday life. Indeed, he expects to be criticized by other more conventional historians. "I shall cheerfully bear," he writes, "the reproach of having descended below the dignity of history, if I can succeed in placing before the English of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors."

What Macaulay in fact describes here is a form halfway to fiction, as is suggested again when he uses words like: “to relate,” “to trace,” “to describe,” and “to portray,” since they imply the writer’s intention to give freer rein to his subjectivity than one would expect of a historian. He thinks the reader might think he has sunk below the dignity of history; he is clearly making an allusion to the fact that what he is writing may seem very much like a novel, a form of literature that, even in his day, had not achieved full legitimacy. Let me leave for later discussion this question of the novel’s standing, for it is one of the issues with which my novelists are concerned. Instead, let me return to history and to Macaulay to point out that what he is doing here is nothing less than redefining the task of the historian.

Macaulay first recognizes that history must address itself not only to university dons and to the gentleman scholar but also to the ordinary citizen who has newly realized that he has a place in the course of events. In addition, Macaulay suggests that the subject of history has altered. When he speaks of battles and sieges, of the rise and fall of administrations, of palace intrigues and Parliamentary debates, Macaulay himself defines the character of what history used to be. Rather than a history that was essentially a catalogue of the experiences of the aristocracy, he advanced the notion of a history that would give an accurate idea of an entire society at a given age, to tell, significantly, the history of the *people* as well as the history of their government, thereby acknowledging the contribution of all people to the making of a historical period. History must therefore include everything by which a nation is identified: the arts, religion, literature, manners, and even dress.

Finally Macaulay sees the present as the endpoint of history. The concepts called into play by words like “relate,” and “portray” do not work with circumstances that do not yet exist. Unlike his predecessors in the philosophy and writing of history who tended to search history for object lessons or who saw it as a means of rational prediction of the future, Macaulay proceeded on the assumption that history was most useful if it could lend insight into present circumstances. However, this idea was plucked from a swiftly rushing stream of discussion about the nature, purpose, and appropriate methods of history.

To understand the conceptual journey that brings Macaulay to this point and that subsequently brings our four authors to this point, we need to examine several ideas that were key moments of this change. It will not be my purpose here to trace the development of historiography, since that would be an undertaking far beyond the scope of this book. I want, however, to underline certain critical ideas that make it possible for us to comprehend the basis of historical narrative as it was written in the nineteenth century.

One way to do this is to use R. G. Collingwood’s analysis of the evolution of western historical thought. Born in 1891, and steeped in the thought of the nineteenth century, Collingwood in many ways is himself a Victorian thinker. His views not only help explain the ideas of the Victorians, but the very cast of his mind gives us access to the way they thought.

As Collingwood observes, the modern view of the writing of history begins in the eighteenth century and assumptions we make concerning the scope and purposes of history are the results of extensive debate and questioning of still older

assumptions. Therefore, in order to understand what it means to have inherited a view of history that begins to take on its present forms in the eighteenth century, we need to distinguish it from the view that obtained in the Middle Ages, since the historians of the Enlightenment directly assailed it. He points out that since the basic tendency of the medieval view is to place God at the center of history as the Creator of the world as well as the director of the events that occur therein, He is therefore the Author of history in both senses of the word. This is one of the first assumptions to be questioned by historians who come after the medieval period.

In tracing the changes that have occurred in historical thought in The Idea of History, Collingwood sees the introduction of Christian ideas into Western thought as the first step on the way to the assumptions we make today about the nature of history and about the way it is to be written. As a result of positioning God at the center of history, the historical process must be seen as the working out of divine (not human) purpose, and as involving “the actions of historical agents”. In this scheme, the agents themselves then become “vehicles of God's purposes and therefore...historically important,”^{xxiii} even if they are not really autonomous. Moreover, we may conclude that, in this scheme, as the workings of a divine will, history is something to be discerned or even recalled to collective consciousness rather than created and narrated. This is essentially history as recollection. In keeping with this way of thinking, the act of *creating* a narrative can be seen as the creation of a structure and the imposition of that structure on a collection of data.

The use of the Christian approach entails the assumption that such a structure already exists, imposed from above. History thus conceived is almost infinite in

scope. It is universal, rather than centering on a few great men, since "all persons and all peoples are involved in the working out of God's purpose... and every part of it is a part of the same whole."^{xxiv} But history thus conceived is also progressive, with 'In the beginning' at the outset and the apocalypse - or the millennium - at the end. When humanistic views begin to influence the writing of history, the idea that God shapes and directs history gives way to the idea that influential men, their lives, their decisions, and their intelligence (or lack thereof) drive history.

But in one sense, the essential nature of history does not radically change in the interval between what we designate as the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. Replacing the divinely ordered succession of events with one that was directed and determined by the actions of an individual or small group of people meant simply the exchange of one intelligent guiding principle for another. Yet, the idea of divine agency in the creation of history must be given up in order for us to arrive at nineteenth century historiography and the novels produced by the writers to be considered here. The Enlightenment provides the opportunity to do this without producing a degree of controversy that will halt inquiry into the possibility of a historiography without divinity at its center. At the same time, it holds to the idea that history has a tendency toward some end.

When the apocalyptic view unites with Enlightenment philosophies of history, one consequence is the idea that the events of history, progressing in orderly fashion from one era to the next are connected by a causal relationship. Once the events of history are related in this way, as proceeding inevitably toward some ideal state, the idea of divine purpose loses emphasis and itself becomes part of the story of history,

while the notion of history as ultimately able to convey an idea of the future remains intact. Modern history gradually moves away from the idea of divine agency and replaces it with the idea of causation. The historian then becomes the maker of the structure – i.e. the cause and effect relationship between events --and of the narrative that arises from imposing it on historical events. As always, he also determines what is historically significant by choosing the people and events he will study and write about. He will ultimately determine what posterity will remember. In the nineteenth century, the historian becomes the new author of history and of memory. But where are the limits of the task of the historian, and of history itself? Those who pondered the subject of historiography also had to define the historian's field and identify its boundaries.

It is a commonplace of present historical thought that one of the functions of history is to enable us to understand the present. However, as Collingwood points out, this view was by no means taken for granted during the first half of the nineteenth century, the period under scrutiny here. Having taken for themselves the role of *creating* history (rather than simply unearthing and recording it), historians were faced with the once-divine task of determining where history must end. And whether historians, including the novelists whose works are examined here, place the endpoint of their task in the present or in the future determines the kind of history they will write.

If the proper end of historiographical endeavor is an understanding of the future, the present can be seen merely as a step on the way to something else and therefore is of relatively little importance as it takes on the characteristics of a

transition from one set of circumstances to the next. Thinking that man accumulates knowledge and wisdom through successive ages, while placing the endpoint of history in the future de-emphasizes the present and de-values the past, since every age becomes a step on the way to a more intelligent, more prosperous, better developed one. "Universal history, so conceived, is the history of progress from savage beginnings to modern civilization."^{xxxv} Such an historian sees early history as a somewhat embarrassing look at the infancy of a given society. At the same time, the whole course of history tends toward a state of perfection whose precise description may vary according to the historian describing it.

Therefore, the historian tacitly asserts that the scheme he has devised to make sense of the past will continue to work for events and situations that have not yet come into being. Avrom Fleishman^{xxxvi} makes the point that "The Enlightenment was notable for beginning a spirit of critical, objective interpretation, in which the past was to be related to the present and in which the total culture was to be considered, not only its political and military history." However, seizing on one of the main difficulties of the approach from a post-enlightenment perspective, he recognizes that "this spirit was still condescending toward the past as merely a stage toward the present." Moreover, "its main interest was in drawing up general laws for rational prediction (rather than in discovering the uniqueness of past ages)." Far from taking advantage of the broadening of the scope of historical examination Fleischman describes, the historians of this period gave in to the impulse to categorize knowledge and generate equations that would use what was known to define the unknowable, rather than allow ideas and information to cross-pollinate and produce new ideas and

deeper understanding of past and present. What resulted were histories whose "cultural-history chapters were compartmentalized and did not organically inter-relate intellectual and material development." As we have observed, Macaulay rejects this in favor of a commonsense narrative approach to history and intends it for present use in showing the English of his own day the traits that contributed to their character. In this way, he could invoke a national past so that it could be installed in a coherent way in the collective consciousness of the people—for ultimately, history was about them.

Yet more is needed to bring about the kind of history produced by the historical novelists of the nineteenth century than faithfulness to detail and the ability to combine different kinds of historical inquiry into a coherent picture of the past. Historians needed to be able to comprehend and convey what the people of the past thought about as well as what they did, ate, and wore. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) had concluded that universal history, that is, the history of mankind, must also combine philosophy with historical thought, "that the facts must be understood as well as narrated, seen from within and not only from the outside."^{xvii} This approach to historiography entails considerably more than is encompassed in history from Macaulay's view. It requires the historian to do more than 'portray' the past; he or she must enter it. However, though Kant envisions a history of ideas, rather than of phenomena alone, like those who came before him, his was a vision in which the task and methods of the historian still project into the future. Such an assumption concerning the scope of historiography cannot produce novels such as were written by the novelists examined here because these works very deliberately address their

own present. Schiller is one thinker who makes this approach possible since he espoused views that derive, in part, from ideas advanced by Kant but that differ in important ways.

In discussing Schiller, Collingwood^{xxviii} speaks of his improvement on the historical views of Kant by using the present, rather than the future, as the endpoint of history, for history can give no insight into the future. Schiller^{xxix} accepts the Enlightenment idea of history as progress but, in his Tenth Letter, conveys the idea that this progress has not necessarily been positive. Nevertheless, his conceptualization of history focuses on the present as its endpoint. In this scheme, history's goal should be to show how "modern language, modern law, modern social institutions, modern clothing...came to be what it is."^{xxx} Those who accept this approach also acknowledge the idea that history is not just an exercise of the mental faculties; it is a tool to be used to serve a purpose that is significant for the age in which it is written. For this reason, such histories are themselves historical documents.

The precise nature of the purpose they serve is to be determined by the historian, who must therefore be as steeped in his own present as he is in the age from which he draws the subject of his history. As is expected, Schiller also asserts that historical method ought to entail "entering sympathetically into the actions which he describes". Rather than be an observer, like an Enlightenment Age scientist, the ideal historian immerses himself in those actions and feels them "imaginatively as experiences of his own." He must then find an effective way to convey his impressions to others. Proof of his effectiveness is that the reader of such a history

also becomes involved in the past as his or her own experience, is encouraged to think historically, and is made to see the past as an object of investigation whose insights are applicable to the present.

Together with this idea, the present could be seen as an improvement on the past - that is unless historians with Romantic tendencies⁷ should decide to reverse the order of progress in favor of the idea that history has shown a departure from an ideal state to a present characterized by uncertainty and the upending of stable social institutions. One development resulting from these differing theories of history is that the past is of interest for its own sake and must be investigated on its own terms. Yet another development is the fact that the historian himself also changes according to this way of viewing history. *Anyone* who can enter into the intellectual and social life of the past, as well as gather the facts that lend authenticity to his or her subjectivity can produce history worth reading. Any written work that accomplishes this can qualify as history. It is through this new conceptualization of the roles and methods of the historian that novelists can become historians and their readers can enter the intellectual landscape they create and become amateur historians themselves.

The idea that history does not consist in the retrieval of factual data—indeed it could never be complete if that were the case—was not called into being by Kant. Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) suggested something similar as early as 1725, when the first version of his Scienza Nuova was published. Many still consider Vico a

⁷ R.G. Collingwood points out: "Rousseau was so much carried away by this idea [that past ages must be looked at sympathetically] as to assert (in his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*) that primitive savagery is superior to civilized life; but that exaggeration he later withdrew, and the only part of it that survived as a permanent possession of the Romantic school was the habit of looking back to primitive times as representing a form of society with a value ... which the development of civilization had lost." (The Idea of History, revised edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. 87)

figure virtually undiscovered by writers in English until James Joyce made him the cornerstone of Finnegan's Wake. But, as a number of scholars have shown⁸ he was well known throughout the nineteenth century, for example, to Coleridge, Thomas Arnold, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde,⁹ and Beerbohm,¹⁰ to name only a few of those who not only knew of him but who were influenced by him.

In a train of reasoning that is echoed in the writings of both Kant and Schiller in its implication that history needed to focus on the way people in the past thought, Vico had decided that the only way to know about the past was to understand the way the people who lived in long gone eras made sense of their own world through the language of myth. By examining and interpreting myth as a system of symbols that could be translated into modern language and concepts, one could recall the forgotten past to the memory of a given society. These ideas would achieve currency long after he first published them, when the likes of Chateaubriand and Michelet would read the Scienza Nuova and disseminate Vico's ideas through the medium of their own writings in the early nineteenth century. They would achieve still wider currency when those who read Chateaubriand and Michelet, including Victor Hugo, began to publish novels.

⁸ See Nathan Rothenstreich in Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity, a collection of essays edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 221-240). See also Gustavo Costa's article, "Vico e Locke", in the Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana (no.49, 1970; 344-361) Alain Pons: "Vico et la Pensée Française" in Etudes Philosophiques (3-4, 1968, 361-383). Oscar A. Haac's article, "Vico and Michelet," in Forum Italicum that same year (vol. 2, 483-493) and Elizabeth Sewall's article, "Bacon, Vico, Coleridge, and the Poetic Method" Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969). Coleridge is one of the many literary figures who were regular dinner guests at the home of William Harrison Ainsworth, one of the authors examined in this project.

⁹ See Ellman, Richard. Oscar Wilde. New York: Random, 1987.

¹⁰ Beerbohm, Sir Max. Letters of Max Beerbohm: 1892-1956, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis. New York: W.W. Norton, 1988; Behrman, S.N. Portrait of Max: An Intimate Memoir of Sir Max Beerbohm. New York: Random, 1960.

Vico's ideas essentially transform historical study and place material that is usually considered the province of the literary historian or artist in the hands of those who would recreate the past. The *Scienza Nuova* can be viewed as Vico's argument asserting and proving the retrievability of the past. He does this through uniting the history of society with the way its members use language. He insists not only upon the possibility of arriving at the past through words and narrative but on their necessity as the only reliable sources of such knowledge. Careful investigation of the way societies communicated would provide insight into the issues that people of past ages encountered and allow people of the present day to understand the way they conceptualized them. According to Collingwood, Vico "regards the historical process as one whereby human beings build up systems of language, custom, law, government, etc. - History as the creation and development of human societies and their institutions."^{xxvi} In this view, history is a process and not a succession of events, and law, government, custom, and language are systems that occur within the context of the historical process.

Neither systems nor processes can be comprehended at a single glance but require close study and immersion in the world of their particular logic. It is at this point that the views of Vico dovetail with Kant and Schiller's notion of a history of ideas. Because systems are heterogeneous in nature, due to the complexities inherent in entities made up of multiple constituent parts, they therefore require careful attention to those individual parts. Language use in myths, for example, provides one way to become familiar with the reasoning of people who cannot otherwise speak for themselves. Long before Macaulay, Vico's perspective produced the image of a

dynamic past that arises from a look at all aspects of history, not just at political and economic activity. His ideas provide a background for the development of the notion that a historian could become familiar with a particular era and society by examining the ways its citizens expressed themselves through poetry, song, ritual, and other forms. Just as the views of Enlightenment philosophers and historians tacitly permitted history to be written by non-traditional historians, Vico's view of history would also liberate later historians by allowing the possibility of new forms of evidence being brought to bear on historical circumstances.

Vico also believed that "Certain periods of history have a general character, coloring every detail, which has reappeared in other periods, so that two different periods might have the same general character, and...it was possible to argue from one to the other...similar periods tended to recur in the same order".^{xxxxii} Though the English version of this idea did not necessarily encompass the idea of a pattern, it is similar to the "spirit of the age" idea that historians of the nineteenth century embraced through Macaulay and Scott, among others. However, in Vico's version, the recurrence of basic features of historical periods extended to historians the possibility of entering into the thinking of past peoples and producing plausible images of what they were really like by comparing those ages with similar and more familiar ones. This easy progression from the notion that periods have a "general character...which [has] reappeared in other periods"^{xxxxiii} to the idea that history was marked, if not by strict repetition, at least by the recurrence of certain fundamental characteristics is a perfectly reasonable point in the train of Vico's thought, but it is nevertheless Collingwood's conclusion through the extension of Vico's idea, rather

than Vico's own conclusion. We will shortly have the opportunity to observe the way this next step in Vico's thought complements the ideas articulated by historians of the Scottish Enlightenment who also seek a theoretical and methodological basis for the retrieval of the past. What is important here is that in Vico's scheme, as well as in Collingwood's elaboration of it, history is spiral, not cyclical. Though it has a discernable pattern, it cannot project its investigative technique into the future, since there is always something unique to a given age. This view together with the idea that knowledge of past peoples was accessible through careful study of their use of language made a fuller, more detailed view of the past possible, even if it was not necessarily more accurate.

Vico's reliance on this principle of repetition of the general characteristics of an age lends strength to an idea of his that we still grapple with today: that history and myth are essentially the same. Just as the effectiveness of myth is predicated on its tendency to discern or to impose recurring patterns in human circumstances and in nature, there are patterns in the course of history that allow the historian to inject knowledge of similar ages to the one under scrutiny, including his own, in a way that makes the resulting history more real and compelling. Nineteenth century historians would later strive to humanize historical figures and bring their worlds to life by using their own direct or indirect experience of people in similar historical circumstances. Yet surely it is a certain kind of history that makes up this equation. Only history that is progressive and universal will respond to this approach. Collingwood's presentation of Vico's argument in favor of such history is made through a narrative that is itself universal in scope and that unfolds in its own

progressive sequence through three ages, namely the age of gods, heroes, and of men. Vico's ideas about myth and history are predicated in turn on this particular—Christian—view of the nature of history. The idea that history and myth recall the forgotten past and provide insight into the minds of past peoples would later fuel the expansion of history as a category of intellectual endeavor, and of the kinds of works that could be included there.

Vico's decoding of the illustration at the beginning of *Scienza Nuova* provides a demonstration of his approach to decoding the symbolism of myth with a view to understanding the circumstances of past peoples. The use of the picture as a paradigm also points up the assumption Vico makes that there is in myth a direct affinity between the visual, spoken, and written narrative and that all contribute in the process of investigating and presenting history—another idea that will tend to lend strength to the use of artifacts and art, in addition to documentary evidence, by subsequent historians. The writers whose works will be examined here all share this assumption, which allows them to shift easily from one category of narrative to another in their own novels. Moreover, they accept the idea that history is characterized by the recurrence of similar patterns of activities and circumstances and that truth is arrived at through informed subjectivity as well as through fact. They also see history as the story of a people, told for the sake of establishing identity and creating collective memory. These are the characteristics of myth.

Using the example of ancient Greek myth, Vico demonstrates how an idea of the past can be gleaned from a correct reading of its symbolism. For example, in explanation of myths that center on seemingly impossible quantities of gold, he

makes the statement that "our science of mythology will show that the first gold was grain, by the harvests of which for many centuries the first nations counted their years." Using a combination of word etymology and the decoding of a symbol that he has observed in similar contexts, he connects gold, grain, harvest, the marking of the passage of time, and the mythic Saturn: "Saturn was so called by the Latins from *sati*, 'sown' [fields], and is called *Chronos* by the Greeks, among whom *chronos* means 'time,' whence comes the word *chronology*."^{xxxiv} In this conception of myth, words and phrases used to describe objects and phenomena are symbols that had direct counterparts in observable reality. This language can be decoded and the patient investigator can discern the actions and circumstances it describes, since it is really reportage, not the flight of primitive fancy.

However for Vico, myth as historiography ceases to function, or is at least severely impaired, when the language of the symbols is distorted to serve the user's interests. Vico uses mythology as a way of getting acquainted with past ages. Yet, he makes an interesting distinction between early myth, which he sees as having been produced by people whose habitual mode of expression is imagistic, and later myth. In the latter, mysticism attaches new and distorting meanings to images and symbols that once had direct counterparts in actual life: "only later (when the long passage of years had obscured their meanings, and customs had changed from austere to dissolute, and because men to console their consciences wanted to sin with the authority of the gods)" did myths come "to have the obscene meanings with which they have come down to us."^{xxxv} These new meanings, in effect, distort the original memories represented in myth and render the task of finding out how people thought

still more difficult. Taking an important step toward liberating historiography from religion, Vico separates myth from mysticism with the assertion that, in early myth, the language corresponds more directly to reality as experienced and remembered by its creators.

Though greatly influenced by the work of Vico,¹¹ Collingwood rejects the idea that history is memory and in this, his views diverge from nineteenth century predecessors such as Macaulay. In making his own argument, and contrasting his views with those who preceded him, he asserts that "Bacon's definition of history as the realm of memory was wrong, because the past only requires historical investigation so far as it is not and cannot be remembered. If it could be remembered, there would be no need of historians."^{xxxvi} This is true if Bacon refers only to collecting and retaining facts and evidence. If however, the past is alive—as it is for Vico—and teeming with developments that are put to better use in successive, more enlightened ages, then memory is a learning process whose subject is actually the self as individual or as nation.

If memory is a process then it, like history itself, has multiple constituent parts. Remembering is only one of them. In this scheme, neither history nor myth is concerned with time *per se*. Indeed, in Vico's thoughts on history, one misses any reference to time as part of his conception of it. Yet he does see historiography as the realm of memory: "Memory...has three different aspects; memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them and invention when it

¹¹ In the Editor's Preface to *The Idea of History* (London, New York: Clarendon Press, 1946), T.M. Knox, who knew the author personally and was responsible for turning his notes, relevant lectures, and essays into this posthumous work (in accordance with Collingwood's plans to write such a book, and in accordance with his wishes as expressed prior to his death), writes that Collingwood used to say that Plato was his favourite philosopher and "that Vico had influenced him more than anyone else". (viii)

gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship."^{xxxvii}

All three of these activities are involved in the production of myth, which is itself historiography encoded in symbolic language, according to Vico's conception of it. Memory is therefore an active creative process, not simply a space into which undigested facts are deposited. Memory thus conceived is history for Vico because it is the need to record events in the language available to ancient peoples that makes myths valuable to the modern historian. Modern historiography mirrors this process since it takes hold of memories not accessible to the present day and records them again in language comprehensible to the new recipients. Vico's way of conceptualizing history makes the idea of the historical novel even more comprehensible as modern myth and transforms its writers into mythmakers. However, it also lends legitimacy to their claim to be historians. It is only fitting that such a hybrid product should have issued from the pens of this hybrid category of writer.

Since myth is a language, it can be decoded and used by the historian because it can yield useful knowledge. Collingwood points out that Vico recognizes the need for "a principle by which to distinguish what can be known from what cannot; a doctrine of the necessary limits of human knowledge."^{xxxviii} Vico does not undertake to provide such a principle. Nevertheless, he undertakes to identify myth as falling within these limits. Since memory and myth are both products of the creative human mind, they are knowable, because according to Vico, one can know and understand (rather than merely perceive) only what one has made. Collingwood again recognizes the next step in Vico's line of reasoning and concludes from this idea that nature,

then, is intelligible only to God and cannot be completely understood. In this conception, the various branches of philosophy, so greatly valued at the expense of history during the eighteenth century, can no longer be seen as the highest level of human endeavor since they are ultimately fruitless. By this reasoning, Vico attempted to raise history to a level that would render it worthy of the notice of the intellects of his age. History, having been made by the human mind, is a more suitable subject and object of human study than is philosophy. Yet, if history is ultimately knowable, how do we account for the missing information and lack of evidence that dog the footsteps of every historian? How can history be expressed in a coherent narrative when such gaps exist?

Along with the views of Vico, Kant, and Schiller, those of the Scottish Enlightenment proponents of Conjectural history nourished historiographical debate in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England and France, and provided an important source for the views of the romantic historians. Whereas the theories of Vico, Kant, and Schiller serve to broaden the definition of history, and whereas Vico's approach adds to the body of evidence that can be used to investigate it, the Conjectural approach allows the historian use his or her imagination to supply what is lacking in historical evidence. Scholars like Adam Ferguson and Dugald Stewart dominated historical thinking during the Scottish Enlightenment, a phenomenon coeval with the Enlightenment that was taking place throughout Western Europe during the eighteenth century. For them, as for Vico, history is "a reconstruction of the major stages in the course of civilization, often without hard data, but deduced from generalizations about the forms of all social phenomena."^{xxxix} So that while

historians of the English Enlightenment were trying to fit history into scientific enquiry and observe it using the cold light of reason, Ferguson was advancing the idea that it is possible for the historian to become immersed in the past by studying all available evidence and using it to reconstruct the mindset and circumstances of past peoples. This way, he could become so familiar with their way of thinking that he could continue a trend of thought interrupted by lack of information simply by engaging in well-informed speculation.

For the novelist-historian who embraced Conjectural history, this method meant that one could enter and appropriate the subjectivity of historical figures with impunity. Perhaps equally important, it also meant the ability to create fictitious but nevertheless authentic characters representative of the age in question. Moreover, unlike the Enlightenment thinkers of most of Europe, the members of the Conjectural School thought of the past of a given nation as possessed of intrinsic value as a subject of study, so that the narration of its events need not be viewed as so many moralizing tales from which posterity is to derive lessons. Without any detectable familiarity with Vico's ideas on the subject of history, Ferguson and his disciples managed to generate a philosophy of history based on ideas similar to his and that could actually translate into a historiographical method.

Because, like Vico, Ferguson was willing to accept a given historical period on its own terms, he was able to recognize and attempt to reject the tendency of his age to make evidence conform to a favorite theory. "In collecting the materials of history," he remarks, "we are seldom willing to put up with our subject merely as we find it."¹ Further characterizing the tendencies he recognized in contemporary

thought he asserts, “we are loth to be embarrassed with a multiplicity of particulars, and apparent inconsistencies.” He wished to allow the structure of history to emerge from the period itself rather than follow the dubious example of colleagues who “profess the investigation of general principles” but who actually seek to impose their own. Their approach had the effect of bringing the subjects of scientific or philosophical inquiry “within the reach of our comprehension” by permitting theorists “to adopt any system.” Some of these systems emerged from the idea that the human race developed from a very primitive form to its manifestation in the eighteenth century. This idea permitted historical inquiry to focus on the impact of this development on historical events, an approach that limited the historian to the role of observer rather than creator of the story of the past. That human nature is static was to Ferguson a self-evident truth that his contemporaries often tried to avoid in order to reconcile a variety of often-conflicting observations. Acquainting oneself with the deeds and circumstances that make up the past and allowing the narrative to emerge from familiarity with the ways of the people in question and with the facts at hand was a sounder approach than to try to reconcile conflicting data with theories about the development of the human race that could not possibly be verified and that weren’t even necessary to the comprehension and reconstruction of the past.

He pinpoints a common problem in all fields of intellectual endeavor. Yet his own idea of the stability of human nature was in itself a structure that he imposed on history. The theory that human nature simply *is* and does not develop will ultimately determine the nature of the resulting history. However, the Conjectural approach eventually developed by Ferguson, his colleagues, and his students permits the

structure of the historical narrative to emerge from historical circumstances themselves through the medium of the historian's processing of those circumstances. The historian is placed in the role of making history, rather than of recording it.

The reader, by the same token, is placed in the position of experiencing history, rather than merely reading it. This is possible because, just as the Conjectural approach influences the historian to become a part of the age he investigates, Ferguson's attitude to the investigation and narration of the past encourages the readers of the resulting narrative to place themselves in the context of history. The resulting sense of the immediacy and accessibility of the past allows the present to be viewed as history in the making. Important events are potential additions to the record and the objects that belong to the age are potential historical artifacts.

The Conjectural historians greatly influenced Sir Walter Scott, who in turn greatly influenced nearly every historian and novelist of the early to mid-nineteenth century. With the exception of Jane Austen, alone among the authors examined here in having earned the distinction of being wholeheartedly admired by Scott as a writer capable of creating narratives he could not create, the authors in this study claim the Scottish novelist as their muse and as their instructor in the writing of historical fiction. For this reason, they are products of the Conjectural approach to history.

The closeness of Scott's connection with the Conjectural historians, their theories, and methods can most readily be explained by the fact that Adam Ferguson was his teacher and a friend of his family. Dugald Stewart, another significant figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, became his teacher after Ferguson retired from the University of Edinburgh. The historians and novelists of both France and England

were exposed to the ideas of the Conjectural School through Scott's novels. One of the most significant of these ideas places upon the imagination the burden of discerning the patterns of thought from which historical events occur, and of creating a coherent and plausible image of the past out of the scattered, incomplete facts of history. The unabashed advocacy of speculation to fill in those interstices in historical fact that remained even after the most meticulous research made the views and methods of the Conjectural School very well suited to the novel and to the kind of history many nineteenth century historians wanted to write.

It thus became the duty of novelists and historians alike to impart to readers a sense of what it was like to live in a given period and to convey some idea of the way people thought. Ferguson, and his German counterparts take up this issue at least twenty-five years after Vico and assert that real history is about ideas, not events, and about whole societies, not just their leaders. Therefore, when Macaulay begins to write his History of England A generation later, the concept of capturing the "Spirit of the Age" is well on its way to being widely accepted as a means of accessing the past and making it accessible to the widening reading public.

We may summarize the way the influential eighteenth century figures discussed here approach historiography by saying that for Vico, reading myth, legend, fable, etc. correctly is the way to retrieving and understanding history. For Kant and Schilling, history must be an examination of the development and manifestation of ideas, and for the Conjectural historians, the imagination must complete the picture derived from research and inquiry into all aspects of the past. These approaches liberated the historian from authorities and sources that are often tainted by bias or

self-interest. However, it was because of self-interest of a particular kind that nineteenth century historians and novelists began to write history. It was a means of tracing one's own origins since the history of the nation is the history of the individuals who comprise it. Moreover, increased interest in the past made writing history lucrative. Yet Ainsworth, Hugo, and Dumas in particular took their work seriously and saw in the writing of history the opportunity to change the way people think about themselves and about the past. History could be used to delineate the national identity and thereby re-create the nation in a new, non-monarchical, non-religious, and non-revolutionary image. History may then become a means of defining a nation through the recollection of the characteristics and achievements of that nation's ancestors to the memories of its descendants as a group.

The post-Revolutionary period is the age of nationalism during which "the past is seen as a peculiarly national affair, as having a direct connection with the present fortunes of the nation, and as an organically intertwined and self-validating system of institutions and values."^{xi} What it means to be French takes on new significance after 1789 because the characteristics of the people of France belonged to the population as a whole, rather than to a particular class. Napoleonic imperialism threatened other European regions whose people discovered—in a natural response to the threat of having another culture imposed on their existing one—that they didn't want to become French. The external threat produced a closer examination of distinctive elements of these other European cultures and encouraged people of one nation to distinguish themselves from the people of another.

Furthermore, revolutions, economic crises arising from the growing pains of fledgling capitalist economies, and similar upheavals posed a threat to the fabric of a nation from within. The concept of nationhood in England emerges almost unbidden from the resulting sense that the very foundations of a given society are under threat from its own disenfranchised citizens, but it could be strengthened and used to further the causes of peace and stability if handled properly. Everyone had to be included in the image of the nation so that the masses would be less likely to separate themselves, as the people who really comprised the nation, from the aristocracy, who could easily be seen as an alien presence whose loyalty was always to its own narrowly defined interests at the expense of those of lower rank. Perhaps in their eagerness to follow the French example the underprivileged would claim for themselves the wealth they had created and punish those who had taken it from them, destroying the nation as community in the process.

In many ways, these fears were justified. The breakdown of community certainly does take place in England where Industrial Revolution tended to make people focus more on themselves rather than on common bonds with fellow townspeople, some of whom weren't natives. The people who went to the towns in search of employment altered the populations of communities that had not materially changed in centuries by introducing a new element of the unfamiliar. As the factory and the industrial town became more common, so did the phenomenon of populations whose individual members were from other regions. From the perspective of the foreigner, the combination of leaving the area of one's birth and relocating to one that was utterly new and where no one was familiar would tend to destroy the factory

worker's sense of belonging to a community that had common interests, unless he or she were to associate exclusively with fellow-workers. It is also important to bear in mind that these migrant workers were often turned away from their jobs in times of economic stress, forcing them to move on to another town in search of employment.

Walter Houghton points out that:

When the ties that had bound men to their country neighbors and their ancestral village were snapped by the exodus to the factory towns and metropolitan London, the sense of community was permanently lost. For the huge, impersonal city is simply a 'place' where a mass of unassorted atoms is collected together for greater business efficiency. What human as distinct from commercial intercourse exists is largely casual and amorphous."^{xlii}

Moreover, members of the industrial middle class tended to think more in terms of the family unit than of a greater community, though it has been observed^{xliii} that both classes were capable of assembling - separately, of course - for municipally sponsored social events, music concerts (in the case of the middle class), or outdoor activities. However, class divisions seemed to have superseded any sense of belonging to a larger culture. People from all walks of life who were paying attention to this trend toward individualism and isolation within an ever-growing and more complex society must have felt some trepidation for the future social and political stability of the nation.

In France, the loss of strong universal adherence to the national religion is what seems to have undermined any sense of community. The Roman Catholic Church in France had been seen as having betrayed the people by aligning itself with the aristocracy to the detriment of the poor, and of serving its own interests rather than serving God and humanity. Furthermore, though the Revolution could have

supplied the place of religion, not everyone believed in it and those who did could not always agree on its proper outcome. Besides, if the country were to survive, the Revolution must eventually come to an end. The rallying point would then vanish or be forced to linger artificially.

How then was the nation to be made? By creating a sense of common belonging to the soil of the nation in question, the ruling classes of Europe and even the rulers of post- revolutionary France could cast rebellion in the light of self-destructive behavior that would ultimately undermine the strength of the nation and render it vulnerable to all of the evils of foreign attack. The fostering of patriotism would place a moral imperative on loyalty to the existing government that would perhaps equal the strength that religion once had in keeping everyone in his proper place. It would also ensure a large pool from which to draw the defenders of the nation and of its way of life. The lower classes could view the nation as having been built by their labor and as therefore rightfully belonging to them.

In any event there was clearly a need to convey to the general population the sense of a shared past and a common destiny. Though there was no consistent effort on the part of the governments of France and England to bring this about, it seems that authors, scholars, churchmen, and others severally concluded that the key to doing this was through the printed word.^{xliv} Writers learned to look upon the concept of community as something that can be and needed to be constructed through narrative. Some of the historians among them would take the initiative to create histories that included all levels and aspects of society as a means of uniting the people of a nation around a common image of themselves and of their collective past.

Moreover, the generating of a national history along the lines of Macaulay and Scott would give the public a general frame of reference. It could then replace the universal belief in a single set of religious doctrines that had created Christendom. This solution circumvented all of the issues inherent in reviving religious observance and solved the fundamental problems of how to define – and thereby create – a nation out of an increasingly heterogeneous population, how to make history accessible to the average, somewhat undereducated intellect, even as it challenges the more sophisticated, and how to preserve in the collective memory the important aspects of the nation's history. Even though it was no longer possible to rely on a commonality of belief, it was certainly possible to retrieve the people's past and fill the present with knowledge of achievements and events that everyone could share.

Historians, then, could rebuild a sense of oneness and belonging to something greater than any individual, but devoid of any particular theology. Such an edifice could then withstand doctrinal disputes without having its relevance or usefulness called into question. Moreover, history had the appearance of being verifiable, whereas Church doctrine was not. The ultimate result would be that a new nation would emerge whose citizens were aware of their illustrious past and confident that their ancestors, from the greatest to the least, contributed to the nation's present greatness. They would possess intellectual vigor and confidence sufficient to be aware of their national identity and be prepared to defend it in the salon, the coffee house - or on the battlefield.

The common achievements of a nation - parliamentary government, constitutional monarchy, ports, buildings, and other monuments would also take on

importance as extensions of this idea of common history, common origins, and national character. To the extent that writers were increasingly interested in presenting this brand of history, the people, who we have seen were increasingly literate and interested in history as an on-going phenomenon, were also ready to read history presented in new, accessible forms. Historian G.M. Young^{xlv} mentions how a series of articles by W.J. Thoms entitled *Folk-Lore* was introduced into the famous periodical, *Athenaeum* in 1846. The series was meant to highlight what Young describes as "popular antiquities." That readers in England were enthusiastic about the stories that had sprung from the English *folk* is an indication of the degree to which they were ready to take an interest in their own culture and origins. They were prepared to devote as much time and intellectual energy to its appreciation as to the perusal of any other respectable literature. Other antiquities, such as the buildings England produced became interesting as examples of the physical strength of her working classes, the inventiveness of her artisans, the skill and refinement of her architects, and the generosity of her wealthy patrons. Their durability provided abundant proof of the hardiness and integrity of the English people. Such was the case in other countries as well. However, in France as we shall see, this was a feeling that had to be fostered with particular care. Those same relics of the strength of ordinary French people were also the instruments of their oppression, and therefore were powerful symbols of how much of their very lifeblood had been drained from them for the benefit of the ruling class.

The idea of a Folk has a tendency to reduce the people it encompasses to a collection of physical characteristics and character traits. Yet it is a concept that,

however reductive, ultimately transcends class and a host of other differences that can divide the members of a society. Both in France and in England, the consciousness of an ethnicity together with the awareness of one's membership in a national community would influence people to view themselves in light of a general culture that was unique to their country. New associations could then arise for the nation's more problematic symbols since they could be viewed as having been produced by the culture in addition to exerting influence on it. The nineteenth century's delineation of typically English characteristics even allowed for the rehabilitation of the symbols of the former dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in a country where popular iconoclasm was taken to the point of converting St. Paul's Cathedral into a marketplace.

Through Burke,¹² uncomfortable parallels between the English and French revolutions could be made less compelling—and potentially threatening—by reminding the English that they conducted a much better and a more constructive Revolution than the French. After all, theirs did not end monarchy but rather changed its nature and thereby created a more stable system of government. According to Burke:

The Revolution was made to preserve our *ancient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *ancient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty. It came about for the preservation not the dissolution of the government.”^{xlvi}

The executed king of the English Revolution had committed the egregious error of failing to respect this ancient constitution and therefore had placed himself

¹² *Reflections on the Revolution of France* (1790). Ed. J.G.A. Pocock Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987. 26–8

beyond its protection. Through his essay, Burke reconstructed the revolution so that it could be presented to the reading public as an event that solidified the character of the people and ultimately strengthened its monarchy. Moreover, the English were free to view themselves as a people who had never lost their freedom, were never enslaved as the French were, and therefore did not have to resort to the same drastic measures they had used to bring about social and political change. This last point could obviously serve as a hint to the more militant citizen.

Novelists could follow Burke's example and use their works to redefine historical people and events. Even under Norman rule, the English character shone forth in a variety of ways so vividly depicted by Sir Walter Scott in Ivanhoe, a work that placed before the Englishman an image of himself that he could admire. The novels of Scott, particularly Ivanhoe and Waverley, give us the honest, loyal, hardworking, and resourceful Englishman. Such images of the typical native of England were sufficiently common by mid-century that Dickens could parody them in his novels. Charles Adderley^{xlvii} referred to English imperialism as a "desire of spreading throughout the habitable globe all the characteristics of Englishmen - their energy, their civilization, their religion and their freedom."¹³ Both the English Constitution and the English constitution were praised for their resilience and fitness to their native environment. I follow Walter Houghton's example and quote from Our Mutual Friend:^{xlviii} "We Englishmen are Very Proud of our Constitution, Sir. It was bestowed Upon Us by Providence. No Other Country is so Favored as This

¹³ 'Our old Anglo-Saxon breed, the best in the whole world!' – Charles Adderley, quotation from "Arnold's Discovered Grotesques," Chapter Two: "The Symbolical Grotesque" by George P. Landow, in Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer; A Victorian Web Book. <http://landow.stg.brown.edu/victorian/genre/ej/2b2.html>

Country." the image of the Englishman Scott created through narrative is parodied here through yet another narrative. It is worth noting that Mr. Podsnap's interlocutor is a Frenchman and that these remarks are to be understood in part as a comment about the unsteady state of France. The statement is also interesting as a rather Burkean example of English self-definition in terms of distinctness from France.

Across the channel, ethnicity develops not out of essays, and narratives in the style of Burke and Scott, respectively, but out of the Revolution and the urgent need it creates for redefining France without its aristocracy. The literary definition of the French people comes afterwards. By the 19th century, French identity is also formed by the evangelical imperialism of a leader who takes it upon himself and his nation to liberate the under classes of all Europe from feudalism. Hence, the typical characteristics of the Frenchman center on notions derived from revolution and military engagement - in other words, from conflict. The traits that typify the Frenchman include the belief that freedom is the right of all people - sometimes whether they wanted it or not - as well as boldness sufficient to overthrow what is deemed to be a bad government, and execute its members. Moreover, they portrayed themselves as a rational, intelligent people capable of producing the likes of Voltaire and Rousseau, and as a resilient, determined people who could wage and win wars while its government was in turmoil. All of these characteristics, derived as they are from historical circumstances, become incorporated into the definition of the nineteenth century Frenchman. Any writer of historical fiction who chooses to focus on the French people must take these historically determined characteristics into account. He or she is placed in the position of having to decide whether to use this

image as it is, or whether to develop it in new ways in order to serve the needs of the narrative and of those who will read it.

The historian engaged in the task of making sense of the past and of defining—or redefining—the ethnicity of a people through narrative is, in effect, creating a nation by engendering and intensifying self-awareness according to his particular presentation of self. Only a certain type of people, formed by a particular soil and climate can produce the kinds of things the English, French, Germans, Spanish, etc. have produced. They alone possess the special spirit that allows them to accomplish such great deeds. Since for thinkers like Vico, the act of remembering is itself creative and history and myth are essentially one man-made concept, it is possible for nineteenth century historians to generate a mythology without divinity. History may then be conceived as secular myth.

Of course, this stance implies that to make history is to reconstruct it and if the question of why it is necessary to reconstruct it should arise, the appropriate reply for nineteenth century historians may be that what writers of history are doing is building the national memory - one that will be definitive and supersede all previous efforts at writing about the past. I venture to disagree with Collingwood and assert that used in this way, history *is* memory since it becomes a common image of the past with which every citizen can identify.

History had the opportunity to define and create a place for itself in the national consciousness. By being intellectually accessible and widely available, it could constitute a fairly uniform frame of reference for the experience and awareness of other subjects. Both William Ainsworth and Victor Hugo in particular use the

novel to present history; they use history to improve the intellectual range of the novel, and they use both the novel and history to get readers interested in architecture. In this way, the reader could be engaged in multiple ways - i.e. connected personally, knowledgeable on a subject hitherto only vaguely known, and interested in a secondary issue.

- ⁱ Houghton, Walter. The Victorian Frame of Mind. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. 1957. 1
- ⁱⁱ Barnard, H.C. Education and the French Revolution. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1969. 7
- ⁱⁱⁱ Moody, Joseph N. French Education Since Napoleon. New York: Syracuse University Press. 1978. 3
- ^{iv} Moody. 3
- ^v Moody. 3
- ^{vi} Brantlinger, Patrick. The Reading Lesson: the Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fiction. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 1998. 75 Brantlinger is quoting . J.L.Hammond and Barbara Hammond. The Town Labourer: The New Civilisation, 1760-1832. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor. 1968. 49.
- ^{vii} Altick, Richard. The English Common Reader: a Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900, second edition. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 1957. 81
- ^{viii} Altick. 152
- ^{ix} Altick. 109
- ^x Young, G.M. Early Victorian England, vol. ii. 4
- ^{xi} Altick. 105
- ^{xii} Brantlinger. 63
- ^{xiii} Altick. 97
- ^{xiv} Houghton, Walter. The Victorian Frame of Mind. New Haven & London, Yale University Press. 1957. 55
- ^{xv} Young, G.M. Early Victorian England
- ^{xvi} Hobsbawm, Eric. The Age of Revolution. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 1962. 109
- ^{xvii} See Lukacs' The Historical Novel. Trans. From the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. Lincoln and London: University of Chicago Press. 1962. 24
- ^{xviii} Kant, Immanuel. On History. Lewis White Beck, ed., trans. Indianapolis. New York: Bobbs-Merrill. 1963. 23 Kant asserts here that the impulse of the members of his own government toward the preservation of civil society is an encouraging indication that civil society as a whole will better itself in spite of disturbing tendencies toward warfare: "finally... after many reformatory revolutions, a universal cosmopolitan condition, which Nature has as her ultimate purpose, will come into being as the womb wherein all the original capacities of the human race can develop."
- ^{xix} Young. 12
- ^{xx} Balzac, Honoré de. Illusions Perdues. Introduction, notes, et relevé de variants par Antoine Adam. Professeur à la Sorbonne. Garnier Frères, 1961. 430
- ^{xxi} Balzac. 431
- ^{xxii} Altick, Richard. The English Common Reader. 72
- ^{xxiii} Collingwood. 48
- ^{xxiv} Collingwood. 48
- ^{xxv} Collingwood. 94
- ^{xxvi} Fleischman, Avrom. The English Historical Novel. 18
- ^{xxvii} Collingwood. 103
- ^{xxviii} Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. 105
- ^{xxix} Schiller, Friedrich. On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a series of Letters. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, eds. and trans. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1982. 63
- ^{xxx} Collingwood. 94
- ^{xxxi} Collingwood. 65
- ^{xxxii} Collingwood. 67
- ^{xxxiii} Collingwood. 67
- ^{xxxiv} Vico, Giambattista. Scienza Nuova. 37
- ^{xxxv} Vico. 40
- ^{xxxvi} Collingwood. 58
- ^{xxxvii} Vico. 280

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- ^{xxviii}Collingwood. 64
- ^{xxix}Fleischman, Avrom. The English Historical Novel. 41
- ^{xi}Ferguson, Adam. *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Section III, paragraph 10
- ^{xli}Fleischman, Avrom. The English Historical Novel. 19
- ^{xlii}Houghton. 75
- ^{xliii}Young, G.M., ed. *Early Victorian England*, vol. i. London: Oxford University Press, 1934. 238
Young looks most closely at Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham.
- ^{xliv}See G.M. Young. "The Press." Early Victorian England, vol. ii; Altick's The English Common Reader; Brantlinger's The Reading Lesson for extensive discussion of the nineteenth century belief in the power of the printed word. It is, I think, this idea that the printed word could instruct, influence, galvanize, that Hugo derives his oft-repeated formula that the printing press will kill architecture.
- ^{xlv}Young, G.M. ed. Early Victorian England, vol. ii. London: Oxford University Press, 1934. 79
- ^{xlvi}Burke, P. 19, para. 1 after the subheading "*His third claim*"
- ^{xlvii}Houghton, Walter. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 47
- ^{xlviii}Dickens, Charles. Writings, with Critical and Bibliographical Introductions by Edwin Percy Whipple and Others. 32 vols. Boston and New York, 1894. 138-140

Chapter Two

Nineteenth Century Gothic

Because a society's identity is formed by its circumstances as well as by human nature, there is no "people" without "place". The history of a people is also the story of where they have lived and what they have built. We have observed that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are characterized by increased interest in the past and by increased interest in encountering it on its own terms. The identification of ancient buildings with history brings history into the realm of direct experience and makes such buildings legible to the general public once again. This newly acknowledged relationship between history and Gothic architecture even promises to confer something of their original degree of importance upon the buildings that are consequently re-examined.

The notion that Gothic buildings were histories written in stone that were of value for their ability to lend insight into the periods in which they were constructed, and through which they existed, was becoming acceptable in the post-Enlightenment period. Central to our understanding of the change in attitude toward Gothic buildings and central to the re-reading of the Gothic building as a historical, rather than as a sacred, text that occurs in the nineteenth century is the historian's ability to recognize and manipulate its textuality. All of the novelists featured in this study recognize the existence of this essentially linguistic dimension of the gothic edifice. All of them seek to transform the text or texts it embodies into another kind of text without entirely obscuring the characteristics of the original one. In the case of Jane Austen, the abbey is transformed from a religious, to a literary, and finally to an

historical construct. With Dumas, the castle prison is first a political, then a literary, and finally a biographical and historical text. On the other hand, in the writings of Ainsworth and Hugo, cathedrals appear to lose their religious significance almost completely in favor of the historical, while other buildings essentially become palimpsests.

Gothic buildings have always been thought of as texts. Like the written word, they have the power to shape opinion and manipulate the perception of the reader. After all, cathedrals are interpretations of Catholic doctrine, castles of rules of engagement – or disengagement. According to Emile Mâle, “while the doctors in the new universities of medieval Europe [were] constructing the intellectual edifice which was to shelter the whole of Christendom, the cathedral of stone was rising as its visible counterpart.” In them “a whole dogmatic scheme found expression in concrete form.”ⁱ Using decidedly architectural language, he discusses the development of liturgy and church ritual as a phenomenon paralleling the building of cathedrals and implies that they occurred simultaneously and that their physical characteristics developed along with, and in direct response to, Roman Catholic dogma. As we shall observe, A.W.N. Pugin understood the development of ecclesiastical architecture in the Middle Ages in much the same way, except that he saw architecture as developing *from*, rather than *along with*, liturgy and attempted to reproduce this process in reverse.

The medieval cathedral was more than merely a stone representation of the Bible; it manipulated Holy Scripture by recombining its constituent parts to produce what was, in effect, a separate document that had used the same narrative material as

its basis. Emile Mâle makes extensive reference in his book¹ to the fact that many representations of biblical stories to be found on the walls and windows of Gothic cathedrals blended together episodes from both the Old and New Testamentsⁱⁱ as the artists sought to show that episodes in the Old Testament prefigured episodes in the New, in conformity with Church doctrine.

It is no wonder then, that medieval architecture underwent intense scrutiny during the Reformation. The ideological principles of buildings were rigorously examined and found faulty. What ultimately led to the alteration and dismantling of hundreds of monasteries and cathedrals was essentially an analysis of doctrine as presented in their physical construction. According to Chris Brooks: "When reformers shattered images, razed monasteries and stripped cathedrals they were engaged in ideological warfare, battles about meaning."ⁱⁱⁱ Having discredited Roman Catholic dogma as superstition and papal self-interest, Protestants sought to eradicate these manifestations of it. The cathedrals that were the books in which illiterate peasants read the tenets of their religion were among the most zealously attacked representatives of the Church. They came to be considered "the material expression of Catholic power and the faulty system of belief it sustained; they embodied sets of meaning that had to be changed or erased. In other words, they were semantic structures – structures of meaning – as well as architectural structures."^{iv} Their ability to convey meaning was so universally acknowledged that when that meaning was no longer widely sanctioned, cathedrals in their original form could no longer be permitted to exist.

¹ The Gothic Image, 1958

At the outset of this conflict between Catholicism and incipient Protestantism, Martin Luther had posted his 95 theses on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg in protest of the sale of papal indulgences, which would ultimately finance the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome. His choice of bulletin board is telling for it essentially overwrites and crowds out (through its sensational nature) the messages conveyed by the church and by the Church.

In England, the religious value of a cathedral was called into question under Edward VI (r.1547-1553) when cathedrals were stripped of their statuary, relics, and stained glass, and had their interiors whitewashed. As a result of the young monarch's policies, St. Paul's cathedral in London had, in effect, become a covered market and thoroughfare.^v Even if some people could still decipher them, the images went against the doctrines of the Church of England and were therefore not fit to be read. The destruction of images, the whitewashing of murals, the shattering of stained glass that resulted from this doctrinal war were all actions that at once acknowledged the existence and significance of a text while simultaneously erasing it. Though the breaking of glass and dismemberment of statues are acts that are stark in their finality, the covering of murals with monochrome paint is the most decisive revocation of the stone document's permission to convey Christian doctrine, for it creates a field upon which new doctrine may be introduced. Indeed, the resulting blankness of the walls effectively *is* that new doctrine.

Moreover, the triumph of Protestantism meant that the shattered, image-encrusted glass would be replaced by clear glass, and rood screens removed, and the centrality of the altar replaced by the prominence of the pulpit. These actions re-

created the building and rewrote the doctrine it promulgated. Those churches that weren't destroyed were thus consciously overwritten in the symbolic language of Protestantism. The eventual triumph of Protestantism both as a religious and as a political system ensured that successive ages would lose their ability to decipher the remaining symbolic images to be met with in a Catholic cathedral.

The average peasant of the nineteenth century would no longer be able to decipher the symbols that remained in the typical Gothic cathedral. However, in the Middle Ages, the cathedral would have been the main means through which Roman Catholic doctrine was retained in the minds of the uneducated. Wim Swaan^{vi} reminds his readers that "To the unlettered masses of the Middle Ages, the cathedral was the *Biblia pauperum*." He also quotes St. Gregory's observation that pictures can be read by the illiterate just as the educated read words. This is possible only because the illiterate masses knew the liturgical texts on which the symbols were based.

The language of the cathedral cannot impart that which is not already familiar so for the average medieval peasant, the act of reading iconography entailed what Swaan refers to as "re-knowing". Because the liturgy was also injected into the hymns people sang and into the homilies they heard on a weekly basis, people living in the middle ages were able to read iconography almost without thinking. Confronted with Christian doctrine through different media, medieval churchgoers internalized it so completely that visual representations of it would have been immediately understood. As one scholar has expressed it,² the processing of church iconography by people in the middle ages was not so much cerebral as it was visceral.

² R.T. Farrell. M.A., M.Litt. (Oxon.), Ph.D., F.S.A., Professor of English, Medieval Studies, and Archaeology at Cornell University.

Yet, the fact that religious symbolism was readily absorbed by the uneducated belies the cognitive sophistication required to do this. The texts of Gothic cathedrals were complex and meaning operated at no fewer than two different levels: that of the literal - i.e. the level at which image corresponds directly to written text, and the allegorical, the level at which the image corresponds to mystical truths. Furthermore, as Mâle points out, a third level exists which is often, though not always present; the level at which the contents of an image prefigure the contents of yet another.^{vii} In this case, the very *prefiguration points to mystical truth*, as when Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac foreshadows the salvation of mankind, even as it also points to a specific episode in the New Testament: the crucifixion of Christ.

The cathedral, then, was a huge mnemonic device that was not intended for people encountering Christian doctrine for the first time. It was for those already familiar with it – the initiates. However, even before the novelists examined here were actively publishing, that doctrine had already become alien to most people. By the eighteenth century, cathedrals, monasteries, and abbeys seemed to have gone from being a source of irritation to those who wished to eradicate Roman Catholicism in England, to being converted to a firmly established Protestantism—and to aesthetic irrelevance. Though they managed to emerge from the previous century still clinging to their original religion in France, cathedrals in particular had also become rather irksome because they had the temerity to exist in spite of their lack of correct proportion and symmetry. According to the neo-classicist view, cathedrals and castles were embodiments of a primitive and therefore faulty aesthetic and the artistic norms of ancient Rome and Greece, by way of the precepts of Vitruvius in particular,

rendered the products of medieval creativity and piety beneath the notice of anyone of real taste. At best, they could be seen as typically European and, however rude, represented French or English native art.

As the century closed, revolution in France implicated the Catholic Church and all that pertained to it in the long-standing oppression of the poor. The reading of the ecclesiastical text in this case also produced negative results, since its religious symbolism, when coupled with its role in the oppression of the masses, had the appearance of blatant hypocrisy. France had been moving in the direction of secularism before the fateful events of 1789. By the end of the eighteenth century, revolution and counterrevolution had helped to seal the fate of Christianity—at least, in the eyes of the new governments that succeeded Louis XVI—which had already been under attack since at least the early years of the century. Timothy Tackett³ points out that the French Church had begun to lose credibility in the latter part of the eighteenth century and that many people living during this period thought of religion more in a social light, as a means of dealing with various rites of passage. The religious zeal that had produced the famous cathedrals at Rheims, Chartres, and Paris was a thing of the past; what remained was habit. Gothic buildings in general were still associated with the oppression of the peasantry and the stripping away of their humanity by crushing them into poverty, from which they could not hope to emerge, and by routinely treating its members no better than beasts of burden bred to serve the needs and whims of others.

³ Tackett, Timothy. Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1986. 9-10

Although the French government had taken castles and cathedrals into its custody and had begun cataloguing them since the early days of the Revolution, one of the main reasons for its interest in them was as a means of redistributing wealth and of generating money through their sale to wealthy middle class people who wanted to live at last in the baronial style their prosperity permitted. The Gothic building was in this way used to serve the cause of social and political revolution. There was no widespread sense of nostalgia for its early past in post- Revolutionary France and there was no particular interest in using the historical nature of medieval buildings as a means of making sense of the present. The institutions that upheld feudalism, including the monarchy and the Catholic Church, had been deliberately rejected and the buildings associated with them assailed and plundered during the Revolution. The children who grew up in the post-Revolutionary world did so unaware of church iconography since the churches and the religion they represented had been discredited and dismissed as minions of the monarchy.

The task of rehabilitating the Gothic image in France would fall, by default, to the intellectuals of the day, some of whom found themselves on the committees that were set up in the mid-nineteenth century to decide the fates of the Gothic buildings scattered throughout the country. They would have to attach stronger associations to medieval buildings than had the Revolution, whose first mass impulse was to attack the Bastille, the castle prison. Yet, whereas England tended to look back fondly, France, for the most part, seemed to want a clean break and a new beginning. Artists and intellectuals would have to give problematic ancient buildings the ability to speak for their own preservation by rendering them important to the new France that was in

the process of being created. Victor Hugo would do this through art, through nationalism, and by redirecting revolutionary fervor. Eventually, he too would sit on a committee and work more directly to rescue buildings from destruction and dilapidation. Yet he stopped well short of presenting medieval France in a way that glossed over its negative traits.

On the other hand, the Gothic novel and the advent of Romanticism across the Channel made medieval England a utopia, which writers often contrasted with their capitalist, individualistic, modern times. By the early nineteenth century, the Romantics had already begun to inspire people to see the Middle Ages as a time of the free reign of imagination and sentiment. The tendency to view the past this way, and to view its ordinary people as noble rustics, exemplified in the Lyrical Ballads and its Preface, intensifies with the popularity of Walter Scott's novels. Ruins of castles and abbeys made picturesque by the Romantic poets are restored to life in the works of the novelist and peopled with colorful and likeable characters.

Whereas in France, feudalism as a system was associated with wholesale exploitation of the lowest classes, in England, most notably through Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution of France*, and through the poems of Wordsworth and others, it took on the benevolent aspect of paternalism. Some longed for a time when the wealthy took it upon themselves to aid the poor as a matter of duty, rather than leave them to their own devices in a society that increasingly disregarded their very humanity and used them as they used machines. In this scheme, the castle, which in France embodies feudal oppression, becomes a protective presence from which largesse is dispensed in the manner of Walter Scott's Cedric the Saxon in *Ivanhoe*. It

embraces everyone within its range of influence and finds a place for all. Cathedrals too, far from conjuring up images of rapacious priests and a heavily taxed peasantry, could then remind people of a working class that possessed dignity, of the skilled craftsmen who contributed to their magnificence and of the influential guilds to which they belonged. Such an image would provide stark contrast to that of starving, dirty factory operatives who possessed no skills, no collective voice, and whose living and working conditions deprived them of every semblance of dignity. Such an image could also give strength to the arguments of those who saw the rush into modernity as having left a significant portion of the population behind.

Once Gothic buildings become part of the historical and literary landscape, it is possible to overlay their traditional narrative structures with new narratives, and thereby attach new significance that is not colored with the negative associations acquired in their previous existence. Juxtaposed with the factory buildings that were cropping up with remarkable speed, the Gothic building could be seen as representing the paternalistic stability and orderliness of a long gone age. The Gothic novel is the first literary form to place the medieval building in an imaginative context of this kind.

Mutually supportive, Gothic architecture and Gothic Literature rested upon narrative. With buildings, the meanings loaded on to medieval style were narrative claims on the past, whether as family anecdote and genealogical record, or as part of the national saga of kings and constitutions. Literary antiquarians similarly uncovered, or counterfeited, histories of local or national poetic tradition."^{viii}

By the early nineteenth century, medieval buildings were also encrusted with literary associations derived from the popularity of Gothic fiction that competed for

attention with their own complex stories of construction and reconstruction. People were growing accustomed to the notion that such buildings could be seen as attractive, or at the very least, picturesque or interesting. However, this view was still in competition with the neoclassical idea that only Greco-Roman forms possessed any aesthetic validity, and the Enlightenment idea that since history was a progression from barbarism to rationalism, all to do with the Dark Age of European history represented civilization in its untutored infancy.

But as the eighteenth century closed and the nineteenth century began, the process of re-writing the stone text and re-investing it with significance resumed in earnest, and intensified as the age progressed. Historical investigation, together with notions of the nobility of the nation's medieval peasantry that were fostered through the politics and literature of romanticism, led historians, novelists, and architects like William Ainsworth, Victor Hugo, Augustus W. N. Pugin, E-Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc, and John Ruskin to assume that the great monuments erected during that period were the product of devout, skilled, but essentially ordinary people who spared no effort in whatever work they did.⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner^{ix} reminds us in a lecture on Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc that the nineteenth century French architect believed Gothic buildings to be “les enfants du peuple.”⁵ A.W.N. Pugin, and John Ruskin also make similar statements in their writings. Yet, even before any of these men

⁴ Paul Johnson dismisses this assumption in British Cathedrals with the statement that “the great medieval cathedrals were designed and built by professional experts: that much is quite clear, and the old illusion, beloved of nineteenth century Catholic historians, that abbey churches were built by monks and cathedrals by the common folk, has long since been laid to rest.” (Paul Johnson. British Cathedrals. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980.) Moreover, Adam Nicolson in Restoration, his book about the fire and restoration in Windsor Castle in the mid-1990's implies as much in his discussion of the geometrical intricacies of Gothic design and of the need for medieval builders to make calculations and then adjust them to fit the individual areas being constructed. Both authors emphasize the need for specialized knowledge in Gothic design and building construction.

⁵ Quotation taken from Revue Général d'Architecture. X, 379.

asserted that the Gothic edifice is the product of the labour and ingenuity of the working classes, it was a novelist—Victor Hugo—who in a work published in 1831 had referred to the Gothic cathedral as “œuvre colossale d’un homme et d’un peuple.”^x through the works of historians, novelists, and architects, this view would eventually make a wider range of people aware of themselves as the owners of history and of historical buildings.

The architects, perhaps taking their cue from Hugo and from other novelists such as Ainsworth, whose works actually addressed them directly, connected the image of the stonemason, working with all his strength and skill on a building, to the concepts of truth and beauty in architecture. This way of looking at ancient buildings, rather than focusing on arcane symbolism, could engender new appreciation for the accomplishments of the people who contributed to their construction. Modern building methods and materials rose up in stark and unappealing contrast to the image of the dedicated craftsman because they did not require special skills, nor did they require the worker even to see a project through from beginning to end. Moreover, the finished product was very much like any other of its kind, thanks to technology that increasingly allowed the inexpensive mass production of ornament and building supports intended to take the place of carpentry and masonry, respectively.

Pugin and Ruskin attempted to get people to look carefully at what their own ancestors had accomplished under harsher conditions, with less scientific knowledge (though perhaps with greater wisdom) so that they could glimpse the heights they themselves were capable of attaining. Self-knowledge of this kind, fostered so

carefully by novelists, had already begun to inspire reverence for what already exists. In the hands of someone able to impart practical architectural knowledge and advice, this new appreciation and awareness was backed by real historical and art historical information, and had the potential to create a general desire for new art of equal truth to the same ideals of beauty and careful construction that produced the great buildings of the past. Posterity, with whom both students of Gothic architecture concerned themselves, would then have something worthwhile to inherit when the ancient buildings already in existence should at last crumble to dust.

Ruskin, like historical novelists who were publishing before him, knew old buildings were irreplaceable and understood the lack of comparable new ones in his own day as symptomatic of a deeper problem that emerged with industrialization and capitalism. People were no longer anchored to a given village, town, or region. As peddlers of their own labor, they were obliged to travel away from their native areas to factory towns where purchasers were likely to be found. As a result, they probably did not have as many fond recollections of the landscape that surrounded them or of the buildings that were a part of it. Bent low by the pressures of economic necessity, the workers of the nineteenth century could not have had much opportunity or inclination to admire the beauties of Gothic architecture, even as churchgoers. Nor did they need to learn and develop the technical skills that would have made them sympathetic to the craftsmen of the past and to their handiwork. The existence of increasing numbers of mechanized factories ensured that they would know how to operate specific machinery but would not really know how to make anything. Ruskin felt that, without some form of connection between modern people and ancient

buildings, existing buildings were bound to fall into ruin and nothing of greatness would ever be seen again.

His views concerning the lives of the working class citizens of medieval England are derived from the idea, espoused by post-Enlightenment historians and by other intellectuals who overtly identified with Romanticism, that the ordinary medieval Englishman enjoyed an existence marked by a degree of dignity in his life and work not allowed the modern factory operative. In a lecture given in Dublin in 1868,^{xi} he expresses the knowledge acquired through hindsight that his efforts to bring about Gothic revival in England were ultimately fruitless because he could not change society as it then was:

The architecture we endeavoured to introduce is inconsistent alike with the reckless luxury, the deforming mechanism, and the squalid misery of modern cities.

In The Seven Lamps Of Architecture, he confidently asserts,

There is not a building that I know of, lately raised, wherein it is not sufficiently evident that neither architect or builder has done his best. It is the especial characteristic of modern work. All old work nearly has been hard work.^{xii}

For Ruskin, as for Pugin, the symbol of this decline of human effort and of human greatness of spirit and achievement is iron. Once builders became dependent on it, and once architects began to design buildings with it in mind, the way to Gothic revival would be closed. Moreover, it would be impossible to care for existing buildings adequately since people would no longer know how to deal competently with the wood and stone of which they were composed. As a material manufactured in factories, iron posed a direct threat to the principles of building construction

handed down to European architects from their predecessors. Since the use of iron in the ornamentation of buildings was becoming easier, it would compete with the work of the stonemason or woodworker who traditionally practiced his craft at the construction site under the direct guidance of the architect or master builder. What the medieval worker produced was tailored to the project at hand, whereas the item manufactured in a factory was built to general specifications to which the architect making use of it would have to conform. Because it was on its way to becoming the adopted child of capitalism, Ruskin saw iron as part of a system whose nature precludes and stifles the creativity of the individual.

Iron as it was produced and used in the nineteenth century was intended to serve the interests of commerce. The people who would derive the most benefit from it were those who could produce large quantities of it at relatively little expense and sell it at a substantial profit. Wrought iron was expensive to produce until the puddling process developed in 1784 by Henry Cort made its manufacture much cheaper. Yet, because the process was still rather cumbersome,⁶ it was not used much until after 1820.^{xiii} Indeed, the use of wrought iron in building was still not widespread when Ruskin complained about it in The Seven Lamps of Architecture. However, the processes that facilitated the production of cast and wrought iron had already been developed. Undoubtedly, he was aware that it was just a matter of time

⁶ Once the iron was refined using the puddling process, which entailed melting less pure cast iron and stirring it to allow the carbon in it to come into contact with the air and form carbon monoxide gas which could then be released into the outside atmosphere, it still had to be hammered to release the slag. ["The Processes of Iron and Steel Making" <http://www.top-forge.fsnet.co.uk/Processes.htm>.] See also note xl. This method probably did not produce the vast quantities of iron that would be required for the widespread construction of buildings supported by iron. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, limited availability due to the still slow and labour-intensive puddling process would have been a check on demand. In 1816, Joseph Hall eliminated the need for stirring by including iron oxide with the cast iron at the beginning of the process. Carbon monoxide would then form during the refinement process, bubble to the surface and be released through a sort of chimney.

before the stronger and more resilient wrought iron would be used for more than Sir William Fairbairn's experiments in bridge construction, or for exotic projects such as Paxton's famous crystal palace.^{xiv} Ruskin in particular felt that the public would then be forced to live amid mass-produced mediocrity. The increasing inexpensiveness and availability of iron would eventually render it more appealing to the builder who wished to build quickly and cheaply, causing architecture to take yet another step away from the Gothic ideal of a living and all-pervasive art—an ideal that was in fact created and promulgated by nineteenth century historians, including – perhaps especially— those who wrote novels.

As we shall see, Hugo's novel presented Gothic art to France and then to Western Europe as the people's art through his treatment of art history and of national history as developments to which an entire nation contributed. The architects Hugo inspired internalized this approach, which in turn emerged from Walter Scott's insistence on the idea that history is something that belongs to a nation and is an experience in which its people should immerse themselves. They could therefore express the ideal relationship to Gothic buildings as one through which we all can "fully place ourselves in the position of those to whom their expression was originally addressed."^{xv} Pursuing a line of reasoning that runs parallel to that of thinkers such as Vico and Ferguson, Ruskin in his assertion expresses the need for the modern mind to return to the age in which Gothic edifices were erected so that it may retrieve the frame of reference that permitted them to be intelligible. For him, reclaiming their past was also a way for modern people to reclaim their humanity.

Some people extended this vision to encompass the revival of the values they believed to have characterized medieval thinking so that the comprehension of Gothic architecture could once again be as visceral as it was for the citizens of the Middle Ages. The revival of a medieval sensibility would allow the creation of new buildings that would have merit comparable to that of ancient ones. New buildings could even be in the same style without being inauthentic replicas of a dead art. A.W.N. Pugin, born on 1 March 1812, as the Gothic revival in architecture was gaining momentum, reconnected Gothic style, particularly in architecture, with organized and highly ritualistic religious practices. He was active during the 1830's and '40's as an architect and author of architectural treatises when nearly all of the authors examined in this study were already well established, widely read, and their works widely commented on. Taking advantage of the growing appreciation for Gothic, he sought to use Gothic revival to encourage Catholic revival in England in hopes of initiating a cycle that would create demand for Gothic buildings and result in a return to medieval-style construction and ornamentation. His idea that revival of the religious fervor that characterized medieval Catholicism would lead to Gothic revival was based on the assumption that religion was the one major aspect of medieval life that pervaded every other. Like the historians and novelists who were his contemporaries, Pugin sought to capture the spirit of the age that interested him. However, they thought it was possible to attach new significance to Gothic buildings so that they could be understood and valued by their own generation, which they knew could not think the way their medieval ancestors did. Pugin, on the other hand,

assuming they could if they would only learn how, actively tried to make the spirit of the middle ages live again in the nineteenth century.

The views of Ruskin are somewhat different from those of Pugin but have their basis in the same approach to the medieval past that comes to the nineteenth century by way of Vico, Stewart, Ferguson, Kant, Schiller, and Scott who all in one way or another considered it possible to reanimate the past by focusing on the way people of the past thought in addition to learning what they did. Deploring Pugin's idea of widespread return to Catholicism, Ruskin wanted instead to revive the more secular aspects of the medieval approach to life. For him, these were the ability to discern and correctly appreciate beauty, personal integrity, high quality in design and workmanship, sincere effort, and joy in creativity. Yet, in spite of his insistence on rejecting Catholicism, he too sought the revival of a way of thinking—of the spirit of a particularly religious age—nevertheless. He objected to Pugin's desire for a return to the pomp and pageantry of the ancient Catholic Church as a way of luring people back to Catholicism because he thought the idea potentially dangerous. As Kristine Garrigan^{xvi} points out, Ruskin viewed the seductiveness of Catholicism with horror: he decried the elaborate architectural ornamentation and pageantry that Pugin thought of as faith-inspiring qualities as a sham designed to inveigle the easily persuaded to convert on the basis of Catholicism's external trappings. He thought the beauty of medieval art a flimsy basis for a major religious and political change. His reaction against Pugin's views influenced him to look at Gothic architecture in a way that de-emphasized religious associations in much the same way that Vico was able to divorce mysticism from myth in his conceptualization of history.

By concentrating on what the buildings they erected revealed about medieval people, Ruskin could shift the focus of revivalism in the direction of historical exploration, art history, and antiquarian interest. Here again is the notion of replacing religion with national history, using the Gothic, and specifically, Gothic architecture as the means through which this transaction occurs. Yet, like Pugin before him, he was enraptured by the beauty and piety he saw in medieval art and he viewed medieval society, as it was interpreted through contemporary historiography, as able to provide a useful model for modern living that would combat the de-humanizing tendencies of scientific and economic progress.

The resurgence of the craftsman in the Victorian period is the result of this conscious effort at making art all-pervasive by putting the ability to produce it and earn a living thereby back in the hands of those ordinary, well-meaning people who were supposed to have produced the ancient native art so worth admiring. A people capable of producing art would, presumably, be able to appreciate art and be less likely to be the agents of its destruction. Even if they couldn't understand symbolism in a cathedral, they could at least correctly appraise the workmanship that produced the symbols. The writings of people like Pugin and Ruskin taught the public how to judge the quality of art and architecture and created a market for the kinds of buildings and craftsmanship they advocated.

Both men's fervent, and as some would hold, unrealistic desire that the society they lived in return to a simpler, more wholesome approach to living, such as they believed to have predominated in the middle ages, was born of the conviction that, if fulfilled, it would have resulted in a return to inspired and beautiful art and, above all,

to Gothic-style building in an age that had no style of its own. Scholars looking at the lives of A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin, such as Michael Trappes-Lomax⁷ and Kristine Garrigan⁸ have pointed out the futility of recalling the past to existence in this way because of the impossibility of reawakening a particular kind of consciousness in an entire population (especially at a time when people's social, economic, and political interests had already begun to diverge). Perhaps more compelling still is the idea that the original age was not chosen by its citizens but emerged from what came before as a natural next step. Even if we leave aside the fact that this assumes a particular view of the relationship between historical circumstances, the justice of the observation that an age simply happens without being planned is inescapable.

Pugin and Ruskin must also have been aware of this argument, whether or not they agreed with it. Yet their determination to change people's behavior -- first by changing their attitude to buildings, craftsmanship, and technology -- compelled them to fly in the face of the idea that revival in its strictest sense is not possible. If it were possible to immerse oneself in the past and understand it from within its own context, then see in it certain parallels and points of continuity with the present, as novels and histories encouraged the reading public to do, was it not possible to imitate that past

⁷ See Trappes-Lomax, Michael. Pugin: a Medieval Victorian. London: Sheed & Ward, 1932. The author discusses Pugin's ideals concerning the architecture of his century. He mentions Pugin's hope that the young church architect would be educated in "the mysteries of his faith, the history of the Church," that he should also be familiar with "the annals of his country, --its constitutions, laws, privileges, and dignities,--the liturgy and rubrics of the Church,--customs and ceremonies,--topographical antiquities, local peculiarities, and natural resources." Dr. Trappes-Lomax ends his catalogue of Pugin's hopes for the future of architecture in England by saying, "What a hope! But Pugin had it." (185)

⁸ Dr. Garrigan points out that "the revivalist ideal, at least among the more creative practitioners and proponents, was to free an historic style from mere archaeological accuracy and to adapt it freely to modern requirements--hence the paeans to Gothic 'flexibility' so central to the rhetoric of that particular revival." [Garrigan, Kristine. Ruskin on Architecture: His Thought and influence. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973. 15]

which we were able to observe and understand? Their optimism, I believe, lies in these possibilities. Like so many other writers of the nineteenth century who were similarly optimistic, their confidence in society's ability to retrieve the past in this way gives us a hint of how pervasive the idea was becoming during this century; it had freed itself from historiography and found its way into architecture because Gothic buildings as narratives in stone were seen as a link with the past.

Pugin and Ruskin in England, and Viollet-le-Duc in France all lived in an intellectual context the novelists examined here helped to create, regardless of whether or not they experienced their novels directly. Their lives and works, as well as their influence can be seen in part as a testament to the effectiveness of novelists as the creators of the national myth and of their expression of it in terms of the nation's people, its history, and its monuments.

As we shall see, architecture becomes the focus of the preoccupation with the past—with revival and restoration—that becomes a hallmark of the nineteenth century and that will be manifested in the lives and works of novelists, historians, and architects in ways that connect all three. This reaching for the past becomes a strong collective impulse (though, as we can well expect, not everyone is reaching for the same past or for the same aspect of the past), even as the concept of progress takes on greater significance in the context of technological advances and the shift from an agrarian to a manufacturing and mercantile economy that takes place in England and, though to a lesser extent, in France.

For Ruskin and Pugin, the key to a revival of a sense of community and human dignity lies in a society's value for the past and in continuity with the past.

Because of their own inclinations, and a desire to convey a strong sense of the importance and of the moral and aesthetic legitimacy of Gothic forms to the general public, architecture became the means through which such revivals could be achieved. Both men knew that though Gothic buildings had lost much of their original significance, as buildings they were still effective lightning rods for a variety of issues. They therefore used them to open and direct discussion of those issues. For example, they questioned the criteria by which Gothic buildings were judged in the recent past. They used the role of Gothic buildings as representatives of a long-disparaged art form that constantly suffered in comparison with Greco-Roman architecture to inspire debate about the nature of beauty and to raise the issue of a national building style. Moreover, once these subjects were opened, other questions rushed in: why are medieval buildings worth saving? How does one decide what to save? Should they be restored to their former glory or to the glory they were capable of but never attained? Should they be repaired with a view to accommodating present-day needs? So many old buildings were on the verge of collapse that it was necessary for all people to engage seriously with the issue of what to do about them.

Pugin and Ruskin in England, and E.E. Viollet-le-Duc in France are the people who answer these questions in a way that helps shape the Victorian age. Ruskin in particular formulated the appropriate uses for a Gothic revival and discussed at length the ways in which the spirit of the middle ages was to be called forth – and to what end – in a way that essentially created Victorian Gothic in particular and Victorianism in general.

The Gothic revival in England did not originate
with Ruskin, but he gave to it a stimulus and an

extension; he made it popular, and gave to it the force derived from his incomparable resources of argument, imagination and eloquence.^{xvii}

Ruskin's ideas formed an elixir that drew its potency from his predecessors and contemporaries who were also thinking about architecture and the revival of the Gothic style. He brought various currents of thought on the subject into close interrelationship and successfully extended Gothic revival into all aspects of life and human endeavor. In bringing nineteenth century Gothic revival out of the realm of passing fancy, he defined his age and articulated its political, social, historical, and artistic concerns through architecture. There, and in France, Gothicism could be attached to religion, politics, literature, and art. Indeed, its proponents became so proficient in the language of forms, styles, and techniques peculiar to the Gothic that it became their language. As the authentic expression of the sensibilities of their age, it developed in new ways, especially in England, without losing its power.

Once the nineteenth century proved to itself that it could mimic Gothic forms, it did not take the usual next step and overuse them until they were devoid of meaning. Rather, it learned to express new ideas within the context of the values of craftsmanship, beauty, and authenticity of materials and expression attributed to Gothic style.⁹ Thus, once the Gothic had been successfully used to define the English as a people in its own terms, the English began, in turn, to define the Gothic in *their*, nineteenth century terms. While in other nations, such as France, the Netherlands, and Germany, Gothicism translated into well-executed restorations of existing medieval buildings and, perhaps, a certain determination to separate the

⁹ One need only stroll through the National Railway Museum in York to observe this influence at work in the construction and ornamentation of the trains and railway carriages that were built during the Victorian period.

Gothic from controversial religious and political issues, in England it became the idiom in which a great number of historians, novelists, and architects of the Victorian era communicated to the world their vision of the ideal use of buildings and the space they enclose. Yet, as we have observed, they themselves needed to learn to see medieval art and architecture in a new way before this could happen.

In France as well as in England, Gothic buildings could then be seen to represent a uniquely European architectural form. They were a part of the English nation's robust and wholesome past, while the factory, the newest class of architectural landmark, represented loss of humanity for the working classes and for those who exploited them. In both countries the Gothic buildings themselves were completely illegible apart from these social issues and the associations added by Gothic novels and Romantic poetry.

It is no wonder, then, that the Gothic edifice in nineteenth century England could be seen as a symbol of what was lost in the industrialization process and of what must yet be preserved. The language of Gothic forms becomes appropriated by various segments of the population to further a number of seemingly incompatible agenda. For the political radical, it becomes an eloquent symbol in the call to halt the indiscriminate progress of industry and market forces. For the conservative, it represents the stability—and therefore the perfection—of the political system. Amongst the landed gentry, it becomes a means of solidifying one's rights to land by asserting ancient lineage and privileges.¹⁰ The patriot could view it as uniquely English, as much native to the soil as the Englishman or the yew tree.

¹⁰ See Chris Brooks' The Gothic Revival.

In order for Gothic style to take root in England and France the way it did in the nineteenth century, it was necessary for all classes not only to appreciate the history and beauty of existing Gothic buildings, but also to be able to appropriate some aspects of medieval art and architecture for themselves. They had to be able to own the Gothic. For the landed gentry, the fad for using Gothic forms in landscape architecture attached Gothic structures to nature, to the land, and to landownership in a reassertion of pre-capitalistic values.^{xviii} It also tied the Gothic to constitutional monarchy by associating it with the concept of the election of kings that places sovereignty with the people and that was attributed to their Saxon forbears. These associations ultimately connect the Gothic to British-ness and feed growing nationalism. According to Chris Brooks, Gothic temples, towers, and ruins begin to appear in English gardens in 1716, with the Gothic temple at Shotover Park, Oxfordshire. It was built for James Tyrrell, "the Gothic constitutional propagandist who wrote *Biblioteca Politica*. The Temple's style connotes Gothic theory and history, the whole epic of unfolding liberties, from *Germania* to the Glorious Revolution."^{xix} At the basis of this use of Gothic forms is a testament to the fact that, though made to convey a different and intrinsically diverse set of messages, Gothic structures were still used as texts. More specifically, what also emerges is the idea that these structures were beginning to be exploited as *historical* texts.

Brooks points out that the connection of Gothic forms with landscape architecture made history part of property, "which was the precondition for its circulation as a cultural asset". It is true that ownership implies a certain mobility, the ability to be bought, sold, transferred, or otherwise placed within reach of others.

Once history can be owned it becomes a commodity that can be divided up and shifted around. It is also true that this was a powerful way to do it. However, the ownership of history was also achieved by purchasing historical works, by reading history, participating in it, and simply by the awareness of thinking historically. The ownership of history through landscape architecture was but one means by which many people began to appropriate history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is why the combination of medievalism and the pursuit of history in the nineteenth century is ultimately democratic.

Once Gothic forms are thus detached from the strictly ecclesiastical and from the specifically feudal, its forms can be appropriated for virtually anything and thereby achieve a species of durability and prevalence that is much less dependent on ideological shifts or social and political upheavals. Brooks maintains that this occurs with the conception and construction of Horace Walpole's Twickenham mansion, Strawberry Hill, between 1752 and the 1770's. It is

the first revived Gothic house that was neither a remodeling of an earlier 'Gothic' building, nor built on a site that had medieval associations. It thus advanced the process...that liberated Gothic from a dependence on particular historical locations: the power of evoking the past came to reside in the style itself.^{xx}

The style itself, of course, was something anyone could own, which becomes more important as the landscape of England changes due to enclosures and the building of factories during the first half of the nineteenth century.

On the subject of the Gothic revival in France, Brooks rightly emphasizes restoration of existing buildings and the involvement of the French government from

the very outset as the main activity associated with it.^{xxi} He adds that since French monuments "were formally owned by the state since the Revolution, work on them attracted not only government money but also cultural status. Which is why the restoration of medieval buildings, rather than the design of new ones in the Gothic style, became the defining act of the French revival." However, the French government would not develop a consistent policy for dealing with its buildings until almost thirty-five years after the Revolution began. In the mean time, they were just as likely to become stone quarries for people who needed to build barns as they were to be restored to some semblance of their original splendor. Yet certainly the transformation of history into a more widely accessible commodity aided the process by which the Gothic became the dominant aesthetic, political, social, and literary idiom in England and a direct and formidable challenge to entrenched neoclassicism in France.

Georg Lukàcs implies that medievalism originated in reactionary responses to revolution and the rise of capitalism that favors an idyllic view of medieval European society: "under the banner of historicism and of a struggle against the 'abstract, unhistorical' spirit of the Enlightenment, there arises a pseudo-historicism, an ideology of immobility, of return to the Middle Ages."^{xxii} The fact is, however, that very few people would have given up what they acknowledged as the economic and political progress that marked the nineteenth century. Few would have relinquished philosophical inquiry in favor of what they had come to think of as blind superstition. Much of nineteenth century medievalism was based on externals perhaps most closely akin to the modern-day phenomenon of Renaissance fairs and

Medieval festivals, where one puts on the trappings, speaks the language, and eats the foods of the past before piling into the car to drive home to the well-appointed and climate-controlled present. The experience of medievalism of this kind in any age would still be valuable according to the views of the Conjectural historians, and of Kant, Schiller, Scott, and Macaulay since it gives people access to the past from within its own context even as they remain firmly rooted in the present. The main difference between now and then is that the nineteenth century conjured up the spirit of the past through architectural narrative and the printed word, i.e. the novel.

Through the works of Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, and others, the Gothic castle and cathedral become associated with imaginary characters and fictitious events of long gone eras that exploit, compete with, and often crowd out the original feudal and Roman Catholic associations. As we shall see, later novelists would combine this newfound power of ancient buildings to evoke a complex and fascinating imaginary world with the presentation of carefully researched history to serve the specific extra-literary purpose of building preservation, and in the process create a new kind of novel—the architectural novel. Yet, in order to move the novel from the realm of escape from reality to that of changing reality, the novelist needed the cooperation of the reader.

In the post-Revolutionary period of the early nineteenth century, the Gothic novel—and the genre as a whole—inhabits a world very different from that into which it was born. The novelist can no longer assume that he or she knows the opinions or even the level of education of the reader. In such an environment it is therefore not possible to write for a society in which religious beliefs, political

opinions, or even future circumstances could be relied on due to the rapid changes that had, by the start of the 19th century become common. Such commonality must be created anew or simulated by the writer. Georg Lukács¹¹ contrasts this circumstance with one in which the people of a society take their agreement on these issues for granted since there are immutable truths concerning them all, which need only be revealed to be known. In ancient Greek society, creation is only the "copying of visible and eternal essences, virtue a perfect knowledge of the path; and what is alien to meaning is so only because its distance from meaning is too great."^{xviii}

Only the Christian Middle Ages successfully approximate the ancient Greek world in which truth is stable and merely requires revelation and where artistic creativity consists in its effective representation. However, this state of affairs passes away and eventually leaves works of art in the position of having to create their own context in order to have any meaning. As Lukács argues, "before their own *a priori* effectiveness can begin to manifest itself, they must create by their own power alone the pre-conditions for such effectiveness." The nineteenth century novelist was placed in precisely this position.

The writer of an historical novel was still more heavily burdened with ignorance of the degree of knowledge possessed by readers. He or she was forced to address an amorphous entity whose tastes and interests must often have been difficult to discern except in the broadest terms. Moreover, the writer of a novel that was engaged on behalf of a particular cause could by no means assume the reader shared his anxiety or was even aware of the existence of the issue in question. One of the typical authorial responses to this uncertainty, I believe, is the habit of addressing the

¹¹ In Theory of the Novel.

reader directly as a means of creating a sense of immediate connection and complicity with the views expressed in the work. Furthermore, serial publication provided an opportunity to interact directly with readers since it allowed them to respond to the novel, as it was being written and presented. Dickens employed this method in the publication of Oliver Twist and could gauge his readers' responses to various characters and plot changes. This medium presented the author with a substitute for addressing a homogeneous public.

However, a stronger tactic is necessary when the subject is complex and has never before been brought to the attention of the general public. The novelists examined in this study are all in the awkward position of trying to further a cause first by placing it in its proper historical, artistic, and social context. In doing so, they also reconstruct the sense of shared knowledge and values that appeared to be in decline at this period by creating and including their own database within their novels. For many, artistic work was simultaneously an aesthetic, political, and religious activity that strove to cleanse the perceptions of 'the people' and forge a new spirit of commonality.^{xxiv}

Used in this way, history as narrated through the historical novel could fill the vacuum once occupied by universal religion as *the* uniting and galvanizing force by reaching back into the past and constructing a universal frame of reference from the story that historical research unearths. In such an environment, historical buildings could reclaim their cultural importance and not only be permitted to exist but even to be given special care. It must be emphasized, however, that the commonality that would lead to this result was a national one, since history presented in the nineteenth

century historical novel revealed the past life of a particular nation. The sense of community generated by such works reflects the general trend toward the replacement of the all-embracing, homogenizing concept of Christendom with that of a host of regions and nations all distinct from one another and possessing their own histories.

Historians of this period were able to take advantage of the interest in history that the upheaval in France created. As Brooks asserts, "discontinuity, a decisive break with the past, is the condition of historicism,"^{xxxv} since it forces one to contemplate the differences between the present state of affairs and what they used to be. I would add to this the idea, already mentioned in the previous chapter, that crisis in the form of threatened invasion forces one to contemplate the nature of one's own people and culture. Taken together, these two forms of awareness create the conditions in which the historical and architectural novels can emerge, even as they create the ideal reader for them.

Yet the existence of such readers certainly did not guarantee that they all had material to read. On the contrary, because books were expensive and therefore scarce amongst the lower classes, determined readers found alternatives to committing hard earned money to such a major purchase. Books were often shared, and so therefore was the reading experience. Schools too poor to provide every child a book often got by with one by having it read aloud and having its contents memorized. A group of people often listened to one person read the latest installment of a novel. As Richard Altick expresses it:

The place of the evening reading circle in Victorian middle class family life is so well known that it need

be merely mentioned here. How widespread the institution was, and how deeply it influenced the tastes of the children who grew up in such homes, is attested in countless memoirs.^{xvii}

Circulating libraries allowed access to the latest novels using many of the same principles that govern video rental stores today. Such borrowed books were often read aloud in groups so that the impecunious and illiterate could still have access to them—and to the influence they were believed to have exerted. Even Jane Austen, her mother, and sister Cassandra were in the habit of reading Austen's novels aloud within their family circle before they were offered for publication. Despite the pressure of societal prejudices against novel reading, the entire family also enjoyed reading and hearing other novels read aloud.

Since novels were often heard by groups of people, sales figures for the period are unreliable as indicators of how many people consumed a given work. That fact that novels were often experienced publicly tends to strengthen the idea that reading was a potentially subversive activity. What people are bold enough to think, express, and do in groups they often hesitate to do alone. However, this circumstance also has potential advantages as well since the novels examined here aimed to instruct and inspire the people who read them with a sense of ownership of national history. Their content could be commented on and discussed as soon as they were read aloud, thereby making them even more effective in influencing what people thought about specific issues. The debate many authors hoped would ensue from the ideas they presented in their works probably did take place in shops, kitchens, and salons all over England and France. In the process, the illusive sense of community that was lost through years of industrial and political revolution could be approximated, if not

completely regained, through the activity of public reading. The place where a book was being read and discussed became a meeting ground for the exchange of ideas and opinions by virtue of the presence and reading aloud of that book.

Physical changes in the book, especially in the novel, also made reading material more accessible. Novels were increasingly being produced in serial form so that they could be purchased and sold piecemeal at lower cost. They were also published in periodicals, an inexpensive alternative to the purchase and binding of a book. Duodecimo editions meant books were smaller and therefore more convenient for carrying on trains to ward off the tedium of a long journey. They could be taken to work, where people could read to one another to engage their minds while their hands were busy. During the Victorian period, books were frequently illustrated with woodcuts and engravings that rendered them more attractive and interesting to those who would otherwise never have developed the habit of reading for pleasure.

The idea, touched upon earlier in the discussion of Macaulay and of historical novels, that history could be brought to the masses in the form of a novel has some interesting conceptual implications for the book in the nineteenth century. It can be looked upon as a repository for facts as well as for artifacts that may otherwise be forgotten or too difficult for most people to experience directly. Crumbling Gothic buildings, for instance, can be made permanent and universally accessible through this use of the printing press. The novelists discussed in this study seek to accomplish this through their novels. They use history as presented through and within Gothic buildings to build a context for their continued existence and create in their readers a

strong desire to contribute to their conservation, while preserving them in the written medium in case they should succumb to the pressures of time and political change.

The term “architectural novel” is used in this study to define those novels that have a clearly defined historical context in which a building is the primary focus in the unfolding of both the historical and fictional narratives. In the case of at least one of the authors whose works are examined here, the identity of the building was settled even before the historical context was determined and the fiction conceived. Their novels are written from the unique perspective of buildings and cities, rather than of characters and so need to be read and criticized with this in mind. In novels of this kind, the buildings at the center are themselves narratives and function as such, regardless of any other roles they may play in the finished text.

That a work of Gothic architecture can be viewed as a separate mode of narrative is possible because Gothic buildings carry associations with them that are literary and linguistic in nature. The sum of their parts is narrative and they are themselves symbols of the greatness of God, the power of the Church of Rome, the power and wealth of kings, and the importance of the places in which they are located. Furthermore, they contain symbols that restate these ideas in a multitude of ways. They are entities that are capable by their mere presence in a novel of evoking an impressive stock of possible plots even as they testify to the power and presence of military and religious iconography in the Middle Ages and today. Yet, the significance attached to these symbols is subject to change.

The buildings that architectural novelists write about have witnessed the unfolding of hundreds of years of history but cannot tell the story to a people who

don't know its language. It is therefore the novelists' role to learn the language of buildings, to immerse themselves in their stories and to voice the subjectivity of buildings in language their contemporaries can understand. These last points are key, namely, that the language used to make the building comprehensible is subject to change and that novelists interested in Gothic buildings addressed their contemporaries who they hoped would in turn initiate changes in the way buildings were perceived and treated. The activism of readers, now directed at preservation and reconstruction of buildings and institutions, rather than their destruction, would eventually benefit posterity. If any of these works possess a timeless quality, it is more a testament to the skill of the writer than to his deliberate aim to address future ages.

How these novelists create coherent novels using architecturally and culturally complex buildings and the narratives these structures themselves embody is also of concern here. How can such novels be accessible to people of average intellect and basic education while challenging more formidable minds to think about familiar issues in literature, art, and history in new ways? How effectively are the issues that such novels have in common served? William Ainsworth and Victor Hugo use the novel to save Gothic buildings. Two other novelists, namely Jane Austen and Alexandre Dumas, employ Gothic architecture in the service of the novel itself, but all are ultimately interested in restoration - of architecture, of the novel, or of both.

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- ⁱ Mâle, Emile. The Gothic Image. 23
- ⁱⁱ Mâle, Emile. The Gothic Image. 140
- ⁱⁱⁱ Brooks, Chris. The Gothic Revival. London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1999. 19
- ^{iv} Brooks. 20
- ^v Benham, William. Old St. Paul's Cathedral. London: Seeley and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902.
- ^{vi} Swaan, Wim. The Gothic Cathedral. London: Elek. 1969.
- ^{vii} Male, Emile. The Gothic Image.
- ^{viii} Brooks. 112
- ^{ix} Pevsner, Nikolaus. Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture. London: Thames and Hudson. 1969.
- ^x Hugo, Victor-Marie. Notre Dame de Paris. Paris : Gallimard. 1974. Tome III. chap. i. 156
- ^{xi} Ruskin, John. "The Mystery of Life and its Arts" in Lectures on Literature and Art. Delivered in the Theatre of the Royal College of Science, S. Stephen's Green, Dublin in the Years 1867 and 1868. 5th series. Dublin: William McGee. London: Bell and Daldy. 1869. 99
- ^{xii} Seven Lamps. 21
- ^{xiii} Dixon, Roger. Stefan Muthesius. Victorian Architecture. New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978. 94 See also Topp, Chris. "Wrought Iron and Conservation" in The Building Conservation Directory, 1994. Wiltshire: Cathedral Communications Ltd., 2001 and at www.buildingconservation.com/articles/wrought/wrought.htm
- ^{xiv} Victorian Architecture. 94
- ^{xv} Ruskin, John. The Stones of Venice I. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851. 35
- ^{xvi} Garrigan. 24
- ^{xvii} Trappes-Lomax, Michael. Pugin: a Medieval Victorian. London: Sheed & Ward. 1932. 326
- ^{xviii} Brooks. 61
- ^{xix} Brooks. 51
- ^{xx} Brooks. 85
- ^{xxi} Brooks. 272
- ^{xxii} Lukács, Georg. The Historical Novel. 26
- ^{xxiii} Lukács. 32
- ^{xxiv} In "Deconstructing the Rationality of Terror: William Blake and Daniel Kharms." (Comparative Literature. Winter 1997. p. 62) is found the interesting notion that artists like Blake and Kharms sought to create a sense of commonality through their art. This supports my idea that most artists and literary people were engaged in such activity to some degree during the nineteenth century. Perhaps the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is the culmination of this impulse to renew society's sense of community and the individual's sense of belonging to something permanent and great. However, Lukács is right, their works have to create community and simultaneously reflect it.
- ^{xxv} Brooks, Gothic Revival. 131
- ^{xxvi} Altick. 86

Chapter Three

William Harrison Ainsworth, Restoration Architect

Dick Turpin's ride from London to York is as familiar to the English as Paul Revere's famous ride from Boston to Lexington¹ is to Americans. The story still captured English public imagination as recently as twenty-three years ago when a popular television series about Turpin ran from January 6, 1979 to June 13, 1981.ⁱ Many towns through which he is said to have passed have traditions about his appearance. Even today, numerous websites are dedicated to Turpin and his legendary ride.

Turpin's twelve-hour ride, however, and the death of his horse, Black Bess, is not, like Revere's, historical. It is a fiction, albeit based on a real eighteenth century highwayman. The tale was created by the novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, whose stories and characters live but who is himself long forgotten. It is interesting that Ainsworth's best remembered story is this fictional episode that is characterized by the description of swift movement, when the novels for which he was most popular in his own day were about buildings, their physicality, and their permanence.

Of Ainsworth's forty-two novels, forty are historical fiction. Of these, seven have the names of historical sites (rather than historical places that are disguised as fictional ones) in their titles and of these seven, four are named for real Gothic buildings. Whereas Sir Walter Scott used Gothic buildings in the Waverley novels as settings for, and as symbols of, the persistence of medieval institutions, Ainsworth uses his novels to create an intellectual context in which they can take on additional

¹ It is possible that Longfellow's 1863 poem was influenced by Ainsworth's description of Turpin's ride in the novel Rookwood (1834).

meanings as symbols and embody new narratives. In this way, they could be restored to the national consciousness and restored by their new cultural significance.

Ainsworth used the Gothic novel in particular, and its reliance on place (and specifically on Gothic places), as the means through which his ideas about buildings and history could be treated in a serious, yet engaging way. Yet, the building is not just, as it were, a vertical or horizontal cross-section of history, or a theatrical stage on which historical events were enacted. Ainsworth's novels caused the Gothic building to acquire an individual character as the result of the events that unfolded within it as well as the persons whose actions and ideas constructed and altered it. As we will observe in our discussion of Ainsworth's The Tower of London, W.S. Gilbert shows in *Yeomen of The Guard* the degree to which Ainsworth's approach to Gothic architecture through the Gothic novel was internalized by librettist and audience alike. Its unique qualities become human characteristics, while Gilbert's focus on the fortress actually carries on Ainsworth's work and helps it remain in the public eye.

It is true that, through Ainsworth's novels, real Gothic buildings were not only accorded new respect, they were also transformed into tourist attractions. The new circumstances ushered in by capitalism were used to rescue the very buildings a changing economy and political climate threatened. Ellis writes, "month by month, as the romance [The Tower of London] appeared, vast numbers of people visited the tower of London to examine the various buildings of the old fortress, as they were successively depicted by Ainsworth's pen".ⁱⁱ Yet, he also transformed all Gothic buildings into national treasures by making them the center of discussion of history and other subjects and by demonstrating how these subjects affected the lives of his

readers. In turn, he allowed the buildings' concerns—about their history, their physical state, and their symbolic role in the societies that exist within and beyond the scope of the novel—to increase the complexity of the overall narrative.

Ainsworth was keenly aware that placing a real building in a novel would have this effect and he embraced the chaos that came with the presence of so many issues vying for attention within the same work. One means through which he asserts some degree of control over the various sub-plots, buildings, and historical narratives he includes is to crowd all of them under the umbrella of the concept of restoration, which we encounter in the preface to Rookwood.²

The word 'restoration' resonated in a variety of interesting ways in the early to mid-nineteenth century. It was a political term that had some currency in the context of the French revolution and the debate over the appropriate type of government, which accompanied the frequent changes of regime in France. The word also struck a chord with the English as well since revolution, regicide, the rule of commoners, and the return of the monarchy were also part of their history. Restoration had also come to be an artistic and, specifically, an architectural, term. In both France and England, restoration of medieval architecture was becoming the subject of widespread discussion, and frequently, of heated debate. Moreover, in both nations, the word was beginning to associate itself with radical change, that is, with revolution and its aftermath. It therefore offered itself as a useful point of reference for the competing yet complementary issues raised by the Gothic building and the historical milieu in which he chose to put it. Ainsworth exploited the term in

² "romance....requires....only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection." See note ii.

various ways. From his perspective, restoration—an abstraction he permitted to retain all of its connotations—would serve as a means through which he could change the way Gothic buildings and Gothic novels were perceived.

Sensing, in his words, that “romance...is destined shortly to undergo an important change,” he made a conscious effort to stretch the capabilities of this form and thereby contribute to its development. Seeing the task of rehabilitating Gothic romance in architectural terms and recognizing that the process was initiated by great writers who were his contemporaries as well as by those who have gone before him, such as Hugo, Dumas, Radcliffe, and Walpole, he asserts in the preface to Rookwood that “romance...requires...only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection.”ⁱⁱⁱ One of the ways in which Ainsworth attempted to transform Gothic romance was by replacing the fictitious and exotic settings for which it was known with actual ones.

Ainsworth recognized the potential of Gothic fiction as a medium for public education and for initiating discussion amongst his fellow citizens; the nation could be transformed into a community if he could make the novel a meeting place for minds. The ease with which the novel can initiate and fuel discussion could be used as a means of compensating for the absence of a physical place where people could gather and interact with one another, even if such a thing were practical. His readers were not living in an age when people’s natural tendency was to seek each other out when they wanted to gather or impart information. Gone was the sense of the centrality of cathedrals and other public spaces where townspeople, city dwellers, and villagers could resort to hear and react to the latest news. Changing social realities

eventually took this role away from medieval architecture. In Jude the Obscure, Thomas Hardy makes this point through the character Sue Bridehead who responds to Jude's suggestion that they pass the time sitting in a cathedral by expressing a vague sense of its irrelevance to modern life: "cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station...that's the centre of the town life now. The cathedral has had its day!"^{iv}

Hardy appears to assert that modernity has brought with it a new set of social and psychological realities in which the center of public life is no longer envisioned as a place of gathering, interaction, and contemplation, but a place populated by transients. While the constant change in the composition of the group at a railway station potentially offers a variety of perspectives on all kinds of ideas, the people there never really become acquainted with one another—and never expect to—because they are all on their way somewhere else. Moreover, the increasing heterogeneity of the general population and the isolation of modern city life meant that people had already begun to lose the habit of sharing their minds.³

Ainsworth saw this isolation as potentially detrimental to medieval buildings and, ultimately, to the people who lived among them. With the widening influence of capitalism and with increasing enclosure of land came the notion of possession to the exclusion of others. This, in turn, brought with it a brand of isolation that was as much social as it was economic. Most damaging to traditional European society,

³ It is interesting to note the fact that the advent of railway travel permitted people to read while traveling and stations were often supplied with cheap novels that could be purchased by passengers while they awaited their trains. As mass literacy allowed the creation of a book trade and as the advent of railroads as a means of transporting people created tourism, both reading and travel were brought into close contact with one another. Moreover, they were increasingly brought into the realm of commerce and social interaction. At the same time, the Gothic edifice receded into obscurity and irrelevance until capitalism could find a way to exploit it.

however, was the destruction of religious consensus brought about first by Protestantism, then by the atheism that developed along the lines of eighteenth century rationalism. Perhaps most indicative of a shift toward a secular society was the romantic tendency to deism and humanism, views that undermined the notions of deity associated with Christianity. Yet, at least as important as these factors is the idea that with revolution also came a loss of social consensus, which contributed to a growing discontinuity between social and private life, where once they had been intertwined. In the midst of all this, the cathedral and other buildings like it lost their prominent places in the lives of cities all over Europe.

Ainsworth wanted to remind people about Gothic buildings in a way that would make them memorable in constructive ways. Through the medium of the Gothic novel, he might counteract the tendency of encroaching modernity to displace Gothic buildings from the social consciousness and permit them to be neglected or destroyed. His novels convey the idea that the Gothic building was not the enemy of the working man, or of progress. However odious at times, it was a part of a shared past and the shared achievement of the nation's people. Queens and Kings may have ruled in fortresses and castles but artisans built them. It was as if he were saying: "take another look at these Gothic buildings; they are yours as well as theirs." They are self as well as other.

In this way, though advances in printing technology in the eighteenth century allowed the subversive writings of pamphleteers to incite riot and vandalism against Gothic buildings in pre-revolutionary France, further advances in paper manufacture and printing technology in the nineteenth century would make printed material even

cheaper and open the way for writers like Ainsworth to publish novels that would reach a wider audience with the messages of preservation and restoration. With their greater knowledge of history and consequent new perspective on its far-reaching events, people could change things that needed improving without political upheaval and without destroying time-honored institutions and their emblems. At the height of his popularity and literary prestige in the mid-nineteenth century, his best novels were translated into French, Dutch, German, and Spanish.^v People on the continent must have read them in sufficient numbers to make translations and foreign editions profitable. It is reasonable to assume then, that his ideas about English monuments reached a large and diverse audience.

Ainsworth's use of buildings in his novels is totally different from Scott's and emerges from a different set of ideas. To the Gothic novel form and to the historiographical approach that Scott brought into the mainstream of literary activity, Ainsworth added architecture. He sought to make Gothic buildings meaningful as part of the nation's past, present, and future by causing people to take another look and view them not just as *their* inheritance but *their* legacy.

He was clearly successful in getting this idea across. His novels sold well among the literary elite and in the popular journals.⁴ They made England exotic as the scene of a great many extraordinary occurrences. His researches helped him to accomplish the careful creation of the kinds of accurate settings he had so admired in Scott. His willingness to access large amounts of historical data and treat them in the manner of Scott meant that he too would have the opportunity to formulate

⁴ See S. M. Ellis's William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends, pp. 58, 60 (vol. 2 London, New York: John Lane, 1911), for some of the many instances in this biography where Ainsworth's popularity is mentioned.

personalities for historical ages and enter the intellectual and emotional life of the past as Kant, Schiller, and the Conjectural historians had advocated in the effort to recreate an age. He could also generate characters able to exist comfortably in the historical context he created, while real historical figures could be placed on native soil. Yet this de-familiarized landscape was also made accessible to the reading public through a narrative of history that was presented as their own story.

By taking advantage of the fact that Gothic novels already incorporate Gothic buildings into their structures, Ainsworth was able not only to generate and maintain interest through this form but to transfer a good deal of the interest generated from his novels to the buildings themselves. Most of Ainsworth's architectural novels were about buildings that many of his readers saw frequently as they went about their daily lives. Ainsworth showed readers how to take notice of them in a new way, as structures that were real but not necessarily concrete, as unique and historically significant but not only as perpetuators of feudalism and superstition. He wished readers to understand that, among other things, Gothic buildings were historical documents.

Because Ainsworth directs the reader's attention to the building as a text, the building is transformed from a crumbling concrete presence of dubious background, to a narrative—essentially to an abstraction. The Gothic building is given the opportunity to exist as a thing in itself, apart from its problematic historical associations, and even apart from its physicality, because its continued existence is ensured through the printed word. Ainsworth made the assumption that in order for Gothic buildings to survive to future ages, they had to be turned into an abstraction

collectively. Some nineteenth century intellectuals saw books as the only way to do this effectively. Ainsworth appears to have made the fairly reasonable assumption that the only books likely to have a major impact in society are the ones most widely read. In his day, as today, those were novels.

As a symbolic entity that is not necessarily tied to its original figurative and pre-figurative language, and therefore is presented through the novel as free, the Gothic edifice can embody a variety of artistic forms such as painting, narrative, and even music. Once this way of conceiving of the building becomes possible, it also becomes a flexible entity, able to enter any sphere of intellectual engagement without being threatened with destruction. Just as Chris Brooks⁵ identifies the moment at which the elements of Gothic architecture can be abstracted from buildings and become transferable to other media as the moment when Gothic style becomes everyone's possession, so too does Gothic architecture become the intellectual property of all as it becomes the focus of general discussion initiated by writers like Ainsworth in novels, rather than in treatises. Like any other, the Gothic edifice is a narrative in which the reader may immerse, or lose himself at will, through direct experience of it or vicariously, through the novel.

On the other hand, while the idea of the Gothic edifice as historical narrative allows the building to become an abstraction, the same idea allows national history as embodied in the building to become tangible. The past becomes concrete and able to manifest in objects such as buildings and books, and as the idea that history is something that can be possessed in either of these forms takes hold, history as

⁵ See chapter two, p. 27 of this study.

tangible object need only make a short step to becoming a commodity in an increasingly capitalistic society.

Ainsworth was not troubled by this side effect of his treatment of history. The transformation of artifacts into commodities had begun with the novels of Scott, who was himself an unabashed antiquarian who cared not that people may have thought the collection of the trappings of the medieval past around himself rather crassly un-intellectual. As Ainsworth was concerned mainly with ensuring that all people had access to their heritage through the knowledge of history and through the awareness that they were themselves historical beings, and as he himself was essentially selling history and architectural heritage in novel form, he was perfectly willing to live with the idea of history as saleable object.

Yet, we cannot hope to understand what Ainsworth thought he was doing, what he hoped to achieve, or even why he took himself seriously until we understand where he derived his view of history. Having briefly looked at the influence exerted on Sir Walter Scott by the historians in the Scottish enlightenment tradition, and at the impact he had on the development of nineteenth century historiography, we can now delve a little deeper into these subjects as well as some other trends in historical thought that affected Ainsworth directly.

In keeping with the prevailing idea in the post-Enlightenment era that the present emerges from the past, all trends in nineteenth century views about history were in some way either a reaction to the way history was treated in eighteenth century thought, or else the extension of a particular Enlightenment concept to its next logical step. R.G. Collingwood^{vi} rightly points out that even though

Enlightenment historians saw the past as a period of barbarism hardly worth examining, and capable of yielding no insight into any field of human knowledge, they did approach history in a way that began to open historical thought to different conceptualizations of the past and of the story of the past: “unable though they were to appreciate the creative power of a popular spirit, they were writing from the point of view of the subject, not the government, and were therefore bringing into an altogether new prominence the history of the arts and sciences, industry, trade, and culture in general.”^{vii} Collingwood’s remark touches upon two key points. First is the idea that Enlightenment historians did not necessarily conceive of history from the perspective of governments. This circumstance indirectly allowed the narration of the past from the point of view of people who had never had access to political power. Second, the scope of historical examination was stretched to include more than just the political landscape of a given society. Such changes in the way history was approached would eventually allow ordinary people who were not necessarily able to experience historical events firsthand to become historians.

But the effects of these changes were limited at first. Later historians were the ones who actually made the important stride in the direction of a people’s history. Still, the germ of the idea of shifting focus toward a more all-inclusive picture of the past, and of the idea that there is a creative process involved in generating historical narrative, did in fact emerge during the Enlightenment period with the interplay of ideas among such thinkers as John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume.

When Berkeley challenged Locke's assertion of the limitations of human understanding,⁶ he removed a crucial barrier to historiography that had also been assailed by Vico, namely that it is not possible to generate a history of the past that is true and useful. As Berkeley suggests: "it is said the faculties we have are few, and those designed by nature for the support and comfort of life, and not to penetrate into the inward essence and constitution of things...[however] we should believe that God has dealt more bountifully with the sons of men than to give them a strong desire for that knowledge which he had placed quite out of their reach."^{viii} Though this remark does not address history directly, it does have implications for the pursuit of knowledge of the past. Interest in history is no longer futile. The past is now within the purview of human knowledge by virtue of the fact that people wanted to investigate it.

Berkeley does one other thing in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* that has far-reaching consequences. He removes cause and effect from its privileged place at the basis of human understanding and of its pursuit of truths. This presents potential historians with a dilemma but also with an opportunity. The dilemma lies in the fact that it is now impossible to take for granted the connections once assumed to exist between events. The opportunity lies in the possibility—even the need—now manifest, of creating new links between known

⁶ Locke, John. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. 1690. "Thus men, extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing, it is no wonder that they raise questions and multiply disputes, which, never coming to any clear resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect scepticism. Whereas, were the capacities of our understandings well considered, the extent of our knowledge once discovered, and the horizon found which sets the bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things: between what is and what is not comprehensible by us, men would perhaps with less scruple acquiesce in the avowed ignorance of the one, and employ their thoughts and discourse with more advantage and satisfaction in the other."

facts. For Berkeley, even though cause and effect relations are not intrinsic to things or to phenomena themselves, they are God's way of helping us make sense of the world and function from day to day.

From what has been premised no reason can be drawn why the history of nature should not still be studied, and observations and experiments made, which, that they are of use to mankind, and enable us to draw any general conclusions, is not the result of any immutable habitudes or relations between things themselves, but only of God's goodness and kindness to men in the administration of the world."^{ix}

The patterns of thought these cause and effect relations generate are the means through which human beings process the wide range of phenomena to which they are constantly exposed.

Hume, on the other hand, thought ideas were somehow connected but that it is the human mind that determines the nature of the connection. He too emphasizes the point that cause and effect, "resemblance," and "contiguity"⁷ are all external to the objects themselves. His argument concurs with Berkeley's in this particular. If the connections made between these things are formulated by the human mind and are not located within the nature of things, it follows that all manner of events or circumstances can conceivably be connected, provided a plausible pattern of relationship can be established. While this idea, when applied to historiography, could make historical events more amenable to conjectural assertions and new theories about how they came about, it may not sit well with traditional historians. After all, the idea of received notions in any field of study is undermined and ultimately discredited by the idea that connections between phenomena are formed by

⁷ Terms used by Hume in Part One, Section IV of *A Treatise of Human Nature*

individuals and are not verifiable in accordance with any objective standard of accuracy, though logical thinking can render them valid.

In principle, anyone can do this: scholars, historians, novelists, and the result would possess value as an intellectual enterprise. All fields of human knowledge and investigation are consequently – but only by implication – opened up to anyone sufficiently intelligent and determined to conduct an exploration, since the act of creating relationships between phenomena is a generally human impulse. The challenge to the idea of inherent cause and effect relationships also allows the historian to admit a wider range of material as historical evidence, since it removes the assumption of linear progression from one set of circumstances to another and admits the possibility of the involvement of other factors that would formerly have been dismissed as unrelated. The important point is that the loss of the cause and effect model throws all phenomena open to fresh speculation and new, potentially valid interpretations.

With the Romantic Movement comes a great many interesting ideas—among them the conception of human nature as something that develops through the collective accumulation of knowledge, and the idea that in order for civilization to advance, humankind must be educated and taught to think. These concepts allow a history to be written that depends upon change, development, and the progress of mankind. Indeed, it indirectly asserts that such a history needs to be written in order to further the development of humankind and contradicts the assumption made by Enlightenment historians that human nature is static and only in need of the kind of investigation required to understand any other species of animal. Any history that is

built on this latter foundation will of necessity limit its scope to the cataloguing of significant events, and the observation of the actions of historical figures with a view, not to understanding their age, but rather to deepening one's insight into human nature. Collingwood points out that before historiography could proceed beyond the Enlightenment view, the people thinking about the past had to abandon the concept of the permanence of human nature and the idea that the past was only a tale of barbarism. If human nature is essentially static, it cannot be the subject of retrospective treatment. If this were possible, human nature would to some degree be altered by this increased self-knowledge,⁸ since it would influence the way all fields of thought—not just history—were approached.

History, as conceived by historians like Macaulay, depends upon change, development, as well as the recording of significant events. Rousseau in his Confessions sets forth the idea of childhood as a complete period in human life possessive of its own validity as a stage in the intellectual development of the individual. Rather than simply viewing infancy as potential adulthood, he presents it as a self-contained world existing in the minds of children that is at the same time essential to the intellectual soundness of the adult. If one transposes this concept to the wider context of the development of humankind, this idea has direct bearing on the way one may conceive of the past. Like childhood, it too becomes a world of its own, complete with its own rules of conduct and patterns of thought. As such, it is worthy of attention and not to be rushed through in order to get to the next stage.

⁸ Collingwood remarks, "The truth is that if the human mind comes to understand itself better, it thereby comes to operate in new and different ways. A race of men that has acquired the kind of self-knowledge at which the eighteenth century thinkers were aiming would give rise to new moral and social and political problems, and the millennium would be as far away as ever." (The Idea of History. London: Oxford UP, 1956. 85)

Once its difference from and equal validity with the present are established, the past can be examined as a complete world, rather than as a chapter in a story that can only be finished in the present or at the end of time.

Though Sir Walter Scott was aware of the present when he composed his works, and though those works themselves sometimes address the present, he depicted the past as self-contained, not needing the details of the present to complete the picture. At the same time, past ages can be acknowledged as part of what gives the present its characteristic spirit and as a part of the story of the present. Understanding the past is key to judging the present rightly. The past then becomes valuable and worth looking at carefully as a necessary item in the store of human knowledge. By the same reasoning, all relics of the past, both the tangible and the intangible, become significant since they form a part of the complete picture of the world in which the citizens of bygone ages lived.

This idea of the past as a self-contained world transforms it into something that has boundaries and that can be placed within a narrative framework. The fact that a complete and closed structure can be imposed on past events, rather than an open one such as a chronology, causes history to become less abstract. Those incapable of or unaccustomed to engaging in abstract thought can then grasp it. This is especially important for the newly literate of the nineteenth century. The ability to see the past as its own world allows history to move a step closer to becoming narrative, which in turn will make historical thinking accessible to ordinary people. The best and most striking use of this new potential for history to be framed as narrative, rather than as chronology or as written discourse centered on imparting

facts objectively, can be found in the works of Sir Walter Scott and in those of his more successful imitators. For them, history was not an objective study that would easily lend itself to the discourse and techniques of natural history. It was the story of human experience and therefore could never really be the subject of the kind of analysis we associate with scientific investigation. It was a narrative constructed of a wide range of carefully researched facts and just as carefully constructed bridges between those facts.

The image of the past as its own world, together with the notion that a history of mankind involves all aspects of human activity, make it possible for Scott to write the kind of history he did. By adding the manners, mores, and language of the people of Edinburgh and the Highlands to the record of political events in early eighteenth century Scotland in the Waverley novels, Scott writes Scottish history that embraces all levels of society as well as the major characteristics of the culture as it existed in his chosen time period. The result is a closer, more detailed view of the place, the age, and its people, which was ultimately more interesting to non-academic minds. This close view of the mundane as well as the extraordinary details of life in another age afforded readers insight into the character and ancestry of the people of Scotland that defined the region as a nation having its own past and its own unique character.

Yet, he doesn't isolate history from the present. Rather he uses it to help his English readers to understand the Scottish mentality and to help the Scots understand themselves. The narrative that results helps to create nationhood and becomes a part of that nation's story. The new narrative adds to the nation's store of self-knowledge, advancing its intellectual development, and fostering pride in its heritage. Scotland

was never the same after Scott's copious body of work was published because, through his carefully orchestrated presentation of her ancient culture, she became more keenly aware of herself as culturally separate from England.

At the core of Scott's works was the idea that one could recapture the past through the power and immediacy of narrative only by becoming versed in its factual details and then using them to understand the mentality of the people who lived in past ages. Like Vico, he understood that one could never have all the facts but thought there were enough to generate a useful picture of the past by retracing the path from actions and occurrences to the minds that produced them. For Scott and for the other members of the Conjectural School, this meant filling in the details about people's attitudes and about their peculiar ways of approaching the circumstances with which their age confronted them with material generated in their own minds. Historians were free to create significance for the facts they gathered by arranging them in relation to one another in such a way as would ring true and keep the reader interested in the resulting narrative. The way to do this is by imagining how things might have happened.

To the intellectual freedoms that were gradually introduced into historiography by Enlightenment thought, the philosophy and methods of the Conjectural School and the Romantic Movement added the use of the imagination. Though diverse and complex, all manifestations of Romanticism had given the operations of the imagination new legitimacy. Rather than seeing it as a passion to be feared and contained, the movement made it a creative faculty and a vital aspect of the intellect that could be drawn upon by anyone, not just those interested in

composing poetry. Through the imagination, the historian could experience the past, rather than simply know it, once its factual details were mastered. Imagination allows the nineteenth century historian to reinterpret those details according to this inner experience of them. The validity of such experience must be judged by the degree to which the image of the past is convincing, and consistent with what is known.

Working within the context of the Conjectural approach and of Romanticism, Scott used the creative power of imagination to make sense of the interaction between historical circumstances and fictional detail, rather than limit himself to breathing life into the historical record. The closeness between fiction and history that arises from this approach created such a strong sense of plausibility that his fictional characters seem real and his real characters seem alive. In The Heart Of Midlothian, he connects Jeanie Deans' walk to London from Edinburgh to procure a pardon for her sister Effie to the political situation of eighteenth century Scotland by using her actions to comment upon the state of the criminal justice system imposed on this country by England and by its own ancient traditions. The inevitable tensions between the modern and the traditional, the native and the foreign institutions that existed in eighteenth century Scotland are illustrated through the story of these two sisters.

Dugald Stewart, as one of its founding members, makes direct references to historiography as the members of the Conjectural School conceived it. Praising the work of a fellow historian, Stewart refers to "an excellence of the highest order, conspicuous in all Dr. Robertson's publications, the different parts of his subject, in consequence of the address & felicity displayed in his transitions." he adds, "it is this

last circumstance which bestows on his works that unceasing interest which constitutes one of the principal charms in tales of fiction; an interest easy to support in relating a series of imaginary adventures, but which, in historical composition, evinces, more than anything else, the hand of a master." in methodological terms, he is essentially praising Dr. Robertson's ability to impose an orderly structure on a collection of facts whose precise relationship can by no means be taken for granted, since cause and effect relationships are merely the means through which humans make sense of events. Stewart values his colleague's ability to convey a sense of continuity and arouse interest, while affording the reader genuine insight into the past. For him, it is in the transitions that there is scope for the play of imagination as a creative, rather than a destructive faculty. It is in the transitions that the past has an opportunity to become humanized and intellectually accessible to the present. The structure created by skillful integration of these transitions with fact is narrative.

Thinking in terms of bridging the spaces between a set of facts from a particular period is the means through which Conjectural historians and their intellectual progeny made the important steps from historical facts to the mindset of an age, to the creation of an historical narrative that flows like fiction. That they should derive their name from the process of creating connections where none exist is evidence of the importance they ascribe to imagination. Facts and their availability are taken for granted. Scott effectively proves that the technique can be used for creating connections between historical events and fictitious ones, just as it is advocated by the Conjectural historians for creating transitions between historical circumstances. The reason for doing any of this, what makes such an undertaking

worthwhile, is nothing less than its potential to add to mankind's store of knowledge while affording amusement and encouraging ordinary people to think about the past in new ways. The Conjectural historian Adam Ferguson, from whom Scott received many of his ideas about history, had formulated the idea—though he was probably not the first and, as we have seen with the Romantics, certainly not the last—that human development is a cumulative process that makes use of what has come before to advance knowledge and civilization. Built into his idea is the same notion encountered in the tendency of Romantic thought that everything that has come before is of value in the progression of mankind from ignorance to enlightenment. Ferguson and those he influenced could conclude that the story of the past was worth investigating and sharing. As a student of Ferguson and of Stewart and as a profound influence on the novel, Sir Walter Scott forms the bridge between the Conjectural and Romantic schools of historiography. He had a clearly formulated method that he inherited from his intellectual forbears.

That William Ainsworth was successful in imitating Scott's approach is evident in a remark made by Thomas Macaulay:

When I devour the pregnant pages of Ainsworth I am lost in amazement that his wonderful historical novels have not an abiding place in every house. His close adherence to established facts, woven together in such attractive form, renders his series of romances indispensable...he always charms, but never misleads.^x

His comment about Ainsworth's "wonderful historical novels" sums up an aspect of contemporary opinion that was at least as strong as the voices that spoke out against his works and touches upon the mainspring from which Ainsworth's historical and architectural novels emerged. They were valuable in part because they were carefully

researched and because they were designed to impart historical and architectural knowledge. Buildings are the stars of Ainsworth's novels, not historical people or events. The resulting novels are a mixture of history, fiction, and guidebook. They exhibit a strong sense of the rapid disappearance of the buildings and landscapes in which history unfolded. Steeped in the faster pace and innovations of his own age, Ainsworth realized these things were irreplaceable and had to be recognized, preserved, and looked after by everyone if they were to survive.

Though today's critics who examine his works often cite his extensive use of descriptive detail as one of the major faults of his novels, I will maintain throughout this chapter that it was a part of Ainsworth's overall plan to educate his reading public, usher them into the age he focused on, and find a place for artifacts and information that may otherwise have been ignored or forgotten. Furthermore, as a historian, he also understood that people could more easily grasp a history and heritage they could visualize. In fact, Ainsworth made novels a visual extravaganza. They were presented in serial form in eye-catching yellow wrappers. They appeared in the *London Illustrated Times* along with the drawings of the famous political satirist, George Cruikshank. Even people who couldn't afford to buy the editions suitable for binding could have access to the visual stimulation of the intricate and expressive engravings.

Moreover, Ainsworth's narratives were extremely descriptive. Ellis does not refer to the tower of London as being "depicted by Ainsworth's pen"^{xi} casually. Like travel narrative, Ainsworth's novels carefully painted images of landmarks, landscapes, and costume in the same way a traveler to distant lands would attempt to

convey as true and detailed an image as possible to those at home in an age before cameras. They were filled with illustrations of the kinds of things travelers would draw in their sketchbooks.

This kind of descriptive writing, together with the drawings of illustrators, was not greeted with the same impatience many of us may feel as we read through the works of Ainsworth and similar writers because his technique has its foundations in the well-established tradition of travel narrative. It allowed the people who read these novels it to *see* and know a variety of places even if they could not experience them in person. If they too were fortunate enough to travel to the places featured, the experience of having read Ainsworth's novel would impart greater familiarity with them than any guidebook.

Ainsworth and Cruikshank crept into every nook and cranny of every building featured in Ainsworth's architectural novels – often more than once. They looked at each detail so they could faithfully present it to their contemporaries. People expected that in travel narrative; they wouldn't be averse to encountering it in a novel whose purpose was to acquaint them with a specific region, historical period, and building in an entertaining way. His decidedly visual approach to history, complete with extensive illustration, made it interesting to people who may not otherwise have been habitual readers of history. It was through this sense of the immediate and the personal that Ainsworth aroused public interest in English monuments.

The Tower of London: Heritage and Legitimacy in the Architectural Novel

The Tower of London, published in serial form from January to December of 1840, makes use of the famous fortress to focus attention on the concepts of heritage and legitimacy as they operate within the context of historical events and nineteenth century life. It is the setting for the major events that occur in the period immediately following the death of Henry VIII's only male heir, Edward VI on July 6, 1553, when Lady Jane Grey reluctantly obeyed the summons to the throne of England. Ainsworth also uses the Tower to illustrate the seriousness of the problem of succession by presenting it as the prize in the intrigues in which the historical characters involve themselves. In approaching his presentation of the fortress this way, he conveys the idea that he who possesses the fortress wields political power.

As Lady Jane approaches the Tower by barge, and as the members of her court begin to generate stratagems against one another to oust the new queen or to fix her more firmly on the throne, we also become acquainted with the fictitious Cicely, nicknamed the Rose of the Tower in token of the intimate connection between her origins, her immediate future, and the edifice. This adopted daughter of the royal cooks catches the eye of Cuthbert Cholmondeley, the Royal Consort's squire, during the festivities surrounding the Queen's arrival in London. Elated to find that she is likely to be of illustrious birth, he pursues and extracts from her a promise of her hand in marriage at a more convenient time. Another admirer, Lawrence Nightgall, the Tower's jailor, becomes jealous and locks the squire away in a dungeon, with the help and complicity of Spanish ambassador Simon Renard and the Earl of Pembroke. These last are historical characters and partisans of Princess Mary, and both see

Cholmondeley as a threat to their conspiracy to assassinate the Duke of Northumberland, the de facto ruler of England, and remove Jane from the throne.

By Book Two of the novel, the conspirators have succeeded. Mary is queen, while Jane and Princess Elizabeth have become prisoners of the Tower and objects of unrelenting suspicion, since each has supporters of her claim to the throne. An insurgency, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt (son of the famous courtly love poet featured in Windsor Castle) and Guildford Dudley, Jane's ambitious husband, threatens Mary's position when it becomes clear that she intends to marry Philip of Spain, heir to a vast empire that is richer and more powerful and therefore threatens to overshadow her own. Mary stands her ground and wins the fight for control of the Tower. Her stalwart resistance to the tide of insurgency earns her the respect of her subjects. Owing to Renard's insistence that she is a threat as long as she lives, one of the casualties of the battle is Jane Grey who later dies on the block on Tower Green. The squire, Cuthbert Cholmondeley, escapes from his dungeon and rescues Cicely who, we learn, is the daughter of two members of Henry VIII's court who were imprisoned for siding with Catherine in the divorce controversy. She becomes lady-in-waiting to the condemned Queen Jane and, sharing her captivity in the Tower, cares for her until her execution. Cicely's long-suffering and loving ministrations to Jane are rewarded by the restoration of her correct name, titles, and lands, and by marriage to Cholmondeley. The execution of Jane Grey is the note on which the novel ends.

The plots of the fiction and of the history that are worked out in this novel center on identity as established through ancestry, and on legitimacy as established through law. In this story of the crisis of succession after the death of the young king,

Ainsworth, himself a lawyer, presses the issue of the precariousness of a government that is formed in defiance of the legal structure of the state in question, a decidedly conservative approach that also tacitly rejects the idea of revolution even as it embraces that of restoration of the rightful heir. Even though Queen Jane is represented as innocent of the scheming that is rife during the time leading up to her reign and that continues even months after the end of her nine-day tenure of the throne, the fact that she has attained it illegally—or at the very least through dubious means, excludes her from achieving popular support or the support of the members of her court. Even as Ainsworth's portrayal of her engenders sympathy, her removal from the throne and subsequent death on the scaffold are presented in the light of a sacrifice made on behalf of the rules of succession and the political stability of the country.

Her father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland, recognizes the need to make Jane's reign legal in the face of the claims of Princess Mary, who is more directly in line to succeed her brother, by reminding the Privy Council of yet another set of dubious circumstances: "on the death of our Sovereign Lord, Edward the Sixth, Queen Jane became invested and possessed with the just and right title in the imperial crown of this realm, not only by good order of ancient laws, but also by our late sovereign lord's letters-patent, signed with his own hand, and sealed with the Great Seal of England, in the presence of the most part of the nobles, councilors, judges, and divers other grave and sage personages, assenting to and subscribing the same."^{xii} Ainsworth has Northumberland use the lawyer's prose style, punctuating his speech with terms like "right," and "just," to highlight the means used by the Duke to

maintain that the new queen has her title through law and that the title conferred by law cannot be questioned. This supposed legal certainty comes at a period when the legitimacy of both Mary and Elizabeth was in doubt, ostensibly on religious grounds. Yet such a mode of expression, placed as it is in the mouth of one accused by other characters of murdering his sovereign, is suspect. This is not because the author rejects the concept of right as determined by law but because the suspected regicide has outlined a set of circumstances that are dubious as the basis of changing the line of succession. Such change takes effect only in default of heirs in the former ruler's direct line of descent. Northumberland has conveniently dismissed the claims of Mary and Elizabeth, the two daughters of Henry VIII by introducing letters-patent that override the order of succession. Moreover, the late King may have been tricked or coerced into signing them, if they have not been forged.

We also learn that Northumberland plans to use Jane's position to place her husband, his son, on the throne. All he need do to bring this about is to persuade her to have him crowned as well. Success in this endeavor would disinherit the members of the Tudor dynasty entirely in favor of his own family, in direct contravention of the rules of succession. The law is shown to be an instrument of coup d'état in the hands of the unscrupulous; it is something that is morally indifferent and must therefore be used properly by honest, well-meaning people, or the future of the nation will be placed at risk.

The Tower of London is the physical embodiment of the political legitimacy so avidly sought after by the characters in Ainsworth's narrative. Control of the building translates directly into political power. Although Jane is queen at the

beginning of the novel, it is Northumberland who really possesses power since his word alone can permit people to enter or leave the Tower. The fact that he is in control is emphasized by his possession of the keys to the edifice. When partisans of princess Mary threaten Jane's position, she is persuaded to send Northumberland to check the rebellion. He, however, declines in favor of her father: "I will maintain custody of the Tower."^{xiii} This remark underscores Ainsworth's point that the power lies with the person who controls the building. Jane's supremacy is only nominal because it is bestowed on her by one more powerful.⁹ Northumberland points this out when Jane attempts to assert herself as sovereign: "I am in the presence of one who owes her authority to me, and who holds it through me. The same power which made you queen, can as readily unmake you."^{xiv} When there is an insurgency during the reign of Mary Tudor, we are made to understand that the capture of the Tower signals the captor's acquisition of supreme power over the people within and around it.

Through this episode in the novel, Ainsworth not only makes us mindful of the building as a symbol of political power, he also reminds the reader of the building's role in protecting the ruler's interests, even if those interests were in direct opposition to those of his or her subjects. Therefore, it was also a threat to the people it ostensibly protected. Yet, even though Ainsworth does not attempt to downplay this aspect of the fortress, he does tend to emphasize the physical appearance of the building and its role in the conflict surrounding succession over its role as the instrument of oppressive monarchical regimes. Ainsworth's choices in this matter

⁹ This point is borne out 19th century kingships in Belgium and France. Louis-Philippe was crowned King of the French, and Leopold was King of the Belgians, in assertion of the idea that theirs was not a divine right to rule but a privilege bestowed on them by a powerful populace. [see Christopher Hibbert's Queen Victoria: A Personal History. New York: Basic Books, 2000 for brief reference to this.]

had interesting results. People wanted to see the Gothic fortress that dominated the narrative.

One can imagine that Ainsworth's treatment of it in his novel made people rather more fascinated by its dark past than afraid of it. The Tower of London did initiate the process of attaching new significance to this old fortress. So deeply ingrained was this novel in nineteenth century English popular culture that W.S. Gilbert could make reference to it near the end of the century in *Yeomen Of The Guard* with complete confidence that the reference would be understood. In this libretto, which was originally also titled *The Tower of London*, the building is a sinister character that seems more at home in a Grimm story than in Victorian London: "this wicked tower, like a cruel giant in a fairy-tale, must be fed with blood, and that blood must be the best and the bravest in England, or it's not good enough for the old blunderbore."⁵⁵ Gilbert's treatment of the building derides the sentimental, idealized, even storybook quality the Tower assumed once Ainsworth's novel became popular. By pushing this quality just a bit further and into the realm of fairy tale, the Gothic building becomes a Gothic monster as Gilbert reminds us more forcefully of its less illustrious role in the executions of countless people whose main offense was to disagree with the reigning monarch. Yet, Ainsworth does not shy away from the many wrongful deaths that have occurred there, including the execution of Jane Grey. This too, is part of the nation's collective past.

Presented in this negative light, the Tower has the potential to resemble the French monuments Victor Hugo wanted to save – those that housed the institutions of the ancien regime and their representatives. The monuments of English history were

as much symbols of torture and oppression, as they were symbols of English ingenuity, economic strength, and the durability of the nation and her people. In consideration of this complicated symbolism, Ainsworth took some pains to present a balanced view of the buildings he featured in his novels and of their various occupants. Above all, he asserted their importance as items in the public record and as the inheritance and rightful property of all people of England. This new way of viewing the Gothic building was added to its old meanings.

Having established the idea that the building belongs to the people as early as the preface to The Tower of London, Ainsworth illustrates it in a number of interesting ways: he shows us the kitchen and the people there who labor to keep the Tower in working order, regardless of who the reigning power happens to be, and he shows us the Tower guards who must protect the building at all cost. Seeing these seemingly marginal people as belonging to the Tower, the reader could gain a sense of their importance to the continuity and stability of life within its walls. Ordinary people in the nineteenth century could see that their ancestors were active upholders of the nation. In this novel (as in the others), they appear to be a more stable element in society than the nobility, who were fighting to the death over a throne that Ainsworth lets us know justly belonged to Mary in the estimation of the citizenry of that time.

We are made to understand that, though Jane Grey is not presented to us as manipulative and ambitious, she is a usurper and is not received with enthusiasm as she proceeds to her coronation in the Tower. Rather, she is greeted with silence,

which is broken by the appearance of the archetypal crone of Gothic fiction who begs her not to enter the fortress and predicts her death if she does:

Go not to the Tower. Danger lurks therein—danger to you, your husband, and to all you hold dear. Return... to the retirement of Sion House—to the solitudes of Bradgate...set foot in that galley—enter the gates of the Tower—and another year shall not pass over your head.^{xvi}

Leaving aside the ominous reference to Jane Grey's head, one of the most striking elements of the quotation above is its emphasis on the building she chooses to enter as determinant of her fate. Another noteworthy aspect of it is the fact that the statement is made by a subject, a member of the ordinary public who has successfully flouted authority and protocol to gain the attention of a queen who is interested in what she has to say:

At the moment Jane was crossing the railed plank leading to her galley, a small wherry...shot with marvelous rapidity from out the foremost line of boats, and, in spite of all opposition, passed between the state barges, and drew up at her feet.^{xvii}

In impressing on readers the degree to which the rulers of England were concerned about public sentiment and the likelihood that a monarch would not be able to continue to hold power if the people doubted his or her legitimacy, Ainsworth conveyed the idea of a people possessed of some semblance of a political voice and whose revolutionary potential existed even in the sixteenth century. He thereby pointed up the fact that the people of England were a force to be reckoned with even at that time because the nation was at a point of uncertainty as it made the transition from one regime to the next. In a time of political chaos, the ordinary citizens of

England are represented as the only group that is willing to adhere to the rules of inheritance. Their descendants were therefore entitled to inherit the fortress.

Yet, the Tower also belongs to those who have suffered in it, regardless of class. The names and other writings etched into its walls bear witness to the existence and to the circumstances of countless other individuals, some of whose names have not graced history books. The fact that he takes pains in several instances to draw attention to the way wall inscriptions tell of the existence and fates of the inhabitants of various rooms reinforces the idea that Ainsworth also viewed ancient buildings as documents in a very literal way. When he describes the Beauchamp Tower, he informs us that

Every room, from roof to vault, is covered with melancholy memorials of its illustrious and unfortunate occupants. Over the fireplace in the principal chamber... is the autograph of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, beheaded in 1572, for aspiring to the hand of Mary Queen of Scots. On the right of the fireplace, at the entrance of a recess, are these words: 'dolor patientia vincitur. G. Gyfford. August 8, 1586.' amongst others...is the following enigmatical inscription. It is preceded by the date 1568, April 23, but is unaccompanied by any signature.

No hope is bard or vayne
that hap doth ous attayne.^{xviii}

The Tower is worthy of continued existence because it contains what may be the only evidence that these people once lived, suffered, and died. They become more real and their fates more immediate as a result of being carved into the walls of the fortress that housed and then killed them. There is an almost universally recognized tendency to memorialize the staggering number of those lost in disasters, wars and other atrocities by inscribing their names on the walls of monuments. The frequent

creation of texts of this kind is a strong statement of the powerful connection between buildings as a mode of public expression, as a repository of collective memory, and people. Through their close interaction, both the constructed object and the people to whom it pays tribute have the opportunity to have a permanent existence in objective reality and in the minds of those who come into contact with them—at least for as long as the monument stands.

Ainsworth perceived the importance of the combination of the written word and architecture in the formation of collective memory. Teaching people to read buildings as historical texts that also attested to the lives of those who lived in long gone ages ensured that even once-forgotten prisoners could become part of the general consciousness. The disappearance of a building like the Tower of London would entail the destruction of this evidence of and memorial to its victims. The fire that nearly destroyed it in 1841 made this point painfully obvious to a great many people. But Ainsworth is aware that the building need not be destroyed for this to happen. If people forget its importance and ignore its historical and cultural significance, if they fail to understand that it and what goes on within it concerns them, no one will approach its walls to read them and no one will take the time to know the building's history. It is thereby consigned to oblivion regardless of its continued physical existence.

Ainsworth needed his readers to take control of the building in an intellectual sense, the better to understand the need to preserve it in spite of its historical role in oppression and execution, for they had inherited the Tower from those who built, maintained, and protected it. Moreover, with the slight widening of the political

franchise that was ushered in with the Reform Bill of 1832, the people were, by increments, becoming inheritors of the institution the fortress represented. Historical awareness could empower the citizens of Ainsworth's time to act in ways that would allow the nation to reach its potential without self-destructing, the violent intermediate step France seemed to be taking. Historical and architectural knowledge of the kind Ainsworth and others like him offered could also translate into political will. The idea, which comes from Gothic fiction and from historical events as the author presents them, that they who are in possession of the Tower control the fate of England therefore has interesting implications as it finds its way into the world beyond the novel, permeates the action in the history, and drives the plot of the fiction that unfolds within its walls.

In placing the threads of Gothic fiction and historical narrative parallel to one another in this novel, Ainsworth leads the reader to a variety of interesting insights. He gave the general public the romance plot it may have been expecting but made the history more compelling by comparison and dominated both with the constant presence of a Gothic building that was itself capable of drawing attention away from everything else. Through this approach the reader is made aware of the possibility that historical events don't occur along the orderly time lines we use to make sense of them; they could at times assume traits similar to the suspenseful episodes of romance.

The dramatic nature of actual events and the novelist's ability to take advantage of the narrative techniques native to fiction in his presentation of them ensured plot twists and surprises that were potentially more exciting than any to be

found in Gothic romances. The existence of the parallel Gothic and historical narratives allowed readers, the educated and the indifferently educated alike,¹⁰ to possess the building through two different means, according to their level of intellectual sophistication and interest. Framing history in terms of romance allows the novelist to give the Gothic building a central role and reflects Ainsworth's sense of the need for the form to move in the direction of portrayal of a world and a past that were exciting enough without the need for improbable characters and situations. He wishes not to discard the basic structure of romance, but to re-form the narrative edifice that arises from it.

We also learn, in spite of Ainsworth's tendency toward types rather than the development of full personalities in his characterization, and in spite of the fact that he uses the structure of a narrative form – Gothic romance – that easily lends itself to superficial characterization, that historical figures in Ainsworth's novels are sometimes very interesting in subtle ways. The character of Queen Jane, for example, seems rather one-dimensional. She is portrayed in this novel as unwaveringly good and pious, much like Emily St. Aubert of Radcliffe's *Udolpho* but her goodness and piety are never rewarded and she is never released from her Gothic prison, except through death. The fact that she actually dies and is never rescued from the Tower, as is Cicely, as is Emily, is no less frustrating because it is generally known. Yet, knowing she will die in spite of her goodness gives us the opportunity to examine that goodness more closely. Was she in fact tacitly giving consent to the plot to dethrone Mary by not revealing it? Did she harbor a wish to return to her role as Queen of

¹⁰ In his *Génie du Christianisme* (1802), Chateaubriand, by way of expressing a similar idea, quotes St. Gregory: "Si l'Ecriture renferme des mystères capables d'exercer les plus éclairés, elle contient aussi des vérités simples, propres à nourrir les humbles et les moins savants..." p. 381

England in spite of her voiced reluctance to hold the office? These are questions that hang in the air but are never addressed by Ainsworth directly. They are left entirely to the discretion and willingness of the reader to explore them or leave them alone as he or she sees fit. We are confronted with the villain and the helpless, blameless damsel in distress who ends up imprisoned in a tower but the situation is complicated by the fact that the damsel is a queen imprisoned for usurpation and treason against the true heir.

Renard, the Spanish ambassador, also seems a typical member of the Gothic cast of characters. His status as a villain is established from the moment that he is first introduced; his very name suggests the craftiness of the fabled fox. However, the fact that he is never punished and that his schemes actually achieve his objectives provide an interesting contrast to the thwarted plans, ultimate failure, and repentance of Lawrence Nightgall, the typical old-style Gothic villain. Renard stands out in high relief when compared with the fictional jailor of the Tower. Through the conniving Spanish ambassador, the nineteenth century reader, accustomed by 1840 to the Gothic villain who commits atrocities as an expression of his essential nature, is confronted with evil as the path of choice for one who has a fairly reasonable purpose in view. He realizes that to control the Tower is to control the realm, its domestic and its foreign policies. For this reason, he seeks to ensure that the person most advantageous for Spain is in possession of the keys. To satisfy himself that this state of affairs will hold once achieved, he zealously advocates the execution of anyone who can contest Mary's right to be queen.

These circumstances give rise to the intrigues and plot twists that occur within the historical narrative and tend to render it more compelling than the fiction whose outcome is far more predictable according to the conventions of romance. We know, for instance, that the squire Cuthbert Cholmondeley will be able to marry Cicely, the Rose of the Tower, once he finds out, as all Gothic heroes must, that the woman of humble origin whom he loves is really of noble birth. The plot that concerns these two characters is so conventional as to leave some scholars with the impression that Ainsworth was somehow unaware that Gothic romance had had its day. Nevertheless, Ainsworth allows the historical narrative to unfold along the same lines as romance, effectively encouraging comparison between the two.

He uses the form and conventions of Gothic romance to reveal a living history that is told from the perspective of an actual Gothic building. Yet, it is important to point out that it plays the expected roles in the fictional narrative: it is the means of imprisoning innocents, as well as being the repository of secrets; it is the jailor Nightgall's domain, perhaps more truly than it is the domain of the reigning sovereign, because he holds his position regardless of who is king or queen. His superior knowledge of the architectural intricacies of the Tower makes it more his possession than anyone else's, since he alone can fully exploit its potential—another illustration of the idea that information ultimately empowers its possessor. The Tower of London functions in the same way the castle does in a Gothic novel like Udolpho because its structure makes the fiction possible. While its bastions mount a formidable defense against Thomas Wyatt and his supporters during the rebellion that

nearly toppled the newly enthroned Mary Tudor, a secret room—yet another staple of Gothic romance, hides the identity of a fictional character by concealing her mother.

Ainsworth's desire to make this type of novel more substantial compels him to put the sub-genre to work in the service of Gothic architecture and of the people of his own day, who live among the castles, fortresses, and cathedrals he writes about. He sets himself the task of presenting the Tower of London as a fortress, a palace, and a prison. By giving it a purpose that extends from the novel to the world beyond, he allows romance to address his age about architecture. Quite obviously fascinated with the Tower's multiple personalities, he sets it in a narrative framework that will give him a plausible excuse to describe the entire complex of towers, turrets, banquet halls, presence chambers, and dungeons. He even gives us a close look at the kitchen and at the kinds of dishes prepared there¹¹ when we are formally introduced to the principal figures of the romance plot. At a juncture where it hardly seems necessary to give more than a cursory description of the Great Kitchen, Ainsworth's narrator takes pains to inform us:

It was a low, large room, with the ceiling supported by heavy rafters, and the floor paved with stone. The walls were covered with shelves...the fireplace was wide enough to admit of a whole ox being roasted within its limits; the chimney-piece advanced several yards into the room, while beneath its comfortable shelter were placed a couple of benches on either side of the hearth...^{xix}

The exhaustive description of the kitchen is not a result of the author's need to fill blank pages, nor is it an indication of a sprawling and uncontrolled narrative style. He is delivering on his promise "to contrive such a series of incidents as should

¹¹ in Chapter III of Book One

naturally introduce every relic of the old pile."^{xx} He arranged the major and minor events in his novel to create opportunities for minute descriptions of places his readers would never see, even if they were to visit the Tower themselves. If Ainsworth's own testimony can be relied on, they did.^{xxi}

Treating history in the style of romance, and presenting real buildings as the settings of fictional narratives made both history and buildings interesting to an audience steeped in the conventions of Gothic romance. Ainsworth's use of the word "structure"¹² in the preface to Rookwood indicates an interest in the basic parts of narrative that make it effective. It also reveals an interest in the idea of the novel form, like the Gothic buildings he writes about, as an essentially permanent and flexible entity that allows the novelist opportunities to improve and alter it, without having to discard it altogether. Gothic romance was perfectible just as human nature was capable of reaching its greatest potential, a fairly widespread belief in his time that was applied to everything from scientific inventions to economic systems. That he positions himself at the next step in the road to its perfection leaves the unmistakable impression that he intended to be one of the architects who would restore it.

The unpredictability of actual events for those not well versed in history meant that this kind of novel could still be filled with the plot twists and surprises associated with fiction. History therefore had the potential to achieve the same level of popularity as that enjoyed by the penny dreadful, if only it were presented in a

¹² "the structure, commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish, which choked up its approach, is removed only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection." [Quoted in Ellis' William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends, p. 287]

palatable way. To this end, the novel in the hands of William Ainsworth was a visual as well as a narrative feast. Samuel Ellis remarks: “*The Tower of London* was issued by itself in monthly parts, bound in yellow wrappers, price one shilling. The first number appeared in January, 1840, and...was completed in December, when it also appeared in volume form with all Cruikshank’s wonderful illustrations.”^{xxii} Attractively presented and shrewdly marketed, the romance plot it may have been expecting was willingly offered the general public, but the history was made more compelling by comparison and both were dominated with the constant presence of a Gothic fortress that threatened to garner all attention for itself.

Architecture and loss: diminished patrimony and restoration considered in

Old St. Paul’s: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire

Whereas The Tower of London concerns itself with heritage and legitimacy, Old St. Paul’s is about loss. In fact it is so much about loss that any discussion of this novel that doesn’t address the issue is incomplete. Although the novel’s subtitle and opening pages suggest that it will primarily be about the plague year of 1665-1666, a closer look reveals the fact that the point of Ainsworth’s vivid descriptions of historical circumstances is to present a clear and living picture of London and, more specifically, of St. Paul’s cathedral, in the period immediately before the Great Fire forever changed its appearance. The carefully presented details, such as the names of streets and the kinds of buildings there, allowed his readers to see as historical sites places many of them were familiar with, although in a different form. In building this frame of reference for his readers, in stocking their minds with new memories of their

past, Ainsworth could awaken them to a keener sense of what was taken away from them, nearly three hundred years after the fact. In an age characterized by unprecedented civil unrest throughout Europe, he could influence his readers to consider what might yet be lost if the people of England once again forgot who they were and what they were capable of accomplishing through constructive change. The figure of the cathedral is used as the point of departure and the point of return for discussion of loss of heritage, loss of identity, and loss of the historical record.

By the time Old St. Paul's began its run in 1841, The Tower of London had already made its mark in the world, having made its initial appearance the previous year. The novel named for London's most famous cathedral appeared in the Sunday Times, rather than in a literary journal or in octavo form for binding, because the author knew it would immediately reach thousands of people, increasing his and the paper's revenues as circulation increased. It is certainly true that Ainsworth valued journals and newspapers as media that reached and influenced a wide variety of people because he could make more money by publishing his novels in them. However, as a publisher of books and journals himself, he must also have been aware that the information he had to impart could, through the newspaper, reach people who wouldn't ordinarily buy books.

As we have observed, Ainsworth's prefaces indicate that he was quite certain he had something to contribute to the reading public. He can be viewed as a serious writer in spite of —and perhaps because of —his insistence on removing history and literature from their traditional rarefied atmosphere so they could be available to all people who read. Ainsworth, like Macaulay before him, accepted the idea that

knowledge has practical uses for the general public. He shared with the historian an interest in bringing readers into contact with the past as something literally related to them. Not only the members of the nobility but also the readers' own ancestors would be the focus of these narratives. Such a personal approach would ensure that readers could not distance themselves from the material but could enter into it sympathetically in a manner analogous to the way the historian/novelist enters into the spirit and thought of a given age. True to the Conjectural approach, the extraordinarily detailed image of London represents the author's immersion in the facts and in the world his imagination creates from those facts. Ainsworth's impulse was to share this experience of the past with readers so that they too could recall the buildings, people, and atmosphere of the mid-seventeenth century as accurately and as vividly as possible.

Though it is central to the novel, the cathedral in Old St. Paul's is not the first thing we see. We first encounter a London merchant family at prayer as Stephen Bloundel, the "honest grocer" and head of the family, asks divine protection for his wife, his two daughters, three sons, his servants, and himself from the ravages of the plague. Leonard Holt, the Grocer's apprentice, loves his master's daughter, Amabel, while she is relentlessly pursued by the Earl of Rochester who has made a wager with friends against her virtue. He finally succeeds in abducting her from a house in Kingston Lisle, where, lovesick in spite of herself, and apparently wasting away from the stress of having feelings that are contrary to her morals, she has gone to recover her health. Leonard Holt befriends a girl he knows as Nizza Macascree, a poor piper's daughter, but who, unbeknownst even to her, is really the Lady Isabella

Argentine. She falls in love with Leonard while he still loves Amabel, but he develops the ability to requite her love after Amabel's death at the hands of the plague nurse Judyth Malmayns, whom Rochester hires to look after Amabel, the girl having been deceived into consenting to live with him. As soon as Nizza's true identity is discovered, marriage between her and Leonard becomes out of the question, until the apprentice wins the favor of King Charles II, having saved the monarch's life and devised a scheme to halt the spread of the conflagration during the great fire of 1666. He is given a title and the King's support, and all obstacles to the marriage are removed.¹³ The cathedral is a backdrop for this narrative but, as the story progresses to its conclusion, it gradually assumes a more prominent position.

As the people depicted in this novel become ever more unaware of who they are, the society they inhabit appears to slide further into baseness, the building is revealed in harsher detail, and characters like the Earl of Rochester, the notorious libertine and the fictitious Judith Malmayns, the homicidal plague nurse, are allowed to emerge and prosper. Through this novel, the author conveys what is at risk when a society collectively plays the role of a negligent eldest son. The cathedral represents the accomplishment and heritage of England's people. However Ainsworth's narrator conveys to the reader that, thanks in part to the influence of Cromwell, with his hostility to the trappings of Catholicism, of a profligate king and court, and of the ravages of the Plague, the people no longer know the greatness of their ancestors and are misusing the building erected by those long dead. The new generation cannot appreciate the beauty and importance of what they have inherited and therefore more

¹³ This summary is a reworking of one supplied by George Worth in his book. William Harrison Ainsworth. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1972. p. 118.

easily abuse it. Much of the imagery having to do with buildings in this novel conveys a strong sense of a noble heritage debased and allowed to fall to ruin. As the story begins, St. Paul's is already badly in need of repair and has already suffered the consequences of Protestant revolution, and of being Gothic when the style was beginning to be considered outdated and unrefined.

Ainsworth's very first description of the cathedral reveals Paul's Walk, as the center aisle of the nave was known. It is the province of unsavory characters and the scene of romantic assignations. Each time the story takes us there, Ainsworth has another opportunity to reveal what it once looked like and describe the negative changes it has already undergone by 1665. We learn that the cathedral has become "the haunt of the worst characters of the metropolis," and the author likens the atmosphere within it, as its walls reverberate with the low roar of multiple conversations, to the Tower of Babel.¹⁴ This is an apt simile since it emphasizes the characters' fall from grace and foretells the building's eventual destruction. Instead of recoiling in chaste horror from the idea of going there unescorted to meet a strange man, so that he may address her as a lover without the benefit of parental knowledge and consent,¹⁵ the novel's heroine, Amabel, takes her five-year-old sister—and the rest of us—to Old St. Paul's to meet him. It is during this rendezvous that we encounter the building, and the degradation to which it is being subjected, for the first time. Though the story of Amabel's romance does not emerge directly from the

¹⁴ Though Hugo also uses Babel imagery, Ainsworth could just as easily got this idea from Bishop Earle's *Microcosmography* (1628) in which he asserts that "Paule's Walke is...the lesser Ile of Greate Brittain. It is an hepe of stones and men, with a vast confusion of languages, and wer the steeple not sanctified, nothing liker Babel. The noyse of it is like that of bees, an humming buzze mixed with walking tongues, and feet." The pun on aisle/isle is noteworthy.

¹⁵ something that would still have been frowned upon particularly by members of the middle class in the nineteenth century

cathedral, this is where it unfolds, and we can guess that this aspect of the story, presented as it is under such dubious circumstances, is doomed to end unhappily. But all this is no kind reflection on her. The cathedral's character effectively discloses uncomfortable truths about Amabel and her lover, who literally merges with and emerges from its shadows. We are meant to be saddened but not surprised by her strangely fraudulent, yet legitimate marriage to Rochester that takes place there—she, led to the altar believing the wedding is legitimate, and he leading her there confident that it is not.

In defiance of all that has been said of his flat characters, Ainsworth's grocer, his apprentice, and the latter's aristocratic rival for the affections of the Grocer's virtuous daughter, as well as Amabel herself, are fascinating and complex in characterization. As the novel proceeds, we become suspicious of her undying love for a man who has repeatedly demonstrated his dishonorable intentions toward her, and of her refusal of the attentions of Leonard Holt, a man she acknowledges to possess far better character. The idea subtly emerges that she cherishes the hope that the Earl will actually marry her and raise her above the rank to which she seems to feel herself confined. We begin to realize that the constant compliments to her beauty to which she and the reader are exposed have made her vain. She has come to believe that her beauty merits social promotion. Even after she renounces her love for Rochester, she is still suspect as she begins to waste away from grief—or perhaps out of spite for her disapproving parents.

When she is pursued by Rochester on her journey into the country and a scuffle between members of both parties ensues, she becomes the weak and swooning

heroine. Yet she is still strong enough; the prospect of an inn with no vacancies does not discourage her from pursuing her journey away from London, and the protection and discipline of her parents. Determined to go on to the country estate where her aunt is housekeeper, rather than return to her room above the Grocery store, she asserts that she would “rather die on the road than go home again,”^{xxiii} an assertion of the importance of place, and specifically of buildings to her hopes for social advancement. Once her marriage takes place and she becomes ill with the plague, the house she is left by Rochester to die in is a disturbing combination of tawdry opulence and dilapidation in token of her own strange situation in which she is a wife who is treated as a discarded mistress. Patience the maid seems to be the only character paying attention to the possibility that Amabel is no mere fainting heroine. Correctly assessing her mistress’ state of mind, she remarks, “We women are all hypocrites, even to ourselves.”^{xxiv}

Leonard Holt, the Grocer’s apprentice who follows her to the cathedral, begins to emerge as the hero of this narrative, eventually overshadowing the inconsistent character of the supposed heroine as well as the historical characters with whom he shares scenes. Unlike Amabel, who leaves us in doubt, we can observe from his sense of wonder at the goings on there, that he is not one of the cathedral’s creatures. We learn that he is not sufficiently familiar with the building to misuse it, so the reader is permitted to see it, and the narrator is allowed to describe it, through this character’s eyes: “on arriving at the head of the nave, Leonard cast his eyes down it, and was surprised at the magical effect of the moonlight upon its magnificent avenue of pillars; the massive shafts on the left being completely illuminated by the

silvery beams, while those on the right lay in deep shadow.”¹⁵ Whenever the narrative brings us to the building it is to show us how different it is from Wren’s creation. However, Ainsworth’s approach here is subtler than in the previous novel; the building is never an intrusion into the narrative. Rather, it is often a feature of the musings and the goal of the perambulations of the Grocer’s apprentice.

On the other hand, one of Ainsworth’s most odious villains is vividly presented as a creature of the debased cathedral. Judith Malmayns is spoken of as one who kills and robs her patients. She is hard at work all over London when we first encounter her but when her work is over and she returns home, she goes, appropriately enough, to the cathedral crypt. Thus, the plague nurse literally emerges from the deepest recesses of the cathedral, as does her thieving husband, the cathedral’s sexton. Certain others, like Chowles, a rapacious undertaker, who daily grows richer by robbing the houses of wealthy plague victims, emerge directly from the streets of the disease-ridden city.

Ainsworth did not sacrifice plot development to the improved characterization that marks this novel. Indeed, the various plots that comprise it are deftly handled and carried through to their various and complementary conclusions. We even get to see the murderous plague-nurse boiled in streaming lead as the cathedral burns, one of several instances in architectural novels in which the main building avenges itself upon a character.¹⁶ The fact remains that the setting generates these characters; they are the cynical products of a debased church and of a plague-ridden city. The

¹⁶ See also Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris*. Jehan Frollo is dashed against the cathedral’s façade and Dom Claude falls from it. In *Old St. Paul’s*, arsonist Solomon Eagle perishes in the burning cathedral. In *Windsor Castle*, Mark Fytton, who disagrees with King Henry VIII’s plans to divorce Catherine of Aragon, is hanged from the castle’s Curfew Tower for treason.

building produces only such characters; the one possible exception being the Protestant enthusiast, Solomon Eagle, who is credited with predicting the plague and who successfully predicts the fire – because he helps set it. He is the only fixture in the building that possesses a redeeming quality – compassion, which he displays when the Grocer's apprentice, stricken by plague, attempts to leave the care of the deadly nurse and Solomon takes him to the safety of his own room in the cathedral. This character also helps a few others whose causes he deems righteous enough to merit his assistance. But this character ultimately reveals himself to be as morally flawed as the rest as he perverts religious fervor and destroys the cathedral. Through the characters that populate it, the building is presented as being in a state of moral, as well as of structural decay and the process is too far-gone to be reversed.

What is interesting about the negative characters in this novel is that, like the people of London who have forgotten their greatness, they too have debased themselves. Even Amabel, the lovely and dutiful daughter of a respected London shopkeeper forgets her Protestant beliefs, filial piety, and sense of social class and allows herself to be pursued by a profligate nobleman who admits that he has no intention of marrying her. The rules of interaction between members of different classes are upended, leading to distorted relationships and awkward exchanges. The courtship of Rochester and Amabel is characterized by secrecy, deception, and abduction because it cannot be conducted in the open without violating moral and social taboos. Another illustration of the upending of social conventions, which reinforces the sense of the debasement of the upper class character, while removing the one of lower status from his place and plunging him into a kind of social limbo, is

the confrontation that arises between her father, the Grocer, and the Earl. Mr. Bloundel, having lost his daughter to Rochester and then to the plague, feels justified in being high-handed in spite of the vast social difference between them. When the contrite Earl approaches the Grocer he is almost submissive: "Mr. Bloundel," he said, in a tone of much emotion...I have a few words to say to you on a subject painful to both of us, but doubly painful to me—your daughter."^{xxvi} He approaches Bloundel humbly, almost as a son would, which is precisely what he has been to him before Amabel's death. The Grocer's reply, on the other hand, is decidedly haughty: "I must decline to hear them, my Lord." To this refusal to hear Rochester out, he adds "nor shall you ever cross my threshold again with my consent." He summarily rejects the notion that the contrite nobleman standing before him can ever make amends for the terrible suffering and death endured by his daughter: "'you can make none,' replied the Grocer, repelling him; 'and as to my forgiveness, I neither refuse it nor accord it.'"^{xxvii} The contempt the Grocer expresses arises from the sense that the Earl no longer deserves nobility. Having disgraced his rank and his name, he is no longer entitled to the courtesy due one of his class.

Like Rochester and like the King, who is little better according to Ainsworth's representation of him, the people of London have all forgotten who they are. The result of their ignorance is devastating: destruction of their city, great loss of life due to the ravages of disease, and a severely diminished legacy. Even before the Great Fire destroys the city and its cathedral, the people of London, and by extension, those of sixteenth and of nineteenth century England have lost dignity. From the very beginning of the novel, the forbears of Ainsworth's England are seen to be craven,

greedy, and lacking in character, starved, in fact, of dignity as they sit amidst cultural riches and great social and political potential. Old St. Paul's is the concrete manifestation of these complex circumstances; it tells the story of that potential and of the fact that it is unfulfilled.

Ainsworth first presents an edifice shamefully neglected, and battered by mishaps and natural disasters – and whose cultural value was not noticed and therefore all the more easily squandered – before subjecting the reader to its utter destruction at the end of the novel. Yet, rather than being subjected to a single, detailed description of the cathedral, the reader encounters it piecemeal. In chapter one^{xxviii}, it is a place whose middle aisle “was then converted into a public walk, and generally thronged with town gallants, bullies, bona-robas, cut-purses, and rogues of every description.” By the second chapter, we get a bit more physical detail:

His [Leonard Holt's] eyes rested upon its innumerable crocketed pinnacles, its buttresses, its battlements, and upon the magnificent rose-window terminating the choir... he scanned the roof of the cathedral and noticing its stunted central tower, could not help thinking how much more striking its effect must have been, when the lofty spire it once supported was standing. The spire, it may be remarked, was twice destroyed by lightning; first in February, 1444, and subsequently in June, 1561, when it was entirely burnt down and never rebuilt.”^{xxix}

The image of a once-magnificent Gothic edifice begins to emerge and juxtapose itself to the newer structure that everyone in Ainsworth's day knew. We find out that it lay claim to a “magnificent rose window” but cannot really imagine what it looked like. The sense of loss conveyed in this rare omission of detail is almost palpable. It is further reinforced by the character's own sense that the building was degraded even in his day; the presence of a spire would have increased its impressiveness, yet

Ainsworth never interrupts the narrative to describe the building in its full glory. The most detailed descriptions of the building are given when it is being devoured by fire:

A strange hissing sound was heard, as if a heavy shower of rain was descending upon the roof, and through the yawning gap over the choir there poured a stream of molten lead of silvery brightness. Nothing can be conceived more beautiful than this shining yet terrible cascade, which descended with momentarily increasing fury, sparkling, flashing, hissing, and consuming all before it. All the elaborately carved woodwork and stalls upon which it fell were presently in flames...another fiery cascade burst through the roof near the great western entrance...at the same moment...a third stream began to fall over the northern transept...the sight was magnificent in the extreme.^{xxx}

Even in the process of disintegration, the Gothic edifice shines forth in majesty and sublimity. But it *is* in the process of disintegration and the loss is incalculably great. It is the price of ignorance and neglect and Ainsworth represents it as the just punishment of a people who have wasted their wealth. On the other hand, his generation, who have inherited the loss must, however undeservedly, deal with the consequences of that prodigality. The medieval building, with all of its structural anomalies, badly executed repairs, and subsequent, often ill-conceived additions and renovations, is an ancient document. To destroy any of it is to destroy and erase a historical, architectural, and art historical record.

Throughout the novel, Ainsworth emphasizes the idea that loss of the cathedral and of the buildings of old London entails the eventual forgetfulness of an entire chapter of the nation's history, due to the destruction of an authentic document and witness to several centuries. A necessary consequence of this is incompleteness of self-knowledge in future generations as well. Without some effort to preserve the

record, an age bequeaths ignorance to its posterity and the cycle of ignorance, destructive behavior, and loss continues. A more or less universal awareness of a society's past as constructed by the carefully researched narrative histories being produced in the nineteenth century, such as Old St. Paul's, would make its members aware of themselves as people of their particular age, while placing that age within a larger, historical context.

It must be pointed out that Ainsworth's historical information was at times deliberately inaccurate. He takes liberties with the historical facts in his portrayal of the Earl of Rochester, even though he was true to his essential character. During the time in which the novel is set, Rochester was at sea, fighting a losing war on behalf of England against the Dutch. This might have been the one noble thing he ever did, so it is interesting and perhaps a little prejudicial to this character to bring him back from sea-battles on behalf of his country in order to show how immoral he was. Yet, maligned though he may have been by Ainsworth's portrayal, he is a compelling character who reflects the moral laxity of his age in fascinating ways. This strangely attractive, yet repulsive character could, on his own, spark interest in and discussion of history.

As we have seen, there can be a meeting of minds through the formation of a common frame of reference; buildings then become irrelevant as gathering places, unless *they* are the frame of reference. Ainsworth made Gothic buildings one of the major components of this collective consciousness by transforming them into monuments to the English spirit. By making the nation's history everyone's property, a circumstance that, in essence, accomplished what in France required the shedding of

royal blood and the sacrifice of tens of thousands of other lives, historical fiction would create the possibility for dialogue between people who formerly had little common intellectual ground. Yet Ainsworth's novels are not subversive. Rather, they empower the ordinary intellect to take possession of the rights and responsibilities that already belong to it by virtue of the Glorious Revolution, of the Parliamentary concessions resulting in the Reform Bill of 1832, and of the stalwart English character.

Ainsworth encouraged, if not forced, his readers to think seriously about history and architecture and to form opinions on these important issues. He gave them sufficient information about the history of the building and about its original appearance as to make his readers reasonably well informed on the subject of the building itself as well as on the history that has unfolded around it. He brought to the fore the idea that historical change is irrevocable and affects present circumstances. He also exploited the fact that a popular work about an actual place would generate new interest in that place and used his novels to make the reading public more aware of their surroundings and of the fact that much was in the process of disappearing.

Because Old St. Paul's reveals a living image of mid-seventeenth century London, makes readers familiar with it, and then destroys it, revealing a blank page on which modernity can be inscribed without anyone being troubled with the preservation of antiquity, it is fairly clear that the issue being grappled with in this novel is not one of aesthetics, nor is it one of architecture per se, though this subject obviously plays a significant role. The issue is the role of memory as that which imparts identity and of memory loss, which can strip it away.

The novelist as architect detects an opening for broaching the challenging subject of restoration of an utterly destroyed national monument. Though he shows us that its destruction by the Great Fire leaves no other choice than complete reconstruction in a modern style, still, the new building cannot embody the historical record the original one represents. Therefore the building of a replacement translates into an incomplete historical narrative and an inaccurate picture of England and its people. On the other hand, the old building cannot be duplicated because the resulting one would only be an image of its predecessor and entirely devoid of its historical significance. The new cathedral is redeemable, however. The presence of another cathedral on the site of the original provides the pretext for the story of its first incarnation to be told.

Ainsworth gave his readers sufficient information about the history of Old St. Paul's and about its original appearance as to make them reasonably well informed on the subject of the building itself, and the accomplishments of their ancestors. In this way, he could restore the memory that the fire had destroyed and help his countrymen take yet another step toward the accuracy and completion of their self-image. The idea that even the lives of working class people had visible impact on historical circumstances had the potential to empower readers with the idea that they too, were having an impact on the historical landscape, even as they read and came to know their way around in it. They would then be in a better position to appreciate those relics of history that remained. Ainsworth's works fostered a bond between his readers and their nation and put them in possession of their architectural heritage. Just as the works of Pugin made the reading public better able to appreciate the aesthetics

of Gothic art and architecture, Ainsworth's novels enabled people to see them as historical documents and encouraged them to form ideas and question their assumptions (provided they had ever made any) about how best to preserve, restore, or reconstruct them.

Though Old St. Paul's looks critically at reconstruction and restoration as destructive (to varying degrees) of the histories that can be read in the original buildings, we shall see in another novel that Ainsworth is by no means averse to improving medieval buildings. In both Windsor Castle, and the Tower of London, he mentions the possibility of reconstructing parts of the royal residences. The issue of building restoration is therefore more complex in Ainsworth's novels than if it had just been one of architecture. In Old St. Paul's, restoration is presented as a mixed blessing. The restoration of memory can empower the marginalized and powerless in a society. The restoration of monarchy had the potential to return a nation ravaged by civil war and religious schism to unity and peace but only once the institution itself was reconstructed. When Ainsworth speaks of buildings, restoration is useful only after its object has been damaged in some way. It is only a measure that at its best, prevents further loss, and at its worst, brings about even more.

Old St. Paul's is unique among Ainsworth's architectural novels in its portrayal of a building that is completely destroyed and cannot be meaningfully restored. Even before the catastrophic fire that also destroyed a great deal of London, the cathedral had lost its original religious role and seems to have had trouble adjusting to its newer, post-revolution, Protestant one. By 1666, Old St. Paul's had three times lost its role in society and had become a meaningless relic of papal and

then of royal supremacy. It had no compelling reason for existing and Ainsworth, through his treatment of the historical context, gives us to understand that the pressing concerns of the day precluded the emergence of an advocate for its restoration to public esteem. When the fire effectively removes it and threatens to consign it to oblivion, Ainsworth illustrates how its reconstruction transforms London.

In representing to his contemporaries an entire city whose defining characteristics have long since been drastically altered, Ainsworth places both sixteenth- and nineteenth-century London in the context of restoration and reconstruction. The London of the novel is the former incarnation of the city and the novel's close gives us 1666 as the moment in its history in which the two concepts become an issue. Ainsworth's London is the result. As we have seen, the political context chosen by the novelist is also characterized by restoration of the Stuart dynasty and the reconstruction of monarchy in England after the rule of Cromwell.

One of the points emphasized in this novel is that the cathedral, as Ainsworth finds it in his day, is beautiful but not capable of inspiring the same awe that Old St. Paul's once did. Whether this idea is valid is not quite as important here as the insight it affords into Ainsworth's attitude toward building restoration in the England of his era. As a man immersed in the social and intellectual life of the mid-nineteenth century, and who was not politically radical, his views give us a glimpse of the kinds of ideas that had currency during that time.

This novel frankly acknowledges the need for new buildings to take the place of old ones. Ainsworth's Sir Christopher Wren does not even raise the question of what style to build in. It is understood that he will use the style that predominates in

his age. However, the circumstances under which this takes place provide some indication that this is a measure to be resorted to in extreme cases because it does and it must represent a radical departure from the previous structure. Wren was originally hired to restore the previous cathedral and could in such a case have attempted to remain faithful to its Gothic style but when the fire makes restoration impracticable, he is no longer constrained by its dictates.

The fact that Wren's idea for St. Paul's comes from St. Peter's in Rome, not from any Gothic edifice closer to home, is telling. Its design is not native to England and is therefore somehow unnatural, if not out of place. Ainsworth presents Wren's building as an outsider that England eventually adopts.¹⁷ Unlike the situation faced by his predecessors in the field of architecture, the combination of foreign influences and the march of technology allowed Wren to try a variety of styles that were never open to those who built the original cathedral. This meant he could choose from a variety of styles on purely aesthetic grounds, as circumstances and inclination permitted.

Wren's innovations in church architecture are presented in this novel with a degree of ambivalence, since greater emphasis is placed on the image of the building and on its beauty as a Gothic edifice than on its present state. However, Ainsworth conveys the notion that once it is rebuilt with the same care and skill that built the previous cathedral, St. Paul's actually achieves a historical legitimacy of its own that is quite separate from the original.

¹⁷ Wren's ideas about architecture were formed in part by Vitruvius' treatise, *On Architecture*, a work that could not have anticipated the challenges Wren faced. Yet, the moment from which it emerges is the author's effort to contribute his ideas and insight to the building of Roman cities and somewhat parallels Wren's task of rebuilding London.

To rebuild in the Gothic style would not necessarily have been the natural next step; tastes and technology had begun to move on. On the other hand, as Ainsworth appears to see it, the new building cannot play the role played by the original because it is not an organic development from within the culture it serves. It can inspire admiration and draw attention to itself but it can never draw people into it; something else must do that. In the last line of the novel, the narrator states that the main character “lived to see the new cathedral completed by Sir Christopher Wren, and often visited it with feelings of admiration, but never with the same sentiments of veneration and awe that he had experienced, when, in times long gone by, he had repaired to Old Saint Paul’s.”^{xxxix} For Ainsworth, it is its historical value, not its sacred role that will make the cathedral relevant again, even though it is a church. Its value is created through written (historical and secular) narrative.

The new building embodies a new narrative about the national character. It is the grave marker of the old cathedral. It tells of English resilience and determination to triumph over adversity and its presence represents the beginning of a new chapter in history, ushered in by cataclysm and reconstruction. If Old St. Paul’s is about loss, the new St. Paul’s is about the necessity of rebuilding and grappling with the question of how to go about it after everything that has ever possessed sentimental and historical value has been destroyed. Because Wren’s decision had direct bearing on the appearance of the capital city, he was given the opportunity to define his age by starting the building anew.

The reconstruction of the cathedral and other public buildings begins the process of restoration of London, and of England as a whole, to greatness. For

Ainsworth, if it had not been rebuilt, ruins would have replaced the cathedral and the other buildings that gave the city its distinctive character. London would have become a necropolis, filled with ruins—half-destroyed, half existent—but unmistakably dead. Yet, the body of Ainsworth's architectural novels demonstrates that the questions of whether to rebuild and what to build after the original edifice has sustained catastrophic damage can never be answered once. They need to be addressed anew with the emergence of each new situation. If we can gauge Ainsworth's views from his novel, it is evident that restoration is important if the city and its people are to survive and continue to progress. London must rise from its prostration and resume its important place in the history of the nation and of the world.

In writing this novel, Ainsworth opened debate about restoration of the national heritage to new people. It was written at another moment when a combination of increased demand and new technologies raised questions of architectural form while giving architects the opportunity to think outside of any dominant style. Ainsworth was keenly aware that this circumstance also ensured that buildings like Old St. Paul's would never be built again, even as many existing ones were falling victim to age and neglect. By placing it in the context of the events of 1666, when conditions were similar, he also guides readers to weigh the merits and the disadvantages of restoration. Prior to its destruction, the cathedral is presented as a center of commerce and illicit activity and as a structure taxed by its own weight and further stressed by alternating periods of neglect and vandalism. Changes wrought as early as 1547 after the ascension of Edward VI rendered its very structure

redundant as a Catholic cathedral existing in a Protestant country.¹⁸ At the beginning of the novel, it is already a relic of a problematic past and therefore, essentially dead. Presenting Old St. Paul's as a desecrated¹⁹ church raises the issue of the appropriate role for an edifice no longer capable of serving – or not allowed to serve – its original purpose. These would have been thorny topics for educated people; they must have been challenging for people not traditionally from the educated classes.

The principle behind placing such abstract topics of discussion into the hands of middle and lower middle class people was to put them in possession of the kind of thinking that would enable them to formulate intelligent ideas concerning the buildings and the history that formed a vital component of their identity as English men and women. He also invites readers to weigh the merits and the disadvantages of restoration for themselves by placing it in the context of the events of 1666, rather than focus on contemporary circumstances whose implications and results were yet to be seen. Wren's building is a Protestant cathedral, while the old edifice was constructed as a Roman Catholic one. The change, then, does not represent only restoration and reconstruction, especially as these concepts relate to the effect of the new building on the city as a whole, but also reformation.

¹⁸ According to Canon Benham [in *The Portfolio*, no.43, October 1902. *Old St. Paul's Cathedral*, Seeley and Co., Ltd., p. 44] "The order from the Council commanded the destruction of images in churches and the discontinuance of all processions." The very aisles of the cathedral were meant to accommodate processions. Benham goes on to say that "the images were all pulled down, as were the rood, the crucifix, and its attendants, St. Mary and St. John," attesting to a history of abuse and degradation that considerably predates Cromwell. However, it was, at least, still functioning as a church then.

¹⁹ Indeed, the only rite witnessed within the cathedral is a mock marriage between Amabel and the unmasked Earl of Rochester that turns out to be legitimate, owing to the dishonesty of Judith Malmayns, the plague nurse who secretly supplies a real clergyman so that she may blackmail the Earl later on. Such perversion of the marriage ceremony serves to underscore the extent to which the building is no longer held to be sacred, is no longer revered, and is therefore no longer maintained. It is in the process of becoming a relic until the Great Fire destroys it and turns its reincarnation into a monument to English resilience.

Windsor Castle: Restoration and the Management of the Patrimony for the Benefit of Posterity.

In Windsor Castle, the Gothic building still represents the national heritage but it is used to initiate a different discussion about restoration. Rather than confront readers with the starkness of utter loss, Ainsworth approaches both subjects through the notion of the proper management of the landed estate and addresses the question of how the building should be cared for by the generation in possession of it. Far from condemning alteration of Gothic buildings, this novel embraces restoration as one of the responsibilities of the good inheritor and as an addition to the historical record, rather than the destroyer of it. However, there is a catch; the restoration must be initiated and carried out in the correct manner by the appropriate people.

Though part of the nation's history, Windsor Castle was still very much the home of the reigning monarch in 1842, the year this novel was published. She, not architects, or committees, would have the final say on the subject of what major changes were to be made there, if any. As a monarch who was also the head of her household, she could provide an example of good estate management for her subjects—the inheritors of England's greatness—to follow. Ainsworth conveys to the reader the impression that only work initiated by the Queen could have any historical validity. However, all Englishmen may bask in the resulting magnificence, since there is a chain of responsibility and ownership that begins with her and ends with the lowest level subject.

Since there is a sense of joint, if not strictly equal, responsibility, this novel is addressed as much to her as it is to the citizens of England. It approaches Queen Victoria and her subjects as collective estate holders and custodians. It places the responsibility for the castle and its environs on their shoulders by sharing architectural and historical information about the building and its surroundings and by offering suggestions as to how best to handle them. Letting the reading public into the castle, then, is not meant to undermine the Queen's authority over the building, nor does it point to her diminishing authority over the political life of the nation. Rather, Ainsworth's approach allowed her people access to another building that was an important part of their heritage as well as being hers.²⁰

By now, it is fairly clear that Ainsworth's approach to buildings in all of his novels indicates his sense that they can achieve permanence only in a society that is able to value them and is prepared to pass them on—intact—to the next generation. As a solicitor, he was also aware of this need to preserve the patrimony in the context of English laws and customs surrounding inheritance, which tenaciously upheld primogeniture and the entailment of estates. Because primogeniture forced the patrimony to be kept whole through the stipulation that it be inherited only by the eldest son, while entailment ensured that the inheritor is merely a tenant of the estate in question, property ownership becomes a problematic concept. In fact, ownership seems hardly the appropriate term. Unable to sell any of it to pay debts or reduce his responsibilities, the inheritor must pass it on to the nearest male relative in his line of

²⁰ An interesting comment on her ownership of Windsor Castle and on its claim on her is Queen Victoria's decision to exchange one place name for another by changing her surname from Hanover to Windsor. Through this action, one also derives a sense of Victoria's awareness of her familial connection to the people of England.

descent. People who acquired property this way must have been frequently reminded of the fact that their lives were brief intervals in a timeline that stretched far behind them and would probably stretch at least as far ahead. In this novel, Ainsworth tries to influence readers, who were steeped in this way of viewing inheritance, to think of England's Gothic buildings in much the same way they would think of a family estate and to assume the duties of any responsible inheritor: to keep the buildings in good repair; to manage the grounds sensibly; and to increase the value of the inheritance for the benefit of future generations.²¹

The only use of the word inheritance in Windsor Castle, a novel that is so focused on the subject, is worth noting. It occurs in the context of the initial endowment of land at the site on which the castle now stands: "the pious king [Edward the Confessor]... granted Windsor to the abbot and monks of Saint Peter at Westminster, 'for the hope of eternal reward, the remission of his sins, the sins of his father, mother, and all his ancestors, and to the praise of Almighty God, as a perpetual endowment and inheritance.'"^{xxxii} The property was essentially entailed, then, and given over with the expectation that it would remain the possession of the Church. In the very next sentence, the narrator informs us: "the royal donation did not long remain in the hands of the priesthood," because the priests were essentially bought out by William the Conqueror who gave them "Wakendune and Feringes, in Essex, together with three other tenements in Colchester."^{xxxiii} In addition to foreshadowing the diversion of ecclesiastical power and possessions from the Pope in Rome to the

²¹ In spite of all this talk of inheritance in the context of 19th century law, I must point out that Ainsworth does not appear to be addressing men to the exclusion of women in his novels. There is little sense of the gendered reader, or even of the reader of shifting gender as we get in a novel like Sterne's Tristram Shandy, for example.

King of England, this quotation describes the contravention of the wishes of the original owner and the inheritors' failure to secure the property for the use of their religious order and of members who would occupy it in successive ages. Moreover, the priests were obliged to part with something of great value in exchange for something whose value was less certain. After all, having one tract of land situated on a hill must be more advantageous than being obliged to secure five properties in five different places during the uncertain times in which this arrangement was made.²² What would have been a monastery or other ecclesiastical edifice, which would even nominally have existed for the benefit of the poor and friendless would instead become a fortress designed to protect the interests of a foreign conqueror.

There is another way to look at this situation, however. Taking the land away from a monastic order that, by its very nature, does not concern itself with inheritance in the usual sense and placing it in his own hands allows William to ensure that it will be a legacy that will be kept in the hands of people who can defend it and beget natural heirs to whom they can bequeath it. However one chooses to view the situation, the fact remains that Windsor Castle was taken from its original inheritors and their successors for the first time in a long history of changes in succession, which continued even to Ainsworth's day. Furthermore, it was converted into a fortress and symbol of William's dominance over the Saxon people. By the mid-nineteenth century, the castle had long been part of the inheritance of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties and had recently fallen into the hands of the Hanovers. Its ecclesiastical beginnings overshadowed, it was now a symbol of monarchy, the

²² There certainly must have been the perception of uncertainty and danger since many ecclesiastical buildings erected in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were battlemented.

institution whose overarching influence had long since blurred any distinctions between Norman and Saxon that once existed, and smoothed over the irregularities in the line of succession.

Ainsworth emphasizes the now familiar idea that ancient buildings belong to the nation as a whole and adds to this idea the duties to posterity consistent with traditional land ownership. The entire nation is responsible for the preservation of Windsor Castle and the institution of constitutional monarchy it has come to represent. No longer dazzled by the spectacle of absolute monarchy with its wealth and power, the nation's people as a whole would not be able to revere such buildings. Ainsworth implies that the sense of awe and admiration Gothic buildings originally inspired in those who beheld them was in large part the result of a belief in the institutions (church and monarchy) to whose hegemony they continuously bore witness. Centuries of myth, legend, and propaganda lent them a mystique that in the nineteenth century had been undermined all over Europe by the French Revolution and by the idea that ecclesiastical institutions could be corrupt and monarchies could be toppled. Though Ainsworth saw this mystique as having lost its impact, he did not wish to avoid the use of myth, nor did he wish to discard old myths, especially those surrounding the beginnings of Windsor Castle. For this reason, he discredits but does not discard the story of Wulwin a woodman struck by blindness, who after having "visited eighty-seven churches and vainly implored their tutelary saints for relief, was at last restored to sight by the touch of Edward the Confessor, who further enhanced the boon by making him keeper of his palace at Windsor."^{xxxiv} Pointing out that the story "may be doubted," he overlays it with the story, mentioned earlier, of Edward

granting the land on which Windsor Castle stands to the priests as a sort of offering. The opening of Book Three gives us still another foundation myth but it is not entirely clear where it stands in relation to the other two. What is clear is that Ainsworth sought to retain them all, while superimposing a newer one informed by historical data, and that can at times influence the reader to “surrender to the sway of fancy”.

Amid the gloom hovering over the early history of Windsor Castle appear the mighty phantoms of the renowned King Arthur and his knights, for whom, it is said, Merlin reared a magic fortress upon its heights, in a great hall whereof, decorated with trophies of war and of the chase, was placed the famous Round Table. But if the antique tale is now worn out, and no longer part of our faith, it is pleasant at least to record it, and, surrendering ourselves for awhile to the sway of fancy, to conjure up the old enchanted castle on the hill, to people its courts with warlike and lovely forms, its forests with fays and giants, and its stream with beauteous and benignant sprites.^{xxxv}

The stories originally told by Gothic buildings were indeed “worn out, and no longer part of our faith”. Yet, Ainsworth self-consciously uses them in his novels, in spite of his knowledge that they no longer fire the popular imagination in the same way. Through Windsor Castle, he could create a new mystique and add to it a sense of duty and get readers interested in the castle and its environs.

I have alluded to the fact that Ainsworth's minute descriptions of the landscape and of the building in Windsor Castle, along with the presence in the fictional and historical narratives of the legendary figure of Herne the Huntsman left James Simmons with the impression that the novel was an unsuccessful merger of Gothic novel and guidebook.^{xxxvi} But it *was* meant to be a guidebook. After all, the

Preface to The Tower of London demonstrates the fact that the author was particularly anxious to inform his readers about the buildings he featured and to describe parts of them the public could not visit because he believed these buildings belonged to them. Moreover, Ainsworth added to the collective frame of reference images of landscapes that no longer existed, while shifting the circumstances of his own day into sharper focus.

Having come into being long before Industrial Revolution and the advent of capitalism, the castle and its surroundings provide a window on ages that were vastly different from the one in which Ainsworth and his readers lived. As if to emphasize this, Windsor Castle begins with a very specific date: "in the twentieth year of the reign of the right high and puissant King Henry the eighth, namely, in 1529, on the twenty-first of April and on one of the loveliest evenings that ever fell on the loveliest district in England..."^{xxxvii} Another important effect of this specificity is to arrest the appearance of the castle at a specific moment of its development and establish a frame of reference from which to view the same building at various other times, as we have occasion to do in Book Three. His chosen date was the point at which the outlines of the castle began to resemble the building his readers knew in 1842.

Ainsworth makes no apology for the fact that Windsor Castle, not Henry VIII, is the central figure in the novel. He asserts the building's importance in every conceivable way. It is represented in nearly every illustration that accompanies the work, it is described in minute detail in every chapter, and its history occupies an entire volume. The illustrations contributed by Tony Johannot, Alfred Delamotte, and George Cruikshank, who joined the project at the last minute, complement this

approach with aerial views and drawings of even the most obscure sections of Windsor Castle. In fact, nearly every woodcut and engraving features the castle or some part of it. These illustrations keep the narrative and the reader's attention focused on the building, even as the action he places within it allows readers to form definite associations between events that unfold in the novel and the various parts of the castle.

The concerns brought to light in this novel defy James Simmons' description, at least in part. Windsor Castle is about restoration. Ainsworth's concern about the treatment that his contemporaries would mete out to England's old buildings is at least one motivation for this novel. The remark he makes in the second volume of this novel with regard to the Curfew Tower indicates his preoccupation with the state of the edifice:

Still, notwithstanding its dilapidated condition, and that it is the mere shell of its former self, its appearance is highly picturesque. The walls are of prodigious thickness, and the deep embrasures within them are almost perfect; while a secret staircase may still be tracked partly round the building. Amid the rubbish choking up its lower chamber, grows a young tree, green and flourishing—a type, it is to be hoped, of the restoration of the structure!^{xxxviii}

As Ainsworth raises—and answers—questions of what to restore and how to go about it, the novel begins to point the reader towards the future. Having stated in the first chapter that the novelists featured in this study address their own age, here is a possible exception. This is the only one of the three Ainsworth novels in which the novelist repeatedly raises the issue of posterity. Yet he is still addressing his contemporaries in hopes that their actions will have a positive effect on the England

their descendants will inhabit. This slightly different approach ensured readers a panoramic view of history. Through his insistence on turning readers' attention to the future, he ensured that they would become aware of themselves as living in a particular age that would itself pass away and be replaced by another. Ainsworth expresses his hope that the building will remain a vibrant part of the nation's existence and that the work that has so far been done will continue and achieve this end. His wish list for Windsor Castle is extensive, expensive, and indicative of his detailed familiarity with its structure. He engages in similar wishful restorations in the other two novels discussed here. His tone and the specificity of his suggestions seem to arise from the suspicion—or the outright assurance—that someone will take him seriously.

His remarks also indicate that he reveled in the characteristics of Gothic architecture without separating it into periods or regional styles. Ainsworth does not toy with the idea that these structures can be renovated in the style of the 19th century, nor does he have any difficulty with the idea that it may be impossible to do so; he is concerned about consistency. His idea of carrying out Wyattville's plans to restore the Curfew, Garter, and Salisbury Towers to their former state is the most glaring indication that he is interested in some form of stylistic consistency but this view is never left open to discussion within the context of the novel, or even beyond it. That such a return to an earlier state is possible for the building is taken for granted.

Ainsworth wishes to see the Horse-Shoe Cloisters "consistently repaired", an indication that he subscribed to the notion that Gothic buildings were capable of such

a thing and that they could be altered to fit some ideal of consistency. Elsewhere, he speaks of removing "incongruities"—the improvements and repairs that have been made throughout the centuries. Yet this will alter the historical document in order to serve aesthetic principles. On the surface, Ainsworth seems willing to abandon the idea of this particular Gothic edifice as a historical entity in favor of making the case for its aesthetic improvement. Yet, he never really needs to because of the idea that tacitly underlies his treatment of restoration in this novel. He emphasizes the role of the kings and queens who occupy the castle as the initiators of these projects as if their involvement imparts historical validity to restoration by making it a historically significant act. In this scheme, restoration does not erase history; it *is* history and the role of the ordinary citizen is to sanction and appreciate the results. This novel encourages people to identify with the building, and view it as their own but only the reigning monarch has the right to alter it, according to what Ainsworth apparently views as objective principles of consistency and taste. Hence, his disapproval of the houses Windsor residents had built near the castle.

The case is still being made for the underlying consistency and methodical nature of the Gothic building. Giles Downes conducted extensive research on the subject of Gothic architecture prior to redesigning the upper ward of Windsor Castle after the 1992 fire. In an effort to preempt or combat any assumption that Gothic architecture is haphazard in design, he too asserts the underlying consistency of the style, thereby conveying the impression that the other view is still prevalent enough to require refutation. During the course of research that he conducted as he planned the reconstruction of the damaged parts of the castle, he discovered that medieval

architecture is based in mathematical principles and geometry: "Gothic architecture, as the surviving examples from the middle ages so clearly show, was above all, a linear art. The clustered shafts, the ribbed vaults, the fine but richly shadowed moldings that delineated any windows or archways, and the whole hierarchy of forms on which the great Gothic buildings depend, all served one purpose: to impose the beauty of geometry, and the cosmic order of which that was an image, on the mind's eye."^{xxxix} Certainly, this is what proponents of Gothic style during the period in which neoclassicism predominated most often argued when confronted with the idea that Gothic buildings were irregular and imprecise. Yet Downes also recognized that, in the final analysis, though geometry was responsible for creating the shapes of arches and columns, the eye was the only reliable calculator of proportion^{xl}—hence irregularities in the degree of curvature of the arches that may grace the ceilings of the same room. His direct experience of Gothic architecture from the perspective of one who must create it must have been similar to that of medieval architects who understood the abstract principles of geometry but who were also aware that they did not always translate directly into actual experience, given the materials and tools they had at their disposal.

Ainsworth does not inquire very deeply, if at all, into this idea, however. He proceeds on the assumption that Gothic architecture is carefully ordered and that no aspect of it is incidental, though it certainly could be poorly executed or aesthetically incongruous. Moreover, since he does not interrogate the assumptions he makes about Gothic architectural design at any level here, a vital ingredient seems to be missing from this novel about Gothic architecture and restoration. There is no

lengthy disquisition on the development of the pointed arch, the use of the column, or the development of vaulting and tracery that we encounter in Hugo's novel. The natural result of Ainsworth's approach to the subject is that he can somewhat understandably be accused of being unaware of the nature of medieval art and architecture, a subject that he was attempting to blend with a historical account and with what amounts to a ghost story.

Yet he was aware of Gothic buildings as texts, particularly as palimpsests, and was conscious that the buildings he wrote about told stories that were at least as compelling as his own fiction. It is for this reason that he gives them every opportunity to dominate his novels. Ainsworth places greatest emphasis upon the building of chapels or new towers, on the circumstances surrounding their construction, on the costliness and extravagance of the materials used in these additions, and on their positions relative to other structures belonging to the castle. His is an antiquarian interest in its focus on historicism: These buildings have value because they are medieval, not necessarily because they are Gothic. It is a value added by time, not necessarily by intrinsic artistic merit, though it is obvious that Ainsworth appreciated the Gothic style. Had his interest in the buildings he wrote about been purely historical, he might have deplored the notion of restoration and rejoiced at the cessation of the restoration efforts that had been initiated at Windsor Castle during the reign of George IV. After all, the effect of such activity would be to obscure, or even erase, the historical record it represents. However, because he is also interested in the building's overall appearance, he can excuse the projects of the long succession of monarchs as aspects of the history of the nation and the

development of the building. The emphasis is on the idea of the castle as an organic entity whose existent parts are to be preserved while it develops in conformity with the stylistic and practical requirements of the day and of the people who use it.

By locating most of the action of Windsor Castle within the building itself, Ainsworth can provide a plausible excuse for describing it in full architectural detail and for adding information about the history of its construction and reconstruction during the course of the novel. In Chapter Two of Book One, there is an incident in which a patron at the Garter, an inn in Windsor, initiates a toast to the King as a way of allowing the brash young man, Mark Fytton, to redeem himself after making some treasonable remarks concerning the King and Anne Boleyn. Fytton is encouraged to "wash down his foul words in a health to the King, wishing him a speedy divorce and a new queen, and he [Fytton] shall then sit among us again."^{xi} The young man, however, is not impressed and is inflamed even further by the suggestion of making such a toast since it represents blatant disregard of the laws of the Catholic Church. In addition to raising the issue of royal versus papal supremacy, which will be a constant undercurrent in the story, this scene also provides an opportunity for another part of the edifice to be seen at close range. Ainsworth uses Fytton's imprisonment and execution as an opportunity to describe the Curfew Tower:

By this time an officer had arrived, and it was agreed, at the suggestion of the duke of Shoreditch, to take the offender to the Curfew Tower. Accordingly, they crossed the Lower Ward, and passing beneath an archway, near the semi-circular range of habitations allotted to petty canons, traversed the space before the west end of St. George's Chapel, and descending a short flight of stone steps at the left, and threading a narrow passage, presently arrived at the arched entrance in the Curfew Tower, whose hoary

walls shone brightly in the moonlight. They had to knock for some time against the stout oak door, before any notice was taken of the summons. At length, an old man, who acted as bell ringer, thrust his head out of one of the narrow pointed windows above, and demanded their business. [He] admitted them into a lofty chamber, the roof of which was composed of stout planks, crossed by heavy oaken rafters, and supported by beams of the same material. On the left, a steep, ladder-like flight of wooden steps led to an upper room; and from the roof, descended a bell-rope, which was fastened to one of the beams, showing the use to which the chamber was put.^{xlii}

This lengthy quotation illustrates how completely Ainsworth exploited an otherwise unremarkable scene, and one that he could easily have omitted, to describe the Curfew Tower in detail at a period when it was intact. It is evident from the information about its primary characteristics given here that the building was not remarkable for ornamentation, nor is its architecture distinguished. If the building had been open to the public in the nineteenth century, this portion of it would not have been part of any tour since its location is fairly remote and, with its lack of opulent furnishings, would not have been particularly interesting to any but the most hardened of antiquarians, in any case. Yet the author sees it as worthy of notice by virtue of being part of the larger structure and because it is part of his representation of the castle. By interweaving the tower with the story of Mark Fytton, Ainsworth forces the reader to take notice of it. Such passages as these illustrate how little artifice Ainsworth used to mask his technique of including the story as a pretext for the description of the building.

In the depiction of the Curfew Tower, the reader is confronted with the mechanics of the *novel's* construction at a point where he or she expects to be

allowed to enter the world it creates, without stopping to realize that something about the construction of the *building* is to be learned in the process. Yet, the associations between narrative and building that are built into the novel are meant to carry over into life, and this is no less true for the artistically nondescript tower featured in the quotation. It was a bell tower, and now, especially in the minds of readers encountering it for the first time, it would also be Mark Fytton's prison. Its fictional existence having been superimposed on its established and previously unknown historical existence, it was thus restored to collective memory, as well as being restored *by* collective memory.

Ainsworth's novel deserves another look. Rather than dismiss it as a badly executed Gothic novel, historical novel, or guidebook, we must realize that it is not any one of these. It is all of these and much more—and, unfortunately, much less. It is necessary to view this novel in the light of Ainsworth's idea of making the building and its surroundings familiar to his readers as a means of asserting their ownership as well as their duty. We must also remember the important fact that he was as concerned with the physicality of the buildings he wrote about as he was committed to extending their meanings as symbols. He wanted them to last, to be revered, and to be improved. Ainsworth provided readers with two interrelated frames of reference for thinking of Windsor Castle, the first, historical and the second, fictional. Both would allow them to approach this and other such buildings in a more creative and constructive way. No longer identified solely with oppression, castles, fortresses, and cathedrals would be safe even in times of political and social unrest of the kind that was brewing all over Europe.

Writing this novel allowed him to do for the castle and for readers what he had already begun to do through the other two novels: give the people access to a place and age that were a part of the narrative of their history. What makes Windsor Castle different, however, is the fact that he was letting ordinary people into a building still regularly occupied by the royal family. The relationship to the building that is fostered by his efforts to give people intellectual possession of their architectural heritage becomes a bit more complex as a consequence. By thus throwing the royal residence open to public scrutiny, he created a sense of intimacy, not only between the ordinary person and this extraordinary building, but also between the ordinary person and the royal family. The effect is not the erasure of class distinctions, which notwithstanding the numerous illustrious orphans living in humble circumstances in Ainsworth's novels, are razor sharp, but rather the growing sense that it is possible for the classes to co-exist without friction and without anyone being displaced. This is an increasingly alien concept in Ainsworth's own rapidly industrializing, capitalist world, where the working poor were physically displaced, becoming increasingly nomadic in their search for employment, migrating according to the vicissitudes of the national economy, and where the political influence of the nobleman was often challenged by the interests of the middle class industrialist or banker.²³ The intimacy and absence of social ambiguity fostered by this narrative is

²³ It is in fact because the class distinctions are razor sharp in these novels that the sense that everyone has a secure place and belongs in the society described is so clearly conveyed. This can surely be taken for nostalgia for an idealized past, with some justification. Still, in Ainsworth's novels, everyone is entitled to a dignified existence, however simple it may be. It is interesting to note that his lower class characters are always mindful of their inferior status but are content as long as they have the means to live in dignity. The old forester, Tristram Lyndwood, and supposed grandfather of the orphan Mabel Lyndwood, firmly objects to the disguised King Henry's advances to her on the grounds that "she is not to be so lightly won...for though I am but a poor forester, I rate her as highly as the

proffered as a counterweight to these disturbing trends in the period in which the novel was written.

The legitimacy of Ainsworth's vision of a stratified, yet content and interdependent population is confirmed in his ability to locate a precedent. However, his presentation of the historical period he chooses leaves the reader with the distinct impression that the nobility was decidedly unstable and immoral. On the other hand, the lower classes appear to have an uncompromising sense of morality and of their place in society. They actually seem to be a stabilizing influence on the society as a whole at a moment of political transition. The fact that Henry VIII had only one legitimate child, a daughter born to Catherine of Aragon, who was likely to be past childbearing by 1529, engendered a measure of anxiety about the succession. Any solution to the problem of finding a male heir would involve a change in secular or religious law, especially since the situation could provide the necessary pretext to change the English monarchy's relationship to the Church of Rome. The notion that the Catholic monarch was actually subordinate to the Pope did not sit well with the King of England. Yet the only way to remove himself from this position was to change his and his subjects' religious affiliation. Major issues such as these would have created a strong sense of uncertainty while they remained unresolved.

The general public is unwilling to upset a status quo that was in place long before Henry came to the throne. Ainsworth's lower classes in this novel consider themselves and their nation Catholic. They steadfastly cling to the fact that Catherine is queen and her eldest remaining child is heir to the throne unless a legitimate son is

haughtiest noble can rate his child." this idea of the equal worth of all people could be read as an idealized view of the past or as an optimistic view of the future. [Windsor Castle]

born. As Ainsworth's narrator points out, "The meditated divorce from Catherine of Aragon was a step which found no sympathy from the better portion of his subjects, while the ill-assorted union of Anne Boleyn, an avowed Lutheran, which it was known would follow it, was equally objectionable."^{xliii} They are perhaps more aware than he that once firmly established laws and traditions are tampered with, even his position as king becomes unsafe and the nation as a whole becomes unstable. Rather than be embroiled in the intrigues and debates the nobility engage in, Henry's subjects seem wiser and better able to ensure the continuation of the nation's political system even though, as we shall observe in the case of Mark Fytton, who is executed for saying the wrong thing, they are often victimized by it. Because of these factors, brought to the fore in Ainsworth's presentation, they are indeed a force to be reckoned with in the making of history and show themselves worthy custodians of the nation and its history.

Windsor Castle centers on King Henry and his efforts to divorce Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn, certain that a new wife will provide a male heir to his throne. From the beginning, we are made to understand the importance of having a legitimate male heir as inheritor of the castle and the King's domains. Indeed, in keeping with Ainsworth's approach to the castle as part of an estate in this novel, we encounter Henry as a landowner, not as a warrior or maker of policy. Because of this unexpected focus, the importance of marriage and offspring is highlighted. The marriage plot was a popular one in Ainsworth's day. People never seemed to tire of the typical story of a beautiful woman of inferior rank pursued by a nobleman who is bold enough to marry her and elevate her to high social status and

great wealth, their mutual goodness ensuring that they both will live happily ever after. In Windsor Castle, there is a slight twist on the usual marriage plot: a beautiful woman of lower rank is pursued by a married king who hopes that she will produce the son that will prevent him from having to bequeath his kingdom to a daughter and, ultimately, to a new dynasty.²⁴ Cardinal Wolsey tries to delay Henry's actions in a futile bid to prevent England from breaking with the Church of Rome. He resorts to such tactics as arousing the jealousy of the King against Anne and attempting to interest him in Mabel Lyndwood, who is actually the Cardinal's own illegitimate daughter who is passing as the child of the forester Tristram Lyndwood.²⁵

Ever the manipulator, Wolsey also arranges to have Catherine confront Henry with evidence of Anne's love for Sir Thomas Wyat. By the end of Book Four, Wolsey's schemes have all failed. Henry marries Anne, who has been aided by the Duke of Suffolk, Wolsey is disgraced and Mabel is ultimately rejected by Henry in favor of Anne, a circumstance never directly addressed in the novel. She is then pursued by Wyat and Herne the Hunter, a phantom that haunts the Home Park, and dies a strange death by the hand of Herne in Book Five. By the sixth book, Henry has grown tired of Anne, who has produced a daughter in the mean time, and sets about the task of replacing her with Jane Seymour. On receiving evidence of her love for Sir Henry Norris, he has Anne beheaded.^{xliv}

²⁴ Viewed in the context of Ainsworth's own day, this circumstance is interesting. Queen Victoria's reign is the result of similar issues. Moreover, having had to relinquish her title to Hanover, a kingdom whose laws stipulated a male ruler, she had taken the name of Windsor for herself and her family. By thus renaming herself and her children, she essentially appropriated a masculine privilege for herself and rendered moot the issue that so divided sixteenth century England.

²⁵ Mabel comes to the novel with an incomplete story of her own; we never find out whether or not she actually is Wolsey's daughter or even how she comes to be in Lyndwood's custody.

This novel's inability to focus on any particular character or set of events threatens to leave it without a center. The historical context is not sufficient to convey an accurate image of the period because, though the reader is provided ample opportunity to visualize Tudor England, its costume, food, and to some extent, its language, ironically, the political aspect of Henry's situation is not clearly presented. We have seen that historiography was just beginning to move away from its focus on politics to the exclusion of everything else. Here, the situation is reversed. The result is that many things were included except the one thing that might have made the overall narrative more coherent by providing a strong plot line that would be directly relevant to the events unfolding in the novel. Adding to the confusion is the fact that two completely separate plots unfold alongside the mostly historical one sketched above. The first of these is the story of the young Earl of Surrey and his pursuit of Geraldine, a young noblewoman who is ardently loved by the King's illegitimate son, the Duke of Richmond. The second is the story of Sir Thomas Wyatt, who is madly in love with Anne Boleyn, the King's chosen replacement for Queen Catherine. Both stories of frustrated love are frequently interrupted for long periods and are not satisfactorily concluded.

The progress of these two vaguely historical characters takes the narrative in different directions. Used by Ainsworth as if they were entirely fictional, they become involved in plots that are uninteresting and implausible. In the first case, Surrey is made to suffer in various ways for his impolitic love, including imprisonment in one of the castle's towers, a circumstance that effectively removes this historical character from circulation and prevents him from having any impact on

historical events. It does, however, permit Ainsworth to describe the Tower minutely. Surrey's story is entirely uninteresting except for the episode in which Herne arranges for him to be magically transported outside of his cell in order to meet with Geraldine and end his rivalry with his friend Richmond. He is eventually released from the Tower and reunited with Geraldine.

Ainsworth permits this story to unfold along the lines of a conventional Gothic romance. The Earl of Surrey is transformed into a typical hero of such literature. Precocious, poetic, and genteel, he is learned enough to be refined and brave enough to rise to any occasion. He fits the ideals of aristocratic manhood of his own day as well as those of the nineteenth century. But it is never tested, never challenged, and, what is even stranger in a Gothic story, nothing much happens to him. He spends most of the novel imprisoned. Through the story associated with him, Ainsworth again inserts a historical character into the Gothic fiction construct. Yet in contrast to the case of Jane Grey in The Tower of London, the narrative that focuses on him simply cannot generate the interest that is aroused by the story of Henry's quest for an heir, a story that itself can be placed in the Gothic framework only if the King takes on the role of villain in the tradition of Otranto's Manfred.

On the other hand, Sir Thomas Wyatt leads the narrative into Gothic tradition's darker regions. History, represented by the character, is combined with legend as Wyatt forms a pact with the demon Herne in order to win Anne Boleyn. However, though he has bartered his soul, his plan fails, for the King always has his way, in spite of supernatural interference. Wyatt vanishes with Herne to become a member of his band of ghostly huntsmen. This aspect of Windsor Castle is not only implausible,

it serves no purpose in a novel that is supposed to be historical, unless one considers Ainsworth's antiquarianism and the probability that he used this novel as a repository for historical artifacts in much the same way that any contemporary antiquarian would have found room in his house for the ancient odds and ends collected during his researches and travels.

A glaring example of this tactic can be found in the description of a royal procession:

Those who most promptly obeyed this summons
[discharge of ordinance from the castle gates] beheld
the lower castle gate, built by the then reigning
monarch, open, while from it issued four trumpeters
clad in emblazoned coats, with silken bandrols [*sic*]
depending from their horns, blowing loud fanfares.
They were followed by twelve henchmen, walking
four abreast, arrayed in scarlet tunics, with the royal
cipher, H.R., worked in gold on the breast, and carrying
gilt pole-axes over their shoulders. Next came a
company of archers, equipped in helm and brigandine,
and armed with long pikes, glittering, as did their steel
accoutrements, in the bright sunshine.^{xlv}

The King and his train are about to parade through the streets of Windsor. Such description, according to James Simmons, "in effect breaks the continuity of the narrative"^{xlvi} and assume[s] a disproportionate place in his romances."^{xlvii} That it breaks the continuity of the narrative is certainly true. Such descriptions often occur at crucial moments in the plot, and there are a great many of them. Yet, just as Herne and his legend find a place in this novel, so also do other aspects of sixteenth century England that Ainsworth is still less diligent about working into the plot. Though it is carelessly handled and clumsily worked into the scene, this description allows Ainsworth to convey the notions of precedence that dictated the order in which

dignitaries and others appeared in such processions in the sixteenth century. A sense of the social hierarchy and its careful organization is created through his description of every member of the procession in the order in which they would have appeared, while the notion of a stable society in which everyone knew his or her place is conveyed. He describes the costume of the day in detail so rich as to be almost photographic. The aim here is certainly to entertain such among his readers as would be interested in what people were wearing during this period. Moreover, this section is also an appropriate context for these minutiae of life at this period. There isn't much scope even in modern histories for the complete description of clothing, manners, or of public entertainment on this scale, simply because the age-old problems of limited space, the question of relevance to the topic at hand, and the limited attention spans of readers who don't have a particular interest in costume or pageantry still exist. Here was an opportunity to describe such things for people who would be interested and who wouldn't ordinarily have access to the information without persistent research.

Ainsworth's approach also gave readers the opportunity to be royalty for the duration of the reading experience since his care in presenting all of Windsor Castle and the pomp and ceremony of Henry VIII's court also gave them the opportunity to see it from the perspective of an insider in 1529.^{xlviii} Much like Mrs. Radcliffe, he was aware that his readers were probably not in a hurry to reach the end of the novel, nor would they be averse to a style of narrative that encouraged them to immerse themselves in the atmosphere and minute details of life in another period. Through his presentation of the castle and of the wide range of historical figures who occupied

it at the time, Ainsworth allowed readers to experience a variety of narratives, even if they couldn't always immerse themselves in the numerous tangled plots.

Even though the novel is disjointed and overloaded with stories of dubious relevance and effectiveness, most of the episodes in it are entertaining, in part due to the author's gift for description of buildings, local color, and natural settings. With his ability to transport the reader (or hearer) to another time and another place, Ainsworth could guild a coal-blackened world with beautiful images:

On his right stretched the broad green expanse, forming the Home Park, studded with noble trees, chiefly consisting of ancient oaks, of which England had already learnt to be proud, thorns as old, or older than the oaks, wide-spreading beeches, tall elms, and hollies... Here at the end of a sweeping vista, and in the midst of an open space, covered with the greenest sward, stood a mighty, broad-armed oak, beneath whose ample boughs, though as yet almost destitute of foliage, while the sod beneath them could scarcely boast a head of fern, couched a herd of deer...^{xlix}

Used to fire the intellect through the imagination and to make the world new again, Ainsworth's novels could also restore such time-worn legends as those he describes in the beginning of the third volume of Windsor Castle and accord them a place in English culture by mingling them with history. Retelling the old tales could make the legends of the distant past immediate, could make modern industrial towns the meadows and woods they once were, and, through the power of narrative, make ancient buildings ring with the voices of those long dead.

Legends live longest that are told most often. They are the ones that are altered a little by successive narrators to accommodate the style and medium of delivery, and some personal quirks as well. As a record of past events, as history narrated in stone, the medieval building depicted in this novel is also frequently

revised and lengthened as the buildings undergo restoration, reconstruction, and expansion. Unlike the descriptions of the building in Old St. Paul's, where the cathedral is presented as having been debased by the changes made to it, the demolition and alteration of existing structures is described rather dispassionately throughout the third book of Windsor Castle. Ainsworth sees these changes as emerging naturally as the historical record it represents is revised and added to in accordance with the circumstances confronted by each particular monarch.

By 1842, having stood for over 800 years, and having developed into a sprawling palace, Windsor Castle embodies the wealth and stability of the nation—not just the monarchy—even in the face of drastic changes in government. It also embodies the adaptability of the nation and its people to new conditions. The Windsor castle of Victoria's predecessor, George IV, was a royal residence, rather than a fortified edifice. Its main purpose was to create the impression of the grandeur and stability of the monarchy²⁶ in a time when once-formidable governments were crumbling and royal heads had already been subjected to the guillotine. Through his description of the changes initiated by George IV, we are able to see how the ancient castle was being transformed into a modern palace. Windsor Castle is not a monument.²⁷ As a consequence of this idea, Ainsworth is free to consider restoration,

²⁶ According to Adam Nicolson, Windsor was not the only edifice to be approached in this way: "The Prince's almost obsessive decoration and redecoration, extension and improvement of Carlton House, even after he had also begun the huge building works at his 'marine pavilion' in Brighton, was in its way a political programme, a demonstration of the strength and glory of the English Crown in a Europe where one throne after another had been knocked aside in the onrush of French revolutionary fervour." (*Restoration: the Rebuilding of Windsor Castle*. London: Michael Joseph in association with The Royal Collection, 1997. 171)

²⁷ In a speech delivered at the newly restored Pentagon on September 11, 2002 by President George W. Bush, the distinction is made between a "working building" and a "memorial" in token of the idea that the question of how to approach a damaged building of great importance has to be addressed as each new situation arises.

reconstruction, as well as new construction as facts of the building's existence. The question of whether any of these should be undertaken is therefore moot as he explains what should be reconstructed and how the project should proceed. Yet this view appears to be inconsistent with the view expressed in Old St. Paul's and with his insistence on viewing Gothic buildings as historical texts.

In Windsor Castle, Ainsworth places great emphasis on the building of chapels or new towers, on the circumstances surrounding their construction, on the costliness and extravagance of the materials used in these additions, and on their positions relative to other structures belonging to the castle. He mentions the fact that all that remains of the structure erected by William are some bits of the foundations, without commenting on the fact that the first project undertaken to enlarge Windsor Castle effectively erased its early history. He also points out in this same volume that other windows more in keeping with the decor of a chapel belonging to the edifice had replaced stained glass windows, without once lamenting the loss of the original glasswork. Ainsworth accepts these changes and accepts the fact that restoration alters a building but, as he describes them, it becomes evident that they are as much a part of the castle's history as the events that have occurred within it.

The inconsistency in his approach to the castle, then, resolves into the idea that its restoration is interrelated with history, and indeed is itself an historical event, having been initiated by the nation's rulers. He even seeks to identify what he describes as the completion of Windsor castle with Victoria's reign, pointing up this idea that the connection between restoration and history is the result of the Queen's involvement. However, the stories of various restorations already done and of those

hoped for have no direct bearing on the historical and fictional narratives in the novel. Nonetheless, it is evident that Ainsworth thought of them as part of a broader national history. They were important enough that he envisioned the novel as a ready-made context in which he could describe them:

For the present the works are suspended. But it is to be hoped that the design of Sir Jeffry Wyatville will be fully carried out in the lower ward, by the removal of such houses on the north as would lay Saint George's Chapel open to view from this side; by the demolition of the old incongruous buildings lying westward of the bastion near the hundred steps; by the opening out of the pointed roof of the library; the repair and reconstruction in their original style of the Curfew, the Garter, and the Salisbury towers; and the erection of a lower terrace extending outside the castle, from the bastion above mentioned to the point of termination of the improvements, and accessible from the town; the construction of which terrace would necessitate the removal of the disfiguring and encroaching houses on the east side of Thames Street. This accomplished, Crane's ugly buildings removed, and The three western towers laid open to the court, the Horse-Shoe Cloisters consistently repaired, Windsor Castle would indeed be complete. And fervently do we hope that this desirable event may be identified with the reign of Victoria!¹

In addition to (and in conflict with) his preoccupation with restoration and the restructuring of parts of the existing edifice as a step in the direction of perfecting it, Ainsworth is also an antiquarian who seeks the preservation of the building in all of its various incarnations. Including details of the castle's development in this novel meant that he could simultaneously exhibit and preserve the castle at various stages of its growth and development without interfering with the effort to improve it. This is another reason for the exhaustive descriptions for which he is now notorious.

Ainsworth sought to shape public opinion regarding all English Gothic buildings by generating a sense of connection with their fates that was strong enough to compel people to support their continued existence. Mid-nineteenth century readers were already being bombarded with publications of all descriptions designed to influence their conduct and opinions^{li} so that the idea of deriving instruction from literature designed to modify behavior or influence opinion was perfectly reasonable by the 1840's, the period during which Ainsworth was at the height of his popularity. Walter Houghton^{lii} and, to some extent, Richard Altick²⁸ see the concept of deriving moral and social instruction through reading as a Victorian obsession stemming in part from a general consciousness of the power of the printed word. Hugo had expressed this same consciousness within the context of the late medieval development of the printing press: 'le livre tuera l'édifice' in Notre Dame de Paris, fully aware that such a remark about the ability of books to inspire action would resonate as much in 1830 as it would have done in 1482, the setting of his novel.

Ainsworth saw his literary effort as a contribution to English culture made in response to the initiatives of great writers like Hugo. He gives the Gothic novel the task of narrating history, preserving buildings, and inspiring others to do the same, pushing it into the realm of serious, even didactic, literature. Yet, the objects of his efforts, the Gothic edifice and the Gothic romance, are the forms through which he imparts the idea that we need to know when the time is right to make radical changes in a structure that is honored by time and acknowledged to be effective. Here, we observe the hand of the restoration architect. However, because he attempts to do all

²⁸ In the English Common Reader

of this from within the structure of the Gothic romance, certain problems arise that Ainsworth ultimately cannot resolve.

The treatment accorded the castle is not effective when applied to the novel. Tacking on new narratives and including all of the fruits of his research without careful consideration of how to incorporate the changes that need to be made would not make the novel more beautiful or impressive. Ainsworth uses information that does not fit seamlessly into the overall narrative. His insistence on minutely describing the many changes in the appearance of the castle that have taken place throughout its existence means he must include more information than the narrative needs in order to be interesting and comprehensible. The Curfew Tower is simply not vital to the telling of the story of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn; it therefore needed to be worked into the story with greater subtlety.

Ainsworth's approach leads him to include more material than he—not the novel—can handle effectively. He rightly judges the genre capable of containing the various issues he raises and understands that, like the Gothic buildings at the center of his works, the novel is also a flexible entity. Devoting an entire section to the Herne legend permitted him to maintain his novel's connection to its Gothic roots and preserve obscure bits of local culture. However, though the presence of this “antique tale” allowed it to be woven into the fabric of the wider culture, it constitutes another distraction in a narrative structure already marked by lengthy diversions. The Herne legend is not essential to the historical events that are most prominent in the novel.

Ainsworth does not really attempt to explain Herne's presence; he merely asserts that his story is part of local legend. But, like the clothing, weapons, and

buildings the author describes, he is an artifact for which Ainsworth seeks a context in which to set and thereby preserve it. Wyat's story affords an opportunity to see the Herne legend at close range and to gain insight into what the local population believed in an age when superstition, which the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries associated with Roman Catholicism, still held sway.

By incorporating the Herne legend, Ainsworth also takes advantage of an opportunity to provide himself a fairly reliable, if somewhat implausible catalyst for his numerous plots, since he cannot always use the castle to generate the occurrences, particularly historical events, that take place in the novel. Focusing on Henry VIII and the intrigues surrounding his intention of divorcing Catherine and marrying Anne, as well as the growing movement among some clergy of the day to break away from the Church of Rome, provided the overworked and over-committed novelist a period that was perhaps too rich in narrative possibilities. There is so much room for speculation; there is so much that can never be known, that having a supernatural character in such a story must have been useful. Herne's presence is often used to eliminate the necessity for explanation of motives or antecedent causes; much can be imputed to his agency.

Yet, even though his presence in the narrative allows Ainsworth to side-step cause and effect issues, this figure also represents continuity in the broader context of the story of Windsor. He has been a part of Windsor since before any of these characters entered the theatre of life and presumably he will be there long after they have left it, especially since Ainsworth has attempted to immortalize his story in print. He is a part of the folk history and of the landscape of the period in which the

novel is set, a circumstance reinforced quite literally by the fact that he emerges directly from the trunk of an oak tree remarkable for its great age. Yet Herne and his legend, which is given its own chapter in the forth book, amount to little more than a distraction. It seems odd that Ainsworth would include this element in his novel. The main narrative could certainly have existed without it. One can even make the case for the narrative being better off without it since, rather than contribute a sense of cohesion in the plot, the character tends to add to the general confusion of narratives and characters.

Ainsworth faces another problem. How does one pursue various agenda in the same work, as he attempts to do, and have it still make sense? He attempts to preserve Gothic buildings and other relics of the past, to help ordinary people see them as part of their own history and heritage, to impart historical knowledge, and to transform the Gothic novel from being a literary form characterized by escapism into a form directly engaged with contemporary social and political issues, while preserving its ties to the fantastic.

Because Ainsworth attempts to incorporate several narrative forms into this novel without really changing the nature of any of them, history, legend, and Gothic fiction coexist but never blend effectively. The castle at its center, itself a historical narrative, is used as a stable frame of reference that gradually takes on new significance as a symbol of political continuity as the novel progresses. It represents the most coherent narrative because the narrator never really abandons it. The illustrations never abandon it—and we are consistently confronted with the building

and the city that surrounds it as historical objects with interrelated stories that unfold in a fairly orderly and linear way.

The fact that this novel has failed to move successive generations does not make the author's goals and his effort to achieve them in this particular novel less interesting. Ainsworth set himself the task of teaching readers about England's people by highlighting their ancestors' accomplishments. Since the Gothic novel in its Radcliffean incarnation still enjoyed great, though waning, popularity in the mid-1800's, it must have seemed to him a natural choice as the means through which to educate the ordinary people of England about the past. It would be sure to reach a wide range of people who wouldn't ordinarily read academic history, namely middle class girls and women, people of the lower middle class, and newly literate individuals.

The gift this form of novel possesses of facilitating the emotional involvement of the reader in the perils faced by hero and heroine alike is used to make the reader similarly involved with the fates of historical characters in his novels, and with the fates of buildings. This characteristic of the Gothic novel, as Ainsworth conceives it, gives it the ability to do something to raise public consciousness about the need to preserve the nation's architectural heritage. Windsor Castle was well received when it was published and as a result of Ainsworth's success as a novelist, the buildings he wrote about became associated with the stories in which he involved them. Buildings like Windsor Castle became more visible as historical figures by virtue of his painstaking effort to fit them into the context of unfolding history and to present them as clearly and completely as possible.

Though this novel centers on the need to preserve Gothic buildings in England that are of historical and cultural value, it also raises the subject of loss that is treated in Old St. Paul's as a means of warning his readers of what might yet occur if the nation's ancient buildings are taken for granted or are swept aside to make way for political or economic progress. The detailed depictions of the building, and of the landscape in pictures as well as in words, were designed to recreate the image of sixteenth century England and encourage comparison with its present-day incarnation. In this way, the sense of how much had already changed was more forcefully conveyed. Ainsworth goes a step further in this novel than he does in Old St. Paul's, since Windsor Castle also attempts to preserve what remained of pre-capitalist England for posterity. Ainsworth also wanted to show a growing population of city-dwellers what England looked like before factories and cities encroached upon the countryside, and before land enclosures rendered large sections of it off limits. His description of Herne's oak in Book Two is an effort to reproduce the landscape of the sixteenth century while describing a fantastic scene in which the Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Richmond are in pursuit of Herne. However, he cannot resist underscoring the contrast between the Windsor of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries:

They set off at a quick pace in the direction taken by the ghostly rider. Clambering the park pales, they crossed the road leading to old Windsor, and entered that part of the forest which, in more recent times, has been enclosed and allotted to the grounds of Frogmore. Tracking a long vista, they came to a thick dell, overgrown with large oaks, at the bottom of which lay a small pool."^{liii} (book I, chap. 5)

We are made to understand that the enclosure of the land and its ownership by a member of the landed aristocracy, who happens to be Queen Victoria, has meant that the public no longer has access to this piece of historic ground that was once available to everyone. In this case, it is Crown property but enclosures were fencing off the countryside all over England.

Ainsworth has been charged with turning a blind eye to what was going on around him in favor of daydreaming about kings and queens and the clothes they wore. Why was he writing about Gothic buildings and seventeenth century pageantry while Dickens wrote about abused children and the hopelessness and isolation that accompanied poverty in the industrial age? Whereas Dickens showed his contemporaries the unpleasant things that entered English society with the advent of economic progress and industrialization, Ainsworth showed his readers what had disappeared, how a sense of community had been replaced by selfishness and distrust, and how the quality of the lives of ordinary people had declined. One of the most persistent ideas in Old St. Paul's is that people no longer cooperated with each other with a view to achieving some common benefit. He depicts his bourgeois grocer giving away his merchandise in gratitude for his family having survived the ravages of the plague: "to those who asked for any article he possessed, he presented them with it, but would receive no payment. He next dispatched Blaize to bring together all the poor he could find; and distributed among them the remainder of his store."^{liv} In other novels, he reminds us that poverty has not always been accompanied by destitution, squalor, and lack of dignity; the people in the great stone kitchen in Windsor Castle are poor but well fed and housed. Ainsworth was as aware as

Dickens that such was no longer the case. He approached these changes in a different way.

As an admirer of Nôtre Dame de Paris, he was interested in Victor Hugo's ideas about restoration and he was sufficiently intelligent and educated to pursue his colleague's pet issue along his own line of thought. The results are Old St. Paul's, the Tower of London, and Windsor Castle, all of which give worlds long vanished to the nineteenth century, an era whose meadows were giving way to factory buildings and where the atmosphere was growing black with coal dust. He was, after all, a native of Manchester, England's textile factory; the effects of industrialization were as inescapable for him as they were for Dickens. His descriptions preserved English landscapes of various kinds in print and allowed people to see what had already disappeared and view with fresh eyes what still remained. Like Scott, he attempted to fill the spaces between facts with glimpses of humanity, of long vanished fields and woods, of ancient dialects and manners. Using his knowledge of the particular ages and places he wrote about, Ainsworth sought to create connections between the events and circumstances that were characteristic of a given age and the people who lived in it.

He also sought to connect his readers with their past as a record of human achievement because the sense of self-knowledge and of collective achievement had the potential to change those who examine their nation's history. His researches helped him to accomplish the careful creation of accurate settings he had so admired in Scott and allowed him to formulate personalities for historical ages. They also allowed him to enter the intellectual and emotional life of the past as Kant, Schiller,

the Conjectural historians had deemed necessary to recreate an age. Yet, he did not quite succeed in doing this largely because he did not devote enough time to organizing and composing his novels. The few scholars who have considered this author have all in one way or another, asserted that his efforts to integrate all of the elements of history, architecture, and fantasy into this novel were futile because such a hybrid narrative should never have been attempted. Assuming this is true, Ainsworth was doomed to failure from the outset, as were Hugo, Balzac, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, and scores of others. But the combination can be successful. As we shall shortly observe, Hugo's architectural novel was proof that a work of fiction could encompass history in the form of events and of buildings without descending into incoherence from which nothing of value could be taken away. However, we will also have cause to observe that the fiction suffered.

Ainsworth's ideas about restoration may well have derived and somewhat deviated from those of Victor Hugo but they were not as fully developed. It is probable that he needed more time to consider the connections he detected between the portions of English history he was attempting to shed light on and the buildings in which he wanted to generate public interest. Furthermore, it is entirely conceivable that he never gave himself the opportunity to develop fully the ideas he mentions in the Preface to Rookwood about revitalizing the romance novel form. His works seem to suffer from his inability to balance his literary endeavors with his hectic lifestyle. He wrote another historical novel (The Miser's Daughter) while working on Windsor Castle and published, edited, and contributed heavily to *Bentley's Miscellany*. In 1842, he began publishing *Ainsworth's Magazine* to which he was

also a heavy contributor as well as being its editor, while continuing to research, write, and publish novels. He also led a very active social life, lavishly entertaining the literary elite of the day at his house at Kensal Green in the suburbs of London. That Dickens was able to sustain an equally grueling lifestyle and produce the novels he wrote is more a testament to his extraordinary genius than to Ainsworth's ineptitude. Ainsworth's was a more ordinary ability but, with his education, innate intelligence, and the benefits of his years of practice, he could have been a better novelist than he was. It is probable that his rush to make his literary output keep pace with his mounting expenses ultimately consigned him to mediocrity. His novels were good enough to be effective in their time whereas they could have been great and enduring as significant contributions to the voices discussing political change, building restoration, and history.

Yet, Ainsworth did accomplish some of his most important goals in the three novels examined here. He conveyed the idea that the history of a nation was the story of its entire people because everyone plays a role. Acting on his convictions about Gothic buildings, Ainsworth sat on a restoration committee for a small and ancient parish church in his own village of Kensal Green, in addition to taking part in the British Archaeology Society's efforts to act on behalf of the Tower of London after the fire that severely damaged the Beauchamp Tower and other structures in 1841. He convinced readers that Gothic buildings were special because they were national history in the form of architecture and as such were valuable to them and to successive generations. Readers were assured of sufficient information to enable them to engage intellectually with the dilemmas presented by a growing need to

address the issue of other decaying buildings in the mid-nineteenth century. He loaded his novels with sufficient historical detail to render them valid as historical sources and thus not only provided his readers a background in national history but also disseminated the idea of nationhood by re-creating a sense of a common history and of a stable frame of reference lost since the end of feudalism and “Christendom.” In his age, this sense of community, this commonality, was accomplished through history, not religion. For religious architecture to survive, it had to assume a secular, historical significance. Chateaubriand’s pronouncement, “*Nôtre religion à nous, c’est notre histoire*”^{iv} resonates in a new way as history strives to replace religion.

ⁱ The Dick Turpin Tribute Page. An Homage to the greatest period Drama of the Twentieth Century. A Gatetarn, Seacastle production, in association with London Weekend Television. <http://DickTurpin.homepad.com/>. Photos Copyright, 1979

ⁱⁱ Ellis, Samuel Marsh. William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends. Vol. 1. London: John Lane the Bodley Head, New York: John Lane and Company, 1911. 410

ⁱⁱⁱ Ainsworth, William Harrison. Preface to Rookwood, quoted in S. M. Ellis, William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends, vol 1. 287 cf. Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 1690: "every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge". Ainsworth's addition of architectural imagery lends weight to the idea that the subject was of particular interest to him both as metaphor for the novel and as a tangible entity.

^{iv} Hardy, Thomas. Jude the Obscure. Chap. 19

^v Ellis, vol. I. 421

^{vi} Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.

^{vii} Collingwood. 81

^{viii} Berkeley, George. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, introduction. 1710. section 3

^{ix} Berkeley. Section 107

^x *Macaulay at Lady Holland's Salon*, vol. I. p. 269: quoted in Ellis, William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends. Vol. I. p.432.

^{xi} See note ii.

^{xii} Ainsworth, William. The Tower of London: A Historical Romance. With Forty Plates and Fifty-Eight Woodcuts by George Cruikshank. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1903. Book I. chap. ii. 24

^{xiii} Ainsworth. Tower. Bk. I. ch. xi. 87

^{xiv} Ainsworth. Tower. Bk. I. ch. x. 84

^{xv} Gilbert, W.S., Arthur Sullivan. *Yeomen of the Guard* in The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan. Reginald Allen, ed. London: Chappell and Co.Ltd., 1958. 317

^{xvi} Ainsworth, William. The Tower of London. Bk. I. ch. i. 15

^{xvii} The Tower of London. Bk. I. chap. i. 15

^{xviii} The Tower of London. Bk. II. ch. iv. 148

^{xix} The Tower of London. Bk. I. ch. iii. 30

^{xx} The Tower of London. Preface. v

^{xxi} The Tower of London. Preface. v

^{xxii} Ellis, Samuel Marsh. William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends. Vol.1 London: John Lane the Bodley Head, New York: John Lane Company, 1911. 406

^{xxiii} Ainsworth, William Harrison. Old St. Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire. London and Glasgow: Collins' Clear Type Press. Book III, chap. vi. 353

^{xxiv} Ainsworth, William Harrison. Old St. Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire. London and Glasgow: Collins' Clear Type Press. Book III, chap. vi. 346

^{xxv} Ainsworth, William Harrison. Old St. Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire. London and Glasgow: Collins' Clear Type Press. Book I, Chap. ii. 31

^{xxvi} Ainsworth. Old St. Paul's. Bk. V. ch. ii. 531

^{xxvii} Old St. Paul's. Bk. V. ch. ii. 531

^{xxviii} Old St. Paul's. Bk. I. ch. i. 13

^{xxix} Old St. Paul's. Bk. I. ch. ii. 27

^{xxx} Old St. Paul's. Bk. VI. ch. vii. 615

^{xxxi} Old St. Paul's. Bk. VI. ch. x. 637

^{xxxii} Ainsworth, William Harrison. Windsor Castle, An Historical Romance. Illustrated by George Cruikshank and Tony Johannot, with designs on wood by W. A. Delamotte. London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1844. Bk. III. chap. i. 136

London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1844. Bk. III. ch. i. 136

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- ^{xxxiii} Windsor Castle. Bk. III. ch. i. 136
- ^{xxxiv} Windsor Castle. Bk. III. ch. i. 136
- ^{xxxv} Windsor Castle. Bk. III. ch. i. 136
- ^{xxxvi} Simmons, James C. The Novelist as Historian: Essays on the Victorian Historical Novel. The Hague. Paris: Mouton. 1973. 16
- ^{xxxvii} Windsor Castle. Bk. I. ch. i. 1
- ^{xxxviii} Windsor Castle. Bk. II. ch. ix. 124
- ^{xxxix} Nicholson, Adam. Restoration: the Rebuilding of Windsor Castle. London: Michael Joseph in association with The Royal Collection, 1997. 212
- ^{xl} Nicholson. 234
- ^{xli} Windsor Castle. Bk. I. ch. i. 12
- ^{xlii} Windsor Castle. Bk. I. ch. i. 14
- ^{xliii} Windsor Castle. Bk. IV. ch. i. 175
- ^{xliv} Worth, George J. William Harrison Ainsworth. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972. 48
- ^{xlvi} Windsor Castle. Bk I, ch. iii. 19
- ^{xlvii} Simmons. 16
- ^{xlviii} Simmons. 18
- ^{xlviii} Simmons cites Louis James on p.18 as suggesting a similar idea in Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850. (London. 1963). 19. These extravagant descriptions provided an escape from the squalor that characterized the daily lives of the working class.
- ^{xlvi} Windsor Castle Bk. I. ch. i. 2
- ⁱ Windsor Castle. Bk. III. ch. iv. 169
- ^{li} See Kellett, "The Press" in Early Victorian England, p.42-46
- ^{lii} Houghton, Walter. The Victorian Frame of Mind.
- ^{liii} Windsor Castle. Bk. I. ch. v. 44
- ^{liv} Ainsworth. Old St. Paul's. Bk. V, ch. i. 527
- ^{lv} Chateaubriand, Genie du Christianisme. 394

Chapter Four

*Hugo's Nôtre Dame de Paris and The Revolutionary Notion of the Building as
Narrative*

In Notre Dame de Paris, Victor Hugo redefines the Paris cityscape and repositions the cathedral at the center of it as one of the principal achievements of the French people. Not that the great edifice had been removed in any physical sense but it was no longer the center of social and intellectual activity. Later in the 19th century, a novelist¹ who knew something about ecclesiastical architecture, expressed the view, “the cathedral [had] had its day.”ⁱ Having been vandalized and relegated at the official level to the status of relic during the course of the Revolution, it was no longer the symbol of a powerful Church. In fact, it was so frequently co-opted by one political faction or another in assertion of supremacy that it would have been difficult for the faithful to rally round such a weakened symbol. In a move that seemed to confirm the idea that the cathedral had indeed had its day, Napoleon crowned himself there in a ceremony carefully orchestrated to diminish the importance of Pope Pius VII, whose support and reconciliation with the Church of France he had so carefully cultivated.² That day, December 2, 1804, was an historical moment in which religion was ceremonially subordinated to political power, and in which the physical characteristics of the cathedral were obscured by the preparations of Percier and Fontaine, the architects charged with preparing the building for the event that transformed the First Consul into the Emperor of the French. According to one

¹ Thomas Hardy makes this remark through the character Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure.

² Francois Furet gives a detailed account of Napoleon's rise to power, his orchestration of a return of the French nation to the Church of Rome, and his coronation at which he crowned himself. [Revolutionary France 1770-1880, translated by Antonia Nevill. Oxford, U.K. and Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1992. pp. 211-266]

scholar, "The Paris cathedral was decked out in the taste of the day, a Greek temple to celebrate the new Alexander."ⁱⁱ

In the France of the nineteenth century, the cathedral's diminished role in the life of the city, and the fact of having been discredited, desecrated, and thus transformed (however temporarily) would have overshadowed it in the popular imagination. In response, Hugo reconstructs fifteenth century Paris, the setting of this novel, as a literary place as well as an historical setting. It is a pre-Revolutionary world in which the cathedral is once again at the center. Rather than allow his novel to focus on it only from the perspective that was all too familiar to his contemporaries, that is, as a target (rightly or not) of political unrest, Hugo uses it to present the cathedral as a narrative written by the people in accordance with principles that transcend politics and religious doctrine.

It was a narrative upon which successive ages had inscribed additional ones that were centered on religion, aesthetics, history, and finally, politics. In this last area, the post-Revolutionary factions that were successively in power had again overwritten it, their activity culminating in Napoleon's strange coronation. However, the narrative that was based on Church doctrine (which, as we have observed in previous chapters had been discredited along with the institution itself) and which the building still embodied, continued to threaten the relevance and, therefore, the existence of the building. The people—that powerful and restive entity—would have to re-appropriate it and create a narrative that would help it endure change in order for the building to escape neglect, vandalism, or even demolition. Hugo's novel is an effort to do exactly that. In presenting all of its layers of narrative, he conveyed his

sense that the cathedral belonged to all of these subjects and not exclusively to any one. Moreover, it belonged to the people. Hugo was then able to immerse it in a new and more stable context. Through his novel, *Nôtre Dame* was reconstructed as a part of the national identity, which was being formulated mainly through narrative.³ and therefore rendered worthy of consideration and continued existence in an emerging modern France.

Hugo made the case for the cathedral as narrative mainly by asserting it repeatedly throughout the novel. Revealing his debt to the ideas of Vico, he maintains that narrative can be conveyed through a variety of media selected by different ages in accordance with the materials at hand and with the level of public awareness of how to frame and process ideas through them. The Gothic building was the mode through which the people of the Middle Ages expressed themselves both to their world and to posterity. If Hugo could persuade his readers to read the cathedral as a multi-layered narrative, written in the medium of stone, the building could transcend history and Revolutionary politics and play a central role in modern French consciousness precisely by being removed from consideration as a partisan in specific ideological conflicts. He also encouraged his readers to see the role of ordinary

³ Many of the nation's greatest historians, Michelet and Chateaubriand for example, emerged in the post-Revolutionary period at precisely the moment when the new France needed to establish its legitimacy, especially in the aftermath of the execution of Louis XVI. It was also a time in which the nature of national institutions needed to be redefined after the greatest period of upheaval in the nation's history. Those engaged in doing this looked to the past for ideas: Chateaubriand, for example, found the most fertile ground in the medieval period. Government, history, and society in France after the Reign of Terror were all consciously constructed through narrative rather than by force and, in the case of the new definitions and structures of government and society, codified in law.

When, in 1830, the barricades reappear in Paris, they are again a novelty in a world where the most sweeping changes were made through legislation, treaties, decrees, and even journal articles. They constitute a reminder of the mass movement that brought down the *ancien regime* for people whose collective impulse to action was no longer as strong as it was in 1789.

people in its construction as symbolic of the idea that real power over the national narrative had belonged to them all along.

This effort comes at a time when the nation as a whole was still reconstructing itself and when the last Bourbon monarch, Louis XVIII had just failed in his attempt to rewrite French history without the Revolution. According to François Furet, “the new regime was methodically devoting itself to erasing the Revolution on the symbolic plane.”ⁱⁱⁱ The king understood that political battles were increasingly being fought through language in an age when the ability to articulate the past convincingly, and in accordance with one’s interests, could confer the authority to manipulate the present with greater ease and credibility.⁴ That he was ultimately unsuccessful was not the result of seeing things the wrong way but of having created the wrong narrative. We shall explore this idea of supplying the wrong narrative in the context of Hugo’s novel. Hugo was therefore writing in an environment in which what was anathema, namely the *ancien régime*, was being rehabilitated and in which Catholicism had already been reinstated as the national religion⁵ through legal means and in the journals of the day, not through wholesale armed repression. The idea of similarly rehabilitating a cathedral may, perhaps, have been greeted with some degree

⁴ The reign of Louis XVIII provides examples of ways in which post-revolutionary France attempted to reconstruct itself by rewriting the story of the recent past. According to François Furet (in *Revolutionary France 1770-1880*, trans. by Antonia Nevill. Oxford and Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell Publishers, 1988, 274): “the new regime was methodically devoting itself to erasing the Revolution on the symbolic plane.” The restored Bourbon king, though unable to restore lost lands to the nobility of the *ancien régime*, sought to remove the Revolution from the public memory by restoring lost honors and privileges to the nobility, who had been stripped of their ancient prerogatives after the events of 1789. He also held ceremonies designed as penance for the executions of Louis XVI and Marie-Antionette and, again in the words of Furet, “turned the revolutionary calendar upside down.” Subsequent events would prove this effort to revive the past in order to obliterate a more recent past, and force people to follow the resulting script, ineffectual and productive of further political upheaval. Unlike the cathedral at the center of Hugo’s novel, this was not a narrative that arose from collective need and effort but from narrowly defined personal and political agenda.

⁵ This occurred at the beginning of the First Restoration on May 2, 1814.

of skepticism but it would not have been strange. If the nation's past could be framed as narrative, so too could the relics of that past. Hugo asserts that *Nôtre Dame*, and buildings of its kind, are narratives that reveal the nation's history and can illuminate its present. However, though he contextualizes the cathedral at the center of *Nôtre Dame de Paris* in history, he also places it in the wider context of narrative as an intellectual enterprise that encompasses all others. If we view it this way, the cathedral transcends history (in addition to religion and politics) even though, as Hugo points out to us, it also embodies France's past and present.

The cathedral can achieve permanence both as a physical presence and a cultural construct if Hugo can convince people that it really is narrative and if he can make the case for the enduring value of a *medieval* narrative to a nation in the process of reconstructing itself and rewriting its past. He can show them that, though they may have been perverted by the uses to which successive generations of clergy and gentry had put them, cathedrals and other Gothic buildings had taken shape in the minds and hands of artisans and laborers generations before. A newly empowered people were now in a position to reclaim them. In fact, they were obligated to do so and accord them the reverence and care they deserved. However, his countrymen could lay claim to the great buildings of France only if they understood something of their own past and could trace the outlines of the intellectual and artistic development of their society as embodied in these buildings. Moreover, by once again overwriting the cathedral, this time with a narrative of his own, he could cause a new generation to see it as a literary setting. All of this could be accomplished through his novel—through narrative.

Nôtre Dame de Paris succeeds in attaching a fresh set of associations to the cathedral by filling its familiar and unfamiliar spaces with people and incidents of the author's own invention. The story of the repressed archdeacon who rescues a deformed orphan and subsequently harries another orphan, a gypsy girl, to an untimely death is a familiar one but it is worthwhile to sketch its outlines here, since I will refer to particular parts of it in my discussion. Dom Claude is in the grip of two major obsessions, the making of gold, and Esmeralda—and two cardinal sins: greed and lust. He immerses himself in cabalistic writings, which he has found in ancient manuscripts and on the cathedral itself, in hopes of learning the formula for making gold, while using Quasimodo as his accomplice to bring the girl, Esmeralda, into the cathedral and under his control. In spite of his attraction to her, he cannot forgive her for being repulsed by the spiritual deformity she detects in him and for being infatuated with a shallow young officer. He denounces her as a witch and, when she refuses to save herself by becoming his mistress in exchange for freedom, Dom Claude leaves her to the fate that he has ordained. When she is forced to take refuge in the cathedral, he tries without success to gain access to her, while the vagabonds of Paris, thinking Esmeralda has been imprisoned within the edifice, assail it in order to free her. Esmeralda is tried and convicted of sorcery, an ironic turn of events since her denouncer, the archdeacon, is himself rumored to be a sorcerer. Her sentence is death by hanging. In his effort to protect Esmeralda, who can never reciprocate his love because she is repulsed by his physical deformity, Quasimodo attacks the mob of vagabonds that assembles at Nôtre Dame to liberate her from the clutches of the executioner. Her protector wrongly assumes they are a mob of vigilantes seeking to

carry out Esmeralda's death sentence by their own means. She ultimately leaves the sanctuary of the cathedral.

Esmeralda later learns that she is the daughter of the town recluse, Sister Gudule, a woman who has added her voice to Dom Claude's in denunciation because, as a supposed gypsy, Esmeralda represents the people she has long held responsible for the kidnap and death of her infant daughter many years before. She tries to undo her successful effort to capture Esmeralda and call the authorities when she learns her identity but she is too late and her daughter is taken from her again, this time to be killed for certain. Sister Gudule dies of grief and Esmeralda is hanged.

Hugo's fiction was so unusual and so closely connected with the building that people could not help associating one with the other. The work was presented to the English public as The Hunchback of Nôtre Dame in 1833, when William Hazlitt's translation first allowed Hugo's novel to appear in English.⁶ The title placed greater emphasis on the imaginative story and on the gargoyle within Nôtre Dame than on the building. The French public had also received the novel as if the title really were The Hunchback of Nôtre Dame. They seized upon the story of Dom Claude, La Esmeralda, and Quasimodo, seeming to miss the various areas of exploration to which Hugo's careful research endeavored to lead them. For Hugo, these characters and the stories surrounding them are a means of broaching still other subjects. He understood that it was possible for his readers to enjoy the novel without contemplating the nature of narrative, or its relationship to architecture, but it was

⁶ Translator John Sturrock in this 1978 translation of Hugo's novel (London: The Penguin Group, 1978, p. 11) provides this information in his introduction and adds "The switch of attention from the cathedral to its weird inhabitant was understandable but unfortunate, since it also meant a switch of attention from the book's strength to its weaknesses, from its ideas to its plot."

clear that he wanted them to consider those subjects, and many others. His note to the eighth edition of 1832 invites those so inclined to look at the novel more carefully.^{iv}

The central plot of the novel is essentially a metaphor for the problem Hugo is trying to address. Through Hugo's presentation of the Archdeacon, one is lead to conclude that this character has failed in his role of custodian of the building and because of this, has become a danger to its future existence. He is actually exploiting it in a way that will eventually make it irrelevant and hasten its demise. The story of Dom Claude's drive to make gold, his relentless pursuit of Esmeralda, and his use of the intricacies of the building's structure to accomplish his goals place him in direct conflict with Church doctrine as presented on the cathedral walls and windows that surround him. Dom Claude's reading of the stone text also places him at variance with the novelist's own views concerning the right way to approach it.

What is to be the fate of an ecclesiastical building whose role as a promulgator of Catholic doctrine is no longer considered important? This is the very question Hugo attempts to influence his contemporaries to address. Dom Claude's study in one of the cathedral towers is a place loaded with books on astrology and mysticism, which circumvent Catholic doctrine. Hugo encourages the reader to examine the building for himself, even to the point of displaying areas that a member of the public, even in his own day, would not be able to access. The forth chapter in Book Seven, entitled "ΑΝΑΓΚΗ," shows how someone charged with the care of the building is determined to read only one part of it, how another has vandalized it, and provides an instance of someone trying to read both layers of the palimpsest that is formed from the religious text and the Greek words that are written over it.

We are allowed insight into the concept of destiny as it relates to misuse of the building and as it plays itself out in the fiction plot. Hugo uses the Greek word for the first time in the *Preface*. When we encounter it again in Book Seven, we still don't know what it means. By the time we have something resembling a definition, it is clumsily—or perhaps sarcastically—translated by the impecunious Jehan Frollo, who is about to ask Dom Claude for money, and who is expecting the usual lecture, into Latin: *fatum*. The problem with this is that the Greek word refers to necessity, like the hunger that forces Jehan to swallow his pride and ask his older brother for money, or the physical desire for Esmeralda that Dom Claude mistakenly—or perversely—thinks of as need. It is essentially a secular concept. *Fatum*, particularly in a medieval Catholic context, refers to an outcome that is foreordained by God and therefore unalterable. Why, then, does Hugo place these two words in such close contact? A possible answer lies in another word that is written on the wall just beneath ἀνάγκη – ἀναγκεία, a word that Jehan rightly translates as “impureté.”^v It characterizes Dom Claude's two “needs”: power, which he hopes to attain through the ability to make gold, and sexual attraction to Esmeralda, which threatens to violate his vow of chastity. His actions in response to necessity as he sees it sets circumstances in motion that he ultimately cannot control. In one instance, his actions in response to her rejection of his advances lead to the persecution of Esmeralda for practicing witchcraft, an accusation that once made cannot be recalled. (Since the burden of proof is on the accused, she is certain to be convicted and executed.) Dom Claude's impure desires set the creaking wheels of faulty jurisprudence in motion and bring about the death of an innocent. In the other, it

leads him to use the cathedral as a trap for Esmeralda and as a cabalistic text, which he must decipher.

Hugo takes issue with the idea that the cathedral can be seen, as Dom Claude sees it, more as a piece of parchment than as the writing itself. Once Dom Claude makes this conceptual step, it is only a matter of time before the words can be translated and abstracted from the “paper” on which they are written. Thus, the building becomes obsolete in his estimation, even though he is one of its appointed guardians. The religious narrative, codified in the physical features of the cathedral, is dismissed and the cathedral is no longer narrative. A sacred text that becomes a key to secular things, it is no longer permitted to represent transcendental truths and cannot speak for its own interests. As a means to an end, it will no longer be needed once the goal has been reached.

Dom Claude’s needs, then, threaten the cathedral with obsolescence, the very thing that in Hugo’s own day brought about the deliberate demolition and neglect of many of France’s Gothic buildings. This is the concept of *fatum* in operation as the inability to read the building correctly—i.e. in a constructive way—leads to its neglect and eventual destruction. However, in the following chapter, as Dom Claude urges his visitor, Jacques Charmolue, to “laissez faire la fatalité!”^{vi} one gets the unmistakable impression that Hugo is looking past the religious notion of foreordained circumstances to the idea that fate is not an absolute concept; one really *can* avert a chain of events. Otherwise Dom Claude would not have to make this statement. Thus, when we encounter the formulation that “le livre tuera l’édifice” after this scene, the sense of inevitability as conveyed by the future tense is as

profoundly undermined by the events that occur in Hugo's fiction as it is by the very existence of this novel. Dom Claude pities the fly being devoured by the spider but he won't allow Jacques to interfere. His remarks in response to the tiny drama being played out before the two men is to express pity in terms that are increasingly appropriate to his thoughts concerning the gypsy Esmeralda and to Hugo's fears about the fate of the cathedral:

Elle vole, elle est joyeuse, elle vient de naître ; elle cherche
le printemps, le grand air, la liberté ; oh ! oui, mais qu'elle
se heurte à la rosace fatale, l'araignée en sort, l'araignée
hideuse ! Pauvre danseuse ! pauvre mouche prédestinée !
Maitre Jacques, laissez faire la fatalité !^{vii}

Presumably like the fly, Esmeralda passes from an idyllic early life to one characterized by a search (for love in her case), to entrapment within the cathedral, to death. Dom Claude can predict her fate with the same stunning clarity with which he understands the fate of the fly. In the latter case, lack of interference in these events proves fatal; in the gypsy's case, Dom Claude's insistence on interfering in her life brings about her arrest, torture, and eventual execution. These scenarios illustrate the idea that evil can come in the form of interference or refusal to intervene in a course of events. Lest we forget the focus of this and most scenes in this novel, the word "rosace" reminds us of the cathedral; its physicality and fragility are conveyed by the reference to the rose window.

Five years before Nôtre Dame de Paris was rushed into publication, Hugo had inveighed against misguided department administrators whom he accused of authorizing the demolition of castles and other medieval buildings for the sake of

providing the poor with employment,⁷ or in order to erase feudalism and ecclesiastical excesses from the memories of the many who were oppressed by them. His main argument against such demolition was a simpler version of the argument he advances in the novel, namely that only people who could not read the building—or who, like Dom Claude, could not read it completely—could perpetrate such atrocities against themselves. After all, their own ancestors had financed and built these edifices. As I mentioned earlier, Hugo's approach to convincing those who read Nôtre Dame de Paris that Gothic buildings are narratives was to treat them as narratives from the outset. However, his strategy to save those buildings that remained was more complex; it involved constructing a new set of narratives, which he teaches us how to read. These would ultimately be the means through which to reconstruct the building in people's minds, as well as place it and all Gothic architecture in the company of other great intellectual endeavors. Gothic architecture could then find its niche in French culture.

To ensure the correct reading of the Gothic building, Hugo's novel assails the readings encouraged by one of its first enemies, neoclassicism, by appropriating its own vocabulary to describe the cathedral. Referring to *Nôtre Dame* as the “œuvre colossale d'un homme et d'un peuple, tout ensemble une et complexe comme les Iliades et les Romanceros⁸ dont elle est sœur,” he compares them to the songs of the troubadours and to the ancient and respected work of Homer. His mention of

⁷ Hugo, Victor. *Guerre aux Demolisseurs!* (1825) in Nôtre Dame de Paris. Ed. By S. de Sacy. Preface by Louis Chevalier. Paris: Gallimard, 1981.

⁸ *Romanceros*: according to the *Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Alex Preminger, ed., Princeton UP, 1986), these were collections of romances that first began to appear in written form in the early 16th century. Among the different categories of them are the *romanceros viejos*, “anonymous...primitive or traditional ballads, usually on historical themes and thought to be among the earliest, and the *romanceros eruditos*, “erudite ballads, written by known authors after 1550 and based on old chronicles”.(241)

Romanceros recalls the tradition of historical ballads begun in the middle ages to a nation just beginning to respond to the novels of Sir Walter Scott with a slowly awakening medievalism. As a medieval building, the cathedral appears to belong in the company of this form but Hugo very pointedly makes a comparison with Homer's *Iliad* and places this first. As a result, not only does this entire comparison link the cathedral to the unity of neoclassical forms, as well as to increasingly fashionable medieval poetry, the mention of the *Iliad* forcefully links the building to the venerable narrative tradition of classical antiquity.

The entire third book of the novel is an assertion that Gothic architecture as an art form is "logique et bien-proportionné,"^{viii} in addition to making the case for the cathedral's aesthetic correctness.

Ce que nous disons de l'église cathédrale de Paris,
il faut le dire de toutes les églises de la chrétienté
au moyen âge. Tout se tient dans cet art venu de
lui-même, logique et bien proportionné. Mesurer
l'orteil du pied c'est mesurer le géant.^{ix}

Considering the fact that even at the point when Hugo is writing, the word Gothic still connoted primitivism, irregularity of design,⁹ and lack of correct proportion in structure, the assertion made by the narrator in the quotation above must have been calculated to antagonize neoclassicists. It ascribes to the Gothic monument all of the major characteristics long claimed by proponents of Greco-Roman forms and describes a medieval building by asserting the superiority of the aesthetic principles that govern its design.

Hugo makes the case for the strong claim of Gothic art to veneration on the very grounds of rationality of design and structure that were used to exclude it from

⁹ see OED

such notice. For him, unity, proportion, and logic all belonged to it as well as to neoclassical art. The idea that these characteristics could be ascribed to one style and not to the other must have seemed patently absurd to him. In his catalogue of the abuses leveled against Nôtre Dame, it is clear that the vandalism he inveighs against throughout this novel is attributable not to the violent actions of revolutionaries in more recent times but to restorers of the eighteenth century at the height of the neoclassical ascendancy, and to their insistence on forcing medieval monuments to conform too literally to neoclassical ideals. Hugo appears to have considered those ideals in more abstract terms than the restoration architects he accuses of vandalizing Gothic buildings. He was therefore able to apply them to a wider range of art.

Yet, Hugo is not attempting to win acceptance for the cathedral entirely on neoclassical terms. In the chapter entitled *Nôtre-Dame*,^x Hugo obscures the cathedral's problematic, and increasingly mysterious religious narrative by pointing up its conformity with the new aesthetic of Romanticism, which had begun to value Gothic art as evocative of the Middle Ages. Readers beginning to become interested in the movement that had already taken firm root in England and Germany could read the cathedral as a Romantic text. Hugo himself had learned through reading Chateaubriand's Génie du Christianisme, and through his own observations during his travels, that Gothic architecture was grand and beautiful precisely because the style is of the place in which it is built, rather than having been transplanted from another region. Notre Dame belonged to the French landscape. In addition to appropriating traits for it that people might justly think of as exclusively neoclassical, Hugo refers to the cathedral as "majestueux et sublime," words that would

immediately have resonated with those caught up in the craze for the outsized and asymmetrical.

Moreover, since most of his readers could no longer read church iconography anyway, he asks them to read the architectural elements that comprise cathedrals and secular buildings with a view to learning some relevant terms and understanding something of the medieval aesthetic sensibility. The increasing popularity of the idea that the culture of the Middle Ages was richer and more replete with intellectual and artistic gifts than that of classical antiquity, a view Hugo did much to advance, or than its recent reincarnation in Europe, certainly made it possible for the novelist to undermine French classicism further by centering his novel on a building that it must surely have rejected. One of the many emphatic assertions this novel makes is that, rather than being a random act of crude artistic sensibility, or of strict necessity, *Nôtre Dame* is a “*symphonie en pierre*” - something created on the basis of a plan, possessing a clearly defined structure and needing to be taken on its own terms.

In his effort to convey these ideas to his readers, Hugo presents them with a familiar Gothic building. *Nôtre Dame* was a particularly good specimen both of the beauty of the Gothic and the abuse of neoclassicists. Indeed, many of his readers could go and examine it for themselves. Hugo's efforts to make both the novel and the building accessible influenced him to pursue the discussion of the architectural and artistic value of the cathedral in fairly ordinary terms in addition to introducing people to architectural terminology. This approach provided another means by which the novel could allow the cathedral at its center to plead its cultural relevance and to extend that plea to all French monuments under sentence of death:

Qu'a-t-on fait de ce charmant petit clocher qui
 s'appuyait sur le point d'intersection de la croisée,
 et qui...s'enfonçait dans le ciel plus avant que les
 tours, élancé, aigu, sonore, découpé à jour ? Un
 architect de bon gout (1787) l'a amputé et a cru
 qu'il suffisait de masquer la plaie avec ce large emplâtre
 de plomb qui ressemble au couvercle d'une marmite.^{xi}

Moreover, by tracing the development of the building and describing the kinds of changes to which it had been subjected, Hugo also showed people how to read the history and development of art in the physical characteristics of the cathedral. In this quotation, we can also observe how he traces a decline in medieval art as he points out to the reader that restoration architects, who ought to have known better, replaced a beautiful steeple with something that resembles a pot lid.

However, he left his readers to ponder the question: If the restoration architects who meant well are vandals, what, then, is one to think of the revolutionaries who actually wanted to destroy the cathedral? We are given a description of the building in terms of amputation, disfiguration, and wounds, rather than in the increasingly esoteric language of art.¹⁰ In the Preface, we are given the image of the cathedral with a scarred face, as if it too were a veteran of war. It is difficult not to view this as an oblique reference to the nation's recent, violent past and to the idea that the building was perhaps wrongly viewed as a participant and victimized as a result of that inaccurate perception. In focusing on restoration architects who meant well, Hugo placed people who didn't under greater scrutiny. His effort to discredit those who destroy in the name of Revolution is a way of advocating restraint and relies in part on the notion that no one would really want to

¹⁰ As we shall see, Jane Austen also rejects such language by defiantly creating a heroine who is wholly ignorant of it in Northanger Abbey.

identify with vandals. After all, the term was borrowed from descriptions of the destruction of the great accomplishments of classical antiquity. It had even been used by those who identified with classicism to denigrate the partisans of Romanticism.¹¹ Yoked as it sometimes was with the word 'Goths,'¹² it would certainly have retained the same intensely negative connotations.

But Hugo was also busily at work on the connotations of the word 'Gothic'. Rather than convey only ideas of ignorance and crudeness, it could take on additional meanings in a narrative context in which buildings described as Gothic are shown to be beautiful, complex, and intelligent in design. Moreover, since neoclassicism was closely identified with the elites of the *ancien régime* who were discredited by the Revolution, the Gothic in France, as it was in England, could be identified with the lower classes. Writers influenced by Hugo would learn, among other things, that Gothic art, as represented by the cathedral, is the art of the people. In its beauty, it is possible to read the accomplishments of craftsmen of all ranks and descriptions. Buildings are thereby separated from the symbolism of feudal and ecclesiastical oppression and appropriated by a secular, independent entity: the people.

Embedded in the idea of Gothic art as the art of the people is the idea of their inherent genius and greatness. They are an active force in the culture of France, just

¹¹ Biographer Alfred Barbou, in his 1882 account of Hugo's life and work remarks that "the most eminent critics did not scruple to denounce the romantics as slovens, rascals, drunkards, and madmen". (in *Victor Hugo and his Time*. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1882. 102) Moreover, he asserts that Hugo even received death threats for the drama "Hernani," the language of which many neoclassicists found objectionable on grounds of vulgarity and lack of taste. As he points out: "Countless also were the pamphlets published about the 'rococos' armed for war against the vandal partisans of the Goth." (103) The conflict between the two schools, then, was heated and Hugo's vehement and seemingly antagonistic language in *Notre Dame de Paris* is more comprehensible in this context. The use of pamphlets, the constant threat of violence, and the vehemence of those on both sides can be seen as a re-enactment of the Revolution in the realm of art.

¹² See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for 'vandal'.

as they had become an active force in the political life of the nation in Hugo's day. He reminds his readers that the characteristics of the ordinary Frenchman of recent memory that allowed him to rise up against injustice and change the government belonged to his forbears as well. The people of France are frequently depicted in Hugo's novel as a sea or an ocean in token of the idea of their unity and of their inexorable, uncontrollable movement. He is highlighting the immense impact of the concerted effort of great numbers of ordinary people on challenging situations. But just like the cathedral at the center of the novel, as a crowd they are "*une et complexe* [my italics]," in token of their diversity of views and abilities.

Hugo conveys a strong impression of the stunning defeats that are likely when that inexorable multitude is not in possession of useful knowledge. The scene in the novel that depicts the attack of the vagabonds against the cathedral is bound to inspire frustration because it exhibits the wasted potential of an ignorant, ill-informed mob. Yet, time and again, in this novel, there are examples of the determination and resourcefulness of the seemingly powerless. The existence of the Court of Miracles, the place from which the vagabonds emerge, provides scope for the perversion of the people's potential but it also highlights the level of organization, autonomy, and self-containment achieved by this little underworld. We see its citizens mobilized as an army that sets forth to attack the cathedral and its clergy in order to liberate one of their members. And we see them defeated by deafness and misunderstanding.

Hugo's treatment of the crowd as a concept and as a sort of collective character in the novel reflects a way of thinking that is crystallized in Michelet's History of the French Revolution of 1847. In this work, the culmination of a lifetime

of teaching and writing, the author pinpoints one of the fundamental changes in French society that permits the Revolution to take place:

L'unité reposait jusque-là sur l'idée d'incarnation, religieuse ou politique. Il fallait un dieu humain, un dieu de chair, pour unir l'Eglise ou l'Etat. L'humanité, faible encore, plaçait son union dans un signe, un signe visible, vivant, un homme, un individu. – Désormais l'unité, plus pure, dispensée de cette condition matérielle, sera dans l'union des cœurs, la communauté d'esprit, le profond mariage de sentiments et d'idées qui se fait de tous avec tous.^{xii}

Once people can dispense with the human representation of basic beliefs and values and rely instead on the sharing of ideas and sentiments to bring about a sense of common ground, the human beings whose power, wealth, and access to information made them the point of reference for everyone become obsolete. Louis XVI was all the more easily executed because he no longer embodied the greatness of France. The symbols of revolution would also need to be put to rest in favor of a more lasting one round which the French could rally and continue to experience a sense of community. Clearly of the opinion that something like this was still needed to represent the unity and greatness of the people collectively, Hugo supplies architecture. His insistence on making French Gothic buildings fulfill the role of rallying point for the French people may seem strange at first, since they came under such vehement attack. Yet because they were buildings, and therefore essentially unchanging unless interfered with, they could supplant both Pope and King if the people could learn to view them as their own, and as the nation's achievement. What was different in this case is the idea that the politically empowered population, this

inexorable sea, would flow in a new direction, and turn away from mindless destruction.

Hugo wanted his contemporaries to understand that because the ordinary people are a force of nature, they can simply let things happen or change the course of events. The concept of fatality, a motif that runs throughout this novel, is shown by this approach to be a sham, an abdication of responsibility and the repudiation of free will, with which everyone is equipped. Michelet reminds his contemporaries of Rousseau's reverberating words to the people of France: " 'Votre volonté collective, c'est la Raison elle-même.' Autrement dit : Vous êtes dieux. ”^{xiii} As with Dante, who assigns a special place in the *Inferno* for those who refuse to take sides in moral and political issues, with Hugo, refusal to use one's free will is a perversion of the human mind. At bottom is his belief that nothing happens as a result of accident or divine intervention so that whatever happens in France, whatever *has* happened there, is the result of the choices made by its people. Hence the vehemence with which he often addresses his readers. He is hoping the choices they make will conform to his own dearly held beliefs about the role Gothic buildings should play in the France that was struggling to emerge in the nineteenth century: " Le livre architectural n'appartient plus au sacerdoce, à la religion, à Rome; il est à l'imagination, à la poesie, au peuple. ”^{xiv} Hugo wants his readers to understand and appreciate the idea that medieval buildings represent a national architecture: " Inspirons, s'il est possible, à la nation l'amour de l'architecture nationale ”^{xv} and, as history narrated in stone, they also embody *national* history.

But, having discussed the ways in which Hugo attempted to point people to different readings of the cathedral as narrative, it is important to pause here and look at Hugo's approach to narrative itself. Since such buildings embodied narratives that were no longer acceptable to the French people, Hugo created new ones to overlay them. The idea that Gothic architecture is text and can be layered, erased, elaborated upon, and deciphered persists through the volumes that comprise this novel as he asserts the close affinity all texts bear to one another, always using the cathedral as the point of departure and as the point of reference. He emphasizes the idea of an equation of building and narrative, and superimposes his fiction and the story of the building's development as a work of art on the building's religious narrative. In this way, Hugo presents a palimpsest whose topmost layer can capture the imagination and hold the reader's attention the way the first layer (that of religious doctrine and ritual) no longer can. At the same time, he uses several episodes to illustrate how narrative works. One effect of doing this is that the resulting novel showed the building's versatility and potential to remain relevant in rapidly changing times, while it demonstrated the novel's ability to address difficult and abstract subjects and various forms of narrative.

Nôtre Dame de Paris is a demonstration of the palimpsest concept on another artistic plane – that of prose fiction narrative. Like the cathedral, the novel itself is a constructed object, created according to a defined plan and purpose, a layered text composed of layered texts, all of which remain coherent because Hugo acts on his belief in their interrelatedness. He speaks of one kind of narrative using the words normally associated with another. Books, symphonies, buildings, cities, religions,

and histories all share their origins in concerted human participation, in the meeting of minds and in human creativity and destructiveness. These factors remain constant from one generation to the next, stopping in their progress through the ages only long enough to change their modes of expression. The printed book is one manifestation of this, the cathedral another:

La pensée humaine en changeant de forme allait
changer mode d'expression, que l'idée capitale
de chaque génération ne s'écrirait plus avec la
même matière et de la même façon que le livre
de pierre, si solide et si durable, allait faire place
au livre de papier, plus solide et plus durable encore.^{xvi}

Contained in his assertion in Book Three that architecture is writing in stone, and in his frequently repeated formula, “le livre tuera l'édifice,” is the idea that a shift in the medium of public expression occurs with the invention of the printing press. Whereas the stones of the Gothic building were permanent enough to satisfy the need to codify ideas and preserve them for successive ages, the printing press allows ideas still greater permanence—and mobility. Once the works of controversial thinkers are printed in books, they can be reproduced in large numbers and disseminated to a wider audience. They can also be reproduced repeatedly and indefinitely, and can assume a variety of different forms, presenting themselves as new each time.

At times, Hugo's palimpsests—his novel and the cathedral—seem likely to collapse into one another; they even seem mutually destructive, as the printing press threatens to render the building as meeting place obsolete and as the weight of this enormous and complex stone text threatens the coherence of the novel. Hugo presented the book and the building as manifestations of narrative that were in direct conflict with one another. The idea appears as early as the Preface when he refers to

the word ἀνάγκη, which has been carved into a wall of the cathedral, as “une stigmaté de crime”,^{xvii} and as a scar on its face. Notre Dame is depicted here as a martyr that, somewhat defiantly, continues to exist and proclaim its suffering at the hand of the written word. Hugo seems to assert that the cathedral itself and its religious significance will eventually be effaced by the written word. This idea comes into full flower when, as he points to a printed book, then to the cathedral, Dom Claude utters the words that echo throughout the novel: “Ceci tuera cela, le livre tuera l’édifice”. Later on, the narrator states that “La presse tuera l’église”^{xviii} and that “L’imprimerie tuera l’architecture.”^{xix} With each repetition of this formula throughout the novel, it becomes easier to comprehend why it was that the first revolutionary impulse of the French masses was to attack the Bastille and why one of the last was to desecrate Nôtre Dame de Paris with a pagan ceremony. Rapid dissemination of revolutionary ideas through pamphlets and journals permitted people to learn about and discuss ideas anywhere, without having to resort to town halls or churches. The information and exhortations such publications contained kindled public anger against the state and the Church, endangering both, along with their symbols. However, Hugo does not see the destruction of medieval buildings as inevitable. While he sends the messages about print leading to the demise of architecture, he presents the cathedral to us—in print—as the culmination of an art form, aided in the achievement of artistic sophistication by ordinary artisans, and worthy of continued existence on that basis alone.

Through this approach, the reader is sent the message that dismissing buildings like Nôtre Dame as the servants of oppressors denies their multi-faceted

nature. Their importance to a culture's self-awareness transcends the ways in which they have been misused. The effect of looking at Nôtre Dame through the lens of the fiction was to create new significance for symbols that had lost their original liturgical meanings. In associating the two constructs, narrative and cathedral, Hugo implies that the basic structure of the one is mirrored in that of the other and that the cathedral was a complex text that lent itself to a great variety of readings. The reader can see how the Gothic building and indeed all buildings, communicate with the surrounding culture as Hugo manipulates the messages the cathedral sends both to the reader and to the characters within the novel:

L'architecture commença comme toute écriture. Elle fut d'abord alphabet. On plantait une pierre debout, et c'était une lettre, et chaque lettre était un hiéroglyphe, et sur chaque hiéroglyphe reposait un groupe d'idées comme le chapiteau sur la colonne.^{xx}

The Gothic building is constructed by ideas¹³ as much as it is the result of the placement of one stone upon another. Dom Claude's use of the building demonstrates some ways in which Hugo elaborates this concept, adding more detail to the equation of building and written word, and more specifically, to the equation of sacred building and sacred scripture. Sacred scripture and the language of geometry combine to form a product of unique power:

Tandis que Dédale, qui est la force, mesurait, tandis qu'Orphée, qui est l'intelligence, chantait, le pilier qui est une lettre, l'arcade qui est une syllabe, la pyramide qui est un mot, mis en mouvement à la fois par une loi de géométrie et par une loi de poésie, se groupaient, se combinaient, s'amalgamaient, descendaient, montaient, se juxtaposaient sur le sol, s'étagaient dans le ciel, *jusqu'à ce qu'ils eussent écrit, sous la dictée de l'idée générale d'une époque* [my italics], ces livres

¹³ This is perhaps a good moment to recall Émile Mâle's remark in The Gothic Image about the Gothic cathedral developing as Catholic doctrine was being formulated.

merveilleux qui étaient aussi de merveilleux édifices : la pagode d'Eklinga, le Rhamseïon d'Egypte, le temple de Salomon...
 Le temple de Salomon...n'était point simplement la reliure du livre saint, il était le livre saint lui-même.^{xxi}

This quotation illustrates Hugo's heightened awareness of architecture as an essentially linguistic enterprise that takes different shapes in various ages. The notion of ideas being written according to prevailing ideas of how best to present them implies that they are constant or recurrent and brings us back to Vico and his ideas that myths tell essentially the same stories in different languages. It also shows how he progresses from this awareness to the assertion that Solomon's Temple is a sacred text. He does not speak of architecture in metaphorical terms or as something similar to language and literature; architecture *is* language and, at the apogee of its development, it is narrative.

Because Hugo views it in terms of its different manifestations, such as buildings, symphonies, and epic poetry, we must bear in mind that narrative is not just object. It is event. It can come into being unexpectedly, arise unbidden from the situation at hand, or be deliberately called into being. One must be alert to those moments when there is an opportunity or a demand for the presentation and reception of it in whatever form it comes. Hugo's mention of troubadour and epic poetry can serve to remind us that they too arise from specific conditions that permit narrative to be presented to an audience willing to be entertained by it—an audience that could even have explicitly requested it. The same is true of narrative history of the kind being developed in the nineteenth century. Nations facing crises of various kinds found themselves in need of the sort of narrative that would remind them of who they were and what they had already accomplished as a people.

In the novel, the character Gringoire's near-death experiences on two occasions gives readers a sense of the importance of narrative when he offers the wrong one at crucial moments in his interactions with people who have the power to take his life. In essence, the poet is asked to create a narrative that will bridge the supposed social and intellectual distance between him and his interlocutors but he offers one that highlights his sense of separateness from them instead. He has wandered into the Court of Miracles, an area that is hostile to him because he is not among its usual denizens. He must talk his way out of danger by creating a sense of kinship between himself and the vagabonds who view him as an outsider in much the same way that Hugo himself must offer his readers a narrative that will convince them that the cathedral belongs in their image of a new France. Gringoire fails and the vagabonds, whose main concern is that an outsider is in their midst, decide that he must therefore be killed. His inability to give a complete picture of the circumstances that lead to his presence in the Court of Miracles, a section of town that belongs to the criminals and vagabonds of Paris, nearly causes his death. In fact, his first words: "je suis celui qui ce matin,"^{xxxii} suggest that he will sidestep the question—"Qu'as tu à dire pour ta défense?"^{xxxiii}—altogether and seek recognition of his status as a poet from someone manifestly uninterested in his identity. His insistence on identifying himself—as an author, no less¹⁴—gets him a sentence to be hanged, while the underworld king's persistent interruptions prevent full disclosure. When, after the

¹⁴ I have begun to toy with the idea that Hugo uses this incident to express resistance to the idea that one can make the creation of narrative a profession in the same way that the work of the visual artist and artisan had begun to be taken out of the hands of ordinary people and placed in the hands of professionals—more specifically, academics. As something belonging to and vital to everyone, narrative did not need to be the province of such people; it did, however, require someone of some intelligence who can be attentive to such issues as context and structure.

sentence of death has been passed, he finally has a chance to say who he is, the uselessness of the information becomes glaringly evident:

Ah ! c'est toi, maitre ! dit Clopin. J'y étais, ...
 eh bien ! camarade, est-ce une raison, parce que
 tu nous as ennuyés ce matin, pour ne pas être pendu
 ce soir ?^{xxiv}

In every instance in which Gringoire attempts to use his life story to escape death, he not only fails but he also provokes his interlocutor to expedite the death sentence. Through Gringoire's experience with the vagabonds of Paris, Hugo expresses the idea that narrative, very much like a cathedral, is a construct that emerges from a given context and exists for very particular reasons. The character's failure to supply narrative where needed, and his tendency to offer the wrong one constitutes a missed opportunity to expand dialogue and facilitate communication and can destroy where it had the opportunity to build. This is the point Hugo is trying to make with regard to the cathedral. The religious narrative provokes just indignation on the part of the French people at the ways in which the Church perverted its role for its own benefit at the expense of the people it should have helped. The other narratives embodied by the building must be shared as a means of counterbalancing this effect.

There is an instance in which Hugo carefully provides a paradigm of narrative that echoes the structure of the cathedral when some women trace the origin of a friend's extreme fear of gypsies to an elaborate story of a kidnapping and supposed child-murder. The narrative that emerges is explicitly requested by its audience. The narrator is careful to give full context for the events that unfold within it and to gauge and direct the response of her hearers. The result is rich in detail, full of emotion, and

able to make the attitude of the woman who fears gypsies understandable and even justifiable.

We are allowed to accompany three bourgeois women,¹⁵ two Parisian and one provincial, to the cell of the recluse Sister Gudule, to whom they plan to give a corn cake. Their attention is temporarily diverted from their mission of charity (and curiosity-seeking) by their notice of Esmeralda's presence in the area. When Mahiette the provincial hears that Esmeralda is a gypsy, she immediately attempts to run, dragging her young son to supposed safety. This seemingly unreasonable reaction prompts her companions to ask her to explain the origin of her fears of gypsies as child-stealers. The need for the telling of Mahiette's story emerges in this way from the place and events that the three women encounter.

Their personalities, necessarily drawn with broad strokes since they are minor characters, are formed through their social status and their places of residence. Though a provincial, Mahiette identifies herself as a citizen of a cathedral town in an attempt to place it on par with Paris and as a way of conveying the idea that she is as sophisticated as her Parisian counterparts. She is also using the information as a means of asserting her authority as a narrator. The presence of the gypsy causes her to flee in terror, and her reaction leads her companions to observe that the recluse hates gypsies as violently as Mahiette fears them. Her willingness to speak, compared with the recluse's determined silence (except in the expression of her hatred), provides an opportunity for her hearers—and for Hugo's readers—to gain insight into both the hatred and the fear. The events leading up to the telling of the

¹⁵ In Book Six of Nôtre Dame de Paris, in the chapter entitled "Histoire d'une Galette au Levain de Mais".

story make it possible by bringing it to the storyteller's consciousness and placing it in context.

As Mahiette's relation progresses, it becomes evident that the story she tells is the story of Gudule and Esmeralda, the gypsy she loathes. The stories of Esmeralda's mysterious origins and of the recluse's mysterious past are reconciled through this single narrative and, instead of a digression, the reader is treated to a revelation that comes to the characters themselves much too late. All of this emanates from a trip to a recluse's cell. Hugo reminds us here that, stories originate from places and from the needs of the people who occupy them. He demonstrates the interrelationship between narrative and life, history and present, while he demonstrates his talent for linking stories and controlling a sprawling narrative structure. Mahiette's narrative provides a means of consolidating two lines of sub-plot, namely the story of the recluse, and the true identity of the gypsy girl.

The narrative also has a complex structure reminiscent of that of the cathedral at the center of the novel. Its foundation is the background information about the family and early life of La Chantefleurie given at the outset. In this part of the narrative, we learn that its subject is a young girl of decent family, according to the standards of her milieu, that though vain, she did not appear inclined to vice until the death of her father leaves her and her mother destitute and she turns to prostitution to support them. Mahiette's careful building of additional context for the story arises from her desire to make its tragic end all the more poignant. She is attempting to illustrate a steady slide from light-hearted optimism to despair and tragedy. By telling of the circumstances that lead to the young girl's downfall, she makes it

difficult for her hearers to detach themselves from the story and feel unable to identify with it. As a result, along with its purpose, foundation, and careful ordering of information, Mahiette's tale also provides a way into its world through human frailty and the universality of misfortune. Indeed, she keeps a close rein on her story, allowing no interruptions except her own occasional interjections: "La Malheureuse!"^{xxv} – which serve her hearers as cues for appropriate reactions to forthcoming pathetic circumstances.

She also insists on telling her story in what she considers the appropriate order. Oudarde, the other listener, understands the need to tell the story in the linear and chronological sequence established by Mahiette and therefore urges her to resist Gervaise's impatience to know immediately how the story will relate to gypsies and kidnapping:

Un moment donc, Gervaise! dit Oudarde don't
l'attention était moins impatiente. Qu'est-ce qu'il
y aurait à la fin si tout était au commencement ?
Continuez, Mahiette, je vous prie. Cette pauvre
Chantefleurie!^{xxvi}

Hugo's narrator describes this character as having more patience and, in effect, as being better able to pay attention to a narrative told according to the teller's technique. As a more responsible listener, she ensures that the narrator is not made to stray from her original plan and that the narrative is not dismantled to serve her shortsighted purpose. Her response to "pauvre Chantefleurie" is also a clear indication that she is following the storyteller's cues and perhaps is processing the train of events in the same way she is. The impression conveyed by these circumstances is that, though both listeners can understand and enjoy the story, only

one of them is aware that the story needs to be told in a particular way in order to be more than simply entertaining. Oudarde realizes that if the story is to afford its listeners useful insight, its structure is almost as important as its content. These circumstances reflect the plight of the Gothic building, wrenched as it is from its original context. As a religious narrative in the nineteenth century, it is incomprehensible and incomplete, as an historical one, it is extremely provocative. Hugo's novel attempts to place it in its religious, aesthetic, historical, and social contexts so that he can show the reader how all of them contributed to the creation of the building, just as Mahiette must introduce background material about *la Chantefleurie*'s early life and changes of circumstance in order to enable her hearers to experience the full effect of her pathetic story.

In addition to being a paradigm of both oral and stone narrative, the story of *La Chantefleurie* is an illustration of Hugo's ability to make narrative operate at more than one level simultaneously. Within its own world, it can please the mainly curious and it can also satisfy the hearer who enjoys the narrative process as well as the insight it conveys. In the context of Hugo's views on narrative and on the form his novel should take, it holds the suggestion that a story needs a reason to be told. It also needs a scheme for the unfolding of events that exploits their communicative value. Interesting to note is the fact that the opportunity for the sharing of a narrative in this instance arises from what initially appears to be an unrelated circumstance, the charity visit to Sister Gudule and the sighting of Esmeralda in the area.

Gringoire's case, on the other hand, is an example of the dangers encountered when one is unable or unwilling to present the needed narrative. From a broader

perspective, the entire novel can be seen in the light of a narrative presented at the moment in France when the issue of what to do with palaces, cathedrals, and abbeys confiscated from nobles and from the Church was being discussed and when many of them were being demolished to repair fences or to give unemployed people something to do.¹⁶ In the context of the buildings themselves, Hugo's treatment of Nôtre Dame cathedral allowed him to present it as a narrative as well – one that emerged in the Middle Ages in response to a set of imperatives, which were completely different from those of his day. As such, it naturally needed to be reconstructed in the nineteenth century because circumstances had arisen that had fundamentally altered the world in which cathedrals had existed up to that point.

Michelet expresses a similar idea in Histoire de la Révolution Française, asserting, “ Dans tout moment de défaillance où nous semblons nous oublier, c'est là que nous devons nous chercher, nous ressaisir. ”^{xxxxvii} Extreme social and political circumstances give rise to a need to reconstruct the past as a means of placing the present in some kind of perspective. The narrative that emerges from the search for the past also becomes a means of restoring collective memory and retrieving identity. Only a foundation narrative, one that directly or indirectly describes origins of people and circumstances can provide these benefits. Michelet envisions this search for self in Vico's sense of a collective past pieced together by an entire society, not just one man. It is a narrative of the past whose units, be they stones or words, be they sung or spoken, be they spontaneously composed or assembled from stories already in circulation, are uttered for the sake of the beauty of language as much as for the sake

¹⁶ See Hugo's *Guerre aux Demolisseurs!* (1832) in the edition of Notre Dame de Paris that is cited throughout this chapter. [Notre Dame de Paris. Ed. by S. de Sacy. Paris: Gallimard. 1974. 655]

of communication of truth—or perhaps their beauty lies in the fact that they strive for truth. As the product of a particular culture, epic, romance, architecture, etc. are, as Hugo expresses it:

produit prodigieux de la cotisation de toutes les forces
d'une époque, où sur chaque pierre on voit saillir en
cent façons la fantaisie de l'ouvrier disciplinée par le
génie de l'artiste ; sorte de création humaine, en un mot,
puissante et féconde comme la création divine dont elle
semble avoir dérobé le double caractère : variété, éternité.^{xxxiii}

Tinged as it is with revolutionary rhetoric, this is the foundation myth of the Gothic building in the nineteenth century and of modern France. Hugo influences readers to associate the cathedral at the center of the novel with a new myth of the French nation and the genesis of the French citizen. Using his chosen historical period, he can re-create the people in the revolutionary image and establish a precedent for their behavior. In this way, Hugo provided context and justification for the Revolution in a political context in which its accomplishments were being undermined or called into question. Like that of the Revolution, the story of the cathedral is a story of collective accomplishment, of unity under the banner of an ideal, and of the building itself as a lasting monument to a set of heroes never lauded in epic: the common man, the worker and artist combined within the one category. Moreover, reading it this way means that one can dispense with an attempt at religious interpretation of the images and symbols that comprise it, without dispensing with the images and symbols themselves, because the motifs of Gothic art are themselves the elements of their own myth, even as they also point to a mysticism and myth that pre-date Christianity. He recalls to collective memory the image of the artisan, the artist who is a craftsman rather than the artist as academic, the paradigm that gained official status with the

creation of the Académie Française. Rather than derive from divine creation, the story that is the cathedral is a human creation that parallels it. Therefore, the Gothic building is not the enemy any more than the epic poem; it is self.

Hugo implies that the language of myth, especially as embodied by the cathedral and by the story of the French people that emerges from both the historical context and the fiction, is essentially poetic and permits the narration of actual events in the language of image. Notre Dame de Paris once told the story of Christianity to the middle ages, just as any hymn, chant, or homily would, but in much richer detail. It is sacred scripture encoded in stone, glass, and wooden imagery. Like the pyramids and Solomon's temple, Notre Dame is a sacred text created in the language available to the age in which it was built; its images and symbols comprise a creation narrative that establishes the origins of the Christian faith and the world it has created.

In examining Notre Dame de Paris, we encounter very similar ideas to those brought to the fore in our look at Vico, namely that mythmaking is a form of historiography, which is shaped by the age that uses it and, to an extent, by the age being described. This idea may be inverted, that is to say, historiography can be viewed as mythopoesis, an idea touched upon in earlier chapters in this study. That Hugo should share Vico's perspective is natural enough in light of the fact that he worshipped François René de Chateaubriand, who, like Jules Michelet, was himself heavily influenced by *La Scienza Nuova* and by the Italian author's other works. Like Vico, Hugo sees myth and fable as the true histories because their structures, language, and symbolism communicate more about the thoughts of a long gone society than would a self-conscious effort on the part of that society to prepare a

history for its own posterity. As Chateaubriand points out: “ Dans son ouvrage de la Science nouvelle, Vico, laissant de côté l'histoire particulière des peuples, posa les fondements de l'histoire générale de l'espèce humaine. ”^{xxxix} We have seen that the thoughts behind actions, circumstances, and events are of greater importance to the historians emerging in the nineteenth century than were the prominent political figures and acts of the government that dominated eighteenth century historiography. According to Chateaubriand, such new writing, such myths comprise the mirror in which a society (and age) seeks its own reflection. Chateaubriand reminds us in his Études Historiques (1831) that post-Revolutionary French society was ready to see itself in the story of France, that in response to the events surrounding the Revolution in its various manifestations, a new narrative needed to be constructed:

Ce qui nous blesse aujourd'hui surtout, en lisant
Nôtre histoire passée, c'est de ne pas nous y rencontrer.
La France est devenue républicaine et plébienne,
de royale et aristocratique qu'elle était. Avec l'esprit
d'égalité qui nous maîtrise, la présence exclusive de
quelques nobles dans nos fastes nous irrite ; nous nous
demandons si nous ne valons pas mieux que ces gens-là,
si nos pères n'ont point compté dans les destinées de
nôtre patrie. Une réflexion devrait nous calmer. (97)

The reflection is as much an event as the history that gives rise to it. This view looks askance at Enlightenment history since it has always tended to avoid the symbolic language and myths of the peoples it focuses on. Moreover, it has always tended to focus on those who were directly involved in historical events, not those affected by them. It is no wonder then, that in consideration of the great pre-Revolutionary French historians, Hugo should assert that Nôtre Dame de Paris “ n’a aucune prétension historique... ”^{xxx} He refers to the three chapters that were restored to the

novel in the second edition of 1832 as containing thoughts on aesthetics and philosophy.¹⁷

Another fundamental characteristic of the historiography of the eighteenth century, as we observed in Chapter One of this study, is its emphasis on established fact. It ultimately seeks to create the definitive story of the past for future generations as well as for its own present. Myth does not carry that presumption with it because of its position outside the bounds of strict chronology. For this reason, it is flexible enough to admit changes to the material that comprises it without losing its power to reflect a society's image and beliefs truthfully. Yet, his emphasis on the history of the building and on Paris through the ages to his own present indicate his concern for the accurate presentation of the past, as well as his preoccupation with the cathedral. As Ainsworth would later do, Hugo researched his chosen time period and building very carefully.

Through history and through the idea of the cathedral as the stone narrative of French intellectual development, Hugo could discuss the things he felt were really important, such as philosophy, art, and the real role of the masses in a civilized society. His focus is not on presentation of fact but on exploration of truth about his age and its relationship to the past and to its Gothic architectural heritage. Moreover, it is an attempt at the faithful depiction of fifteenth century attitudes more than it is about the events that occurred at that time; it therefore does not fall neatly into the category of history in the traditional sense that we have already explored. Truth is a

¹⁷ These chapters fell victim to the July Revolution of 1830, when, hastily removing himself and his family from a home that was too close to the action, he left behind a note book contain this material. Contemporary biographer Alfred Barbou (see note 6) reminds us that the omitted chapters were not restored to the work until the eighth edition in 1832. (p. 136)

philosophical pursuit, not a historical one; according to Hegel, it is timeless: "Philosophy has to do with the eternally present."^{xxx} A historian who takes this approach will produce a narrative of the past that constantly refers to present circumstances. The exploration of history becomes a search for self and for evidence that the mindset of the present day has a precedent—a tacit assertion that history is cyclical or spiral in nature in the same way that myth embodies the sense of an endless return of circumstances throughout time. Hugo and the other novelists in this study attempt to give this same ability to engage in philosophical exploration to the novel form and to Gothic architecture by concerning them with issues like history and national identity that were reserved for more formal presentation in essays, lectures, and treatises, or that weren't presented at all.

Yet, if Hugo insists, as he does, that Nôtre Dame de Paris is not history, what is the point of looking back in this novel? The answer lies in part in the words of Michelet.^{xxxi} Present circumstances provide the pretext for exploration of the past. Historical fiction in Europe emerges from crisis in the form of the French Revolution.¹⁸ The Revolution itself and the events surrounding it can be credited with profound changes in Western Europe's basic assumptions about itself, since it forced people everywhere to contemplate the concepts of nationhood, citizenship, the nature and legitimacy of monarchy, absolutism, freedom, rights, equality, and

¹⁸ Among many other scholars, both Eric Hobsbawm and Georg Lukács make this case in their respective works, The Age of Revolution and The Historical Novel. There was another important revolution thirteen years before. Why didn't that one create drastic change in Europe? Certainly, it did have the effect of placing rebellion of that kind within the realm of possibility but the War of American Independence was fought, initially at least, over taxes, profits, and political representation in exchange for taxation. It was more economical than ideological. The revolution in France was driven by popular demand for the means of subsistence and the right to basic dignity and equality with the rest of humanity. It was therefore able to garner support from a wide swath of the European public.

wholesale political and social instability. History therefore becomes more than a question of what happened long ago.

Hugo must make his readers acquainted with their long history if the nation and its Gothic buildings are to survive. According to Hegel: "The relation of the individual to that Spirit [of the Nation] is that he appropriates to himself this substantial existence; that it becomes his character and capability, enabling him to have a definite place in the world—to be something."^{xxxiii} History in this scheme is entirely bound up in national and personal identity. Hugo approached historiography as a creative act that aimed to lower the barrier between the individual and society. He persuades his readers to see the nation's collective accomplishment—i.e. the construction of the cathedral—as the natural result of the characteristics of the individuals who comprise the French nation. Once he can use the notion that the Gothic building is a narrative, which was created by an entire society (and not just by the need of its elites to express their dominance) to open people's minds to the possibility that the Gothic building in its original form represents more than just a target for revolutionary furor, he can help readers to form an intellectual and emotional connection with it. They can develop an appreciation for the Gothic building as something of importance to the national image: "Nations are what their deeds are."^{xxxiv} If a nation happens to have built Nôtre Dame, it must possess greatness that transcends religious or political upheaval. Therefore, its past needs to be explored.

Like Vico and Hegel, Hugo tended to view history as timeless—not outside of time but encompassing all time in the way that any intellectual pursuit that searches

for truth is timeless. In Hugo's representation, the lower classes in the fifteenth century exhibit traits that will be called forth again in the eighteenth century, with the Revolution as the result. He asks and answers the question of what was different in the fifteenth century by showing us how the crowd that confronts the cathedral is defeated by its members' inability to read the situation they faced correctly. Their destructive impulse arises from ignorance similar, but not identical, to the ignorance of the 'demolishers' of his day.

Connecting the cathedral with the vagabonds' efforts to rescue Esmeralda from the grasp of an unjust legal system and from a Church that was in compliance with its excesses seems to convey the idea that the building is complicit in the abuses that took place in and around it. However, Hugo complicates this idea by having the attack on the cathedral precipitated by the fact that the vagabonds are unaware that the gypsy is actually safe and by the fact that Quasimodo mistakes their effort to ensure her safety for an attack. His retaliation to supposed aggression produces the aggression from which it becomes necessary to defend the cathedral. In the midst of all this, the building becomes associated with both groups of rejected people who risk death for what they believe to be right. Hugo can say with some justification that Notre Dame de Paris has no historical pretensions because of his novel perspective; he is looking beyond chronology and the unfolding of successive events to the human spirit in an effort to find commonality and greatness there—a greatness that will not permit the destruction of great buildings in response to temporary and temporal injustice.

He interweaves the cathedral with the plot and, at the same time, makes the role of the cathedral ambiguous. By placing it in a fictional context, the author allows the reader to see that it's capacity to facilitate good or evil depends on how it is used. For the vagabonds, it is the instrument of arbitrary authoritarianism. For Quasimodo, it is the nest in which he was raised; for Dom Claude, it is a book of spells and a prison that reminds us of the mysterious domain of the Gothic villain in other fictions; for Esmeralda, it is a place of sanctuary. The interconnecting stories of Quasimodo, Dom Claude, and Esmeralda unfold in and around the building in ways that allow the reader a deeper, more detailed acquaintance with its potential uses and physical characteristics.

Quasimodo, the other fixture in this setting, is a character whose deformity physically connects him to the cathedral. As the bell ringer and as the child nurtured in and by the cathedral, he seems to lurk in every obscure corner of the building, just as he does in Hugo's novel. Description of Quasimodo's actions often leads author and reader alike into parts of the building that would otherwise go unnoticed. It is no wonder, then, that most people associate this novel, and its cathedral, with him. Both he and the archdeacon, as rather problematic church fixtures, provide an interesting counterpoint to the certainty and absence of moral ambiguity that church iconography is supposed to represent. Even Quasimodo, so frequently the victim of his circumstances, is capable of kidnapping and murder. Chapter Three of Book Four presents the image of Quasimodo as the cathedral's guardian and as the individual who makes its voice heard as the bell ringer. Hugo's narrator establishes "ce lien intime," between character and cathedral by informing the reader that Quasimodo

has been brought up entirely within the walls of the cathedral and is therefore its child. He then intensifies this link by making it spiritual as well: “il est sur qu’il y avait une sorte d’harmonie mystérieuse et préexistante entre cette creature et cet “ édifice.”^{xxxv}

It can be reasonably expected then, that any part of the plot in which his character appears will entail a return to the physical details of the cathedral, for he is always in it and he is spiritually connected to it. As expected, in the very next sentence, with an image of the bell ringer as a deformed child comes an image of vaults and capitals and the flagstone pavement that covers the floor of the cathedral:

Lorsque, tout petit encore, il se trainait tortueusement et par soubresauts sous les tenebres de ses voutes, il semblait avec sa face humaine et sa membrure bestiale, le reptile naturel de cette dalle humide et sombre sur laquelle l’ombre des chapiteaux romans projetait tant de formes bizarres.^{xxxvi}

Often, the building is described indirectly, through the actions and experiences of the character. That Quasimodo’s ‘nest’ is a dark, damp mass such as Nôtre Dame and that he is nurtured on and by its hard flagstones brings us almost too close to the building to see it as more than individual bits of architectural detail. Yet we are too close to the sadness of the life of this child not to see the building and its inappropriateness as a foster mother.

As this character grows and the way he relates to the building changes, interesting ambiguities arise. He becomes its voice, though he refuses to speak; the bells have deafened him but they are his lovingly tended harem: “il les aimait, les caressait, leur parlait, les comprenait.”^{xxxvii} The balance of power in his relationship with the bells is somehow altered in his favor as Quasimodo grows older and he

becomes the caregiver rather than the one receiving care. This relationship is undermined only when he transfers his affections from the cathedral to Esmeralda. From this point on, he begins gradually to pull away. His defense of Nôtre Dame from the attack launched by the vagabonds of Paris is really an effort to protect Esmeralda even more than it is an effort to protect the building itself.

Through the account of Quasimodo's efforts to protect the condemned girl and the building, the reader is also given a detailed description of the façade of the cathedral as he defends it and Esmeralda against the onslaught of the "Tour de Babel", a figurative edifice (in this case) that is constructed by the vagabonds of Paris and buttressed by the hunchback's deafness. But, again, one sees it piecemeal, between images of Quasimodo and the fire he has set:

La clarté inquiète de la flamme les faisait remuer à l'œil.
Il y avait de guivres qui avaient l'air de rire, des gargouilles
qu'on croyait entendre japper, des salamandres qui
soufflaient dans le feu, des tarasques qui sternuaient dans la
fumée. Et parmi ces monstres ainsi reveillés de leur
sommeil de pierre par cette flamme, par ce bruit, il y en
avait un qui marchait et qui on voyait de temps en temps
passer sur le front ardent du bucher comme une
chauve-souris devant une chandelle.^{xxxviii}

Quasimodo is a monster walking among monsters animated by the flame. Later in this same scene, as Jehan Frollo prepares to ascend this same section of the cathedral, the narrator shows us the famous Gallery of the Kings of France, with its impressive statuary, and informs us that "il y a au bout de cette galerie une porte qui n'est jamais fermée qu'au loquet."^{xxxix} (535) The rose window and parapet of the West Front that lies above the Gallery also become part of the action as an armed and armored Jehan, Dom Claude's younger brother climbs a ladder "appuyée à la balustrade de la galerie

inferieure, au-dessus d'un des portails lateraux. ”^{xi} This passage places the building’s individual parts directly in the midst of the unfolding drama, as the vagabonds storm the cathedral to reclaim Esmeralda and take her to safety. Jehan eventually reaches the part of the cathedral where Quasimodo is waging battle single-handedly, his own grotesque shadow moving among those of the gargoyles. What happens to him there is the result of the presence of the building. Quasimodo uses the cathedral to murder his foster-brother by swinging his body against it and allowing it to fall and drape itself over a projection from the wall. The detailed, grisly image of Jehan’s body is contrasted with the description of the building in profile: “l’on vit tomber quelque chose qui s’arrete au tiers de la chute a une saillie de l’architecture...”^{xli} Up to this point, we are given a view of its façade from a closer vantage point than even a visit in person would allow.

The edifice is associated with Jehan’s death and yet distanced from the guilt of an accomplice. Its mere presence is being used to bring about death in the same way that it was used to create a safe haven, first for Quasimodo and then for Esmeralda. Here is yet another way in which the author reminds us that the way human beings use the building determines its moral value.

As he multiplies the number of ways in which the cathedral can be viewed and read, Hugo also expands the novel to accommodate architecture by creating a separate space in its narrative structure for it to take center stage. Volume Three is a history of the cathedral, complete with details about renovations and accidents that have changed its appearance through the centuries. When the novel was published in 1830, this volume was not included. Distressed, rather than gratified by the novel’s

success without it, he restored them to the novel a year later and included a preface that invited people to look beyond the fiction to other, more important aspects of the work:

Sans doute ces chapitres retrouvés auront peu de valeur aux yeux des personnes, d'ailleurs fort judicieuses, qui n'ont cherché dans *Notre Dame de Paris* que le drame, que le roman. Mais il est peut-être d'autres lecteurs qui n'ont pas trouvé inutile d'étudier la pensée d'esthétique et de philosophie cachée dans ce livre, qui on bien voulu, in lisant *Notre Dame de Paris*, se plaire à démêler sous le roman autre chose que le roman, et à suivre, qu'on nous passe ces expressions un peu ambiteuses, le système de l'historien et le but de l'artiste à travers la création telle quelle du poète.^{xlii}

He also prepares the reader for the interruption through recurrent descriptions of the changes that have occurred in buildings and in Paris between 1482 and 1830, as well as through frequent mention of the fact that man-made changes in the building resulted from the failure of restoration architects to understand the intrinsic value of Gothic forms.

One of the reasons for his violent reaction to restoration architects,¹⁹ I believe, is that while Hugo approached buildings from the assumption that they are complex and fascinating narratives, restoration architects worked from the perspective of one who has the image of an ideal in mind when he sets about the restoration of a medieval building. Among other things, it is the difference between a dynamic and a static conception of medieval architecture and, perhaps, of architecture in general. In his Note to the Definitive Edition of 1832, Hugo promises to be “aussi indefatigable à défendre nos édifices historiques que nos iconoclasts d'écoles et d'académies sont acharnés à les attaquer. Car c'est une chose affligeante de voir en quelles mains

¹⁹ See especially Book Three, Chapter One of *Nôtre Dame de Paris*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1981. 155)

l'architecture du moyen âge est tombée...^{”xiii} Though he was able to view inappropriate restorations as part of the historical document that is the building, this quotation is an indication that he also viewed them as unnecessary entries in the record. Nôtre Dame is an appeal to his contemporaries to stop the abuse of such buildings in the name of “improvement” or to make a political statement.

The novel takes readers back in time to 1482, before revolution, to show the cathedral at the height of its magnificence, the monarchy and Catholic Church at the height of absolute power, and the people of France as they awaken to a sense of their own strength. One historian²⁰ reminds us that 1482, the year in which the novel is set, was the year the Peace of Arras, contracted by Louis XI with Edward IV of England, was to expire – at sunset on August 29, to be exact. This was also the year in which it was arranged that the Dauphin, who was supposed to marry Elizabeth, daughter of Edward, as a term of that treaty, would marry Marguerite of Austria instead. This arrangement was made to further the Peace which would remove from Flanders the threat of war with France. According to Hare’s account, Archduke Maximilian was compelled to agree to this treaty and its terms “as his children were in the power of the men of Ghent, who resolved to force him into peace with France, as they would thus remain free.”^{xiv} These negotiations were concluded on December 23 of 1482 and the historian goes on to say that “After the treaty was signed the Flemish envoys attended a great service at Nôtre Dame de Paris.”^{xlv}

Hugo takes liberties with the dates by moving these events back in time by almost a year but it is at this point that Paris experiences the excitement generated by

²⁰ Andrews, Marian. The Life of Louis XI, the Rebel Dauphin and the Statesman King, from His Original Letters and Other Documents; by Christopher Hare [pseud.]. London, New York, Harper, 1907.

the projected marriage of the Dauphin and by an alliance with Flanders that history intersects with his narrative. It also shows us a social order upended and a nation in search of stability. Indeed, he shows us Flemish ambassadors who proudly identify themselves as merchants and hosiers, negotiating for the sovereignty of their country with the lives and futures of three royal children: Marguerite and her brother Philip, and Charles the Dauphin (later Charles VIII). This was an early and rather striking example of what members of the lower classes, their energies focused on a common goal, could accomplish; it also prefigures the execution of Louis XVI. It is impossible to believe that this aspect of Hugo's story did not strike a chord with French citizens, especially those who had witnessed The Terror, the Directorate, the rise of Napoleon I, the summoning of Louis XVIII from exile by the French people, and the recent election (on August 9, 1830) of a new, Orléans king, Louis-Philippe I.

As he shows us the world that Christianity has created as it may have appeared in 1482, he constantly refers to the world of 1830—one that extends the social and political issues of the fifteenth century into the nineteenth. Approaching the crossroads between the ages of faith and reason, the world Hugo describes in his novel is in transition. Its institutions and their representatives are in the position of having to adjust to the conditions brought about by the advent of the printing press or else reveal themselves to be inflexible.

Hugo calls the printing press the mother of revolution because it forced powerful people to give up control over information, knowledge, and even the recipients of ideas themselves. As we have observed in the case of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 theses on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, and in the

case of Louis the XVI and the inflammatory effects of pamphlets on the French citizenry of his day, the hegemony of Church and monarchy were threatened because this technology also made ideas mobile.

Until the invention of the printing press, the stones of great buildings were the media in which great ideas were expressed to the greatest number of people. Because not everyone could design or even do the physical work of erecting buildings, relatively few people had the power to direct public discourse. Once Gutenberg brought moveable type printing to Europe, public expression could be the province of a widening range of people. It is for this reason that Hugo asserts that the book will kill the edifice; printing took away the essential function of the Gothic cathedral. It also undermined the institution that built it. The cathedral as doctrine writ large in stone was threatened by dissent that found expression through the printed word. No wonder then, that Hugo viewed the advent of the printing press as the first stage of political and social revolution.

This novel emerges from a revolutionary France whose citizens have just declared that *they* are France and have *chosen* a king, and from the author's sense of 1482 as representative of an age in which the veil of mystery and awe is about to be stripped from church and monarchy alike. In thus representing the transitional nature of late fifteenth century society to a nation experiencing a similar transition yet again, Hugo illustrates Vico's spiral conception of history.

The historical context in which he places the crowd of ordinary people in Nôtre Dame provides readers the opportunity to see in operation the same features of the national character that were being called forth even as he wrote Nôtre Dame de

Paris in 1829-1830. The deafness and misunderstanding that characterize the people who storm the cathedral is directed in his own world and age against buildings because the demolishers don't understand that they impoverish themselves in destroying these treasures.

Because of this conception of history, Hugo perhaps inadvertently leaves the impression that this problem of how to deal with Gothic buildings could return in future ages. He was concerned about whether the work would survive. In fact in 1830, he wrote a letter to a friend announcing the birth of his daughter Adèle and lamenting that she was perhaps the only one of his works that had a chance at survival. Hugo made a point of including Book Three, which delineates the building's history and the development of the Gothic style, but has no substantive role to play in the plot of the novel. Moreover, he composed a fiction that explores several, timeless themes. All of these facts are an indication that Hugo understood that the case for the continued existence of Gothic buildings at the center of national culture would have to be made repeatedly.

Through a novel of this kind, any nation could learn to value its Gothic buildings as their own possessions. Hugo was telling his readers that these buildings belonged to them because ordinary people like them provided the necessary skill and labor, and because they had wrested the power, authority, and ultimately the greatness of the ruling classes from its members and claimed those assets as their own heritage. That the castles, cathedrals, and fortresses, which were the domains of the oppressors, now belonged to the citizens of France was a natural, if not inevitable, consequence of the Revolution.

Hugo's novel, layered as it is with storytelling, history, myth, and architectural wonders, rebuilt the novel as an entity designed to perpetuate itself through the action and discussion it initiated. It also rebuilt Nôtre Dame de Paris and all medieval monuments in the same image: as a narrative whose essential complexities went beyond Christian doctrine to encompass ideas on language and the nature and promulgation of knowledge. Such a restoration would ensure that no social awakening or loss of faith could rob the edifice of relevance as long as these elements exist within it.

- ⁱ Hardy, Thomas. Jude the Obscure.
- ⁱⁱ Furet, Francois. Revolutionary France 1770-1880, translated by Antonia Nevill. Oxford, U.K. and Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1992. 243
- ⁱⁱⁱ Furet. 274
- ^{iv} Hugo. Nôtre Dame de Paris. 32
- ^v Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. VII. ch. iv. 351
- ^{vi} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. VII. ch. v. 361
- ^{vii} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. VII. ch. v. 361
- ^{viii} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. III. ch. i. 156
- ^{ix} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. III. ch. i. 156
- ^x Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. III. ch. i
- ^{xi} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. III. ch. i. 158
- ^{xii} Michelet, Jules. Histoire de la Revolution Française. Edition du Bicentenaire. France: Jean de Bonnot, 1988. 87
- ^{xiii} Histoire de la Revolution Française. 95
- ^{xiv} Hugo. Nôtre Dame de Paris V, ii, 242
- ^{xv} Hugo. Nôtre Dame de Paris. 33
- ^{xvi} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. V. ch. ii. 231
- ^{xvii} Hugo. Preface, Notre Dame de Paris (1831). 29
- ^{xviii} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. V. ch. ii. 237
- ^{xix} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. V. ch. ii. 238
- ^{xx} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. V. ch. ii. 238
- ^{xxi} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. V. ch. ii. 238-239
- ^{xxii} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. II. ch. vi. 132
- ^{xxiii} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. II. ch. vi. 133
- ^{xxiv} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. II. ch. vi. 133
- ^{xxv} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. VI. ch. iii. 280
- ^{xxvi} Nôtre Dame de Paris. Bk. VI. ch. iii. 280
- ^{xxvii} Michelet, Jules. Histoire de la Révolution Française. 2 vols. Édition du Bicentenaire. Paris: Jean de Bonnot, 1989. 11
- ^{xxviii} Hugo, Victor. Nôtre Dame de Paris. Preface de Louis Chevalier, édition établie et annotée par S. de Sacy. Paris: Gallimard, 1974. Bk. III. ch. i. 156
- ^{xxix} Chateaubriand, Francois Rene De (1768 - 1848). Atala. Préface de la Première Edition. D'après éd. Furne. 1832, orthographe modifiée Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, 1801. 104
- ^{xxx} From a letter to the publisher Gosselin (Correspondances. Paris, 1897). Quoted in Louis Maigron's Le Roman Historique a l'Époque Romantique: Essay sur l'Influence de Walter Scott. Paris: Librairie Hachette et C^{re}, 1898.
- ^{xxxi} Hegel, G.W.F. Philosophy of History in The Intellectual Tradition of the West. Morton Donner, Kenneth Eble, Robert Hebling, eds. United States: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1968. 326
- ^{xxxii} " Dans tout moment de défaillance où nous semblons nous oublier, c'est là que nous devons nous chercher, nous ressaisir. Là se garde toujours pour nous le profond mystère de vie, l'inextinguible étincelle. » [Histoire de la Revolution Française. 11]
- ^{xxxiii} Hegel. 323
- ^{xxxiv} Hegel. 323
- ^{xxxv} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. IV. ch. iii. 204
- ^{xxxvi} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. IV. ch. iii. 204
- ^{xxxvii} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. IV. ch. iii. 209
- ^{xxxviii} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. X. ch. iv. 532
- ^{xxxix} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. X. ch. iv. 535
- ^{xl} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. X. ch. iv. 536
- ^{xli} Notre Dame de Paris. Bk. X. ch. iv. 539
- ^{xlii} Hugo, Victor. Notre Dame de Paris. Note Ajoutée a l'Édition Définitive (1832) Ed. By S. de Sacy. Preface by Louis Chevalier. Paris: Gallimard, 1981. 33

^{xliii} Hugo, Victor. *Note ajoutée à l'édition définitive in Nôtre Dame de Paris*. Ed. By S. de Sacy. Preface by Louis Chevalier. Paris: Gallimard, 1981. 34

^{xliv} Andrews, Marian. *The life of Louis XI, the Rebel Dauphin and the Statesman King, from His Original Letters and Other Documents; by Christopher Hare [pseud.]*. London. New York, Harper. 1907. 253

^{xlv} Andrews, Marian. 255

Chapter Five

A Glimpse beyond the Gothic in The Count of Monte Cristo

Alexandre va ... se révéler un maître de la nouvelle, un vulgarisateur historique fécond, un chroniqueur dramatique redoutable. Il va renouveler l'art du récit du voyage, inventer le roman-feuilleton et poser les bases de son oeuvre Romanesque selon deux axes: le roman de moeurs et le roman historique.¹

Instead of focusing on the role of French medieval architecture in conveying a sense of permanence, and on history as a continuous narrative to which all ages and all classes contribute, Dumas reversed the model created by Hugo and exploited by Ainsworth. Not only does the Gothic building become the means through which change is effected in both the character and the plot, history in this novel is also presented in a very different light. It is not the product of collective effort to achieve a common goal, nor is it presented as a narrative in ink and in stone that must be claimed almost in one motion by the entire populace; individuals, and the stratagems they devise, propel historical events. Moreover, individuals are just as likely to be victimized by the march of history as they are to benefit by it. While Hugo and Ainsworth focused on the ideological implications of revolution for an entire society, Dumas reminded readers how the events of this great upheaval could translate into personal experience.

Rather than presenting history and Gothic architecture as examples of narrative produced by collective experience and indomitable collective will, Dumas presents both forms in The Count of Monte Cristo as narrative that can elevate or more firmly establish the status of the enterprising, even as it destroys those who will not, or cannot be directly engaged in its creation. Though the main character is outside of the events that threaten the stability of the newly re-established Bourbon

monarchy, the fact that they are taking place, and that he does not participate in them, allows others to create for him the role of subversive and to write him into a scene in which he is not even involved as a spectator. His passivity, or lack of interest, in engaging with the events that are transforming France become a means of inviting adversity, not of avoiding it.

Dumas' novel implies that, by becoming active participants in their historical moment, those traditionally left out of its pages can rewrite history, rather than be victimized by it. However, like him, they must be willing to take the risks involved in entering the past as a participant and as a narrator. They are not called upon to rise up and do this en masse, but to raise their voices and claim the national narrative—which has always belonged to all people—by reading it or adding their actions and ideas to the reality that proceeds from it. Though much different from the narrative methods used by Hugo and Ainsworth, the historical novels of Dumas are his own contribution to the edifice that is the history of France, as well as being one of the ways in which he becomes a part of it (as narrator, but also as inheritor). By first placing his version of national history in the hands of individuals who would each experience it in his or her own way, Dumas' novels demonstrate the possibility of making history accessible to everyone, even as his approach to narrative and to the presentation of characters avoided placing it directly and immediately into the capricious hands of 'the masses'.

Dumas' approach to the past in Monte Cristo is reminiscent of the way the *récit de voyage* approaches unfamiliar places and peoples. It is replete with striking images of landscapes, peoples, and architecture. Emboldened by the familiarity such

narrative creates with the previously unknown or simply unexplored. the reader is invited to share the experiences of the traveler and apply them to his own frame of reference. Ultimately, the reader comes to be influenced by the writer's way of viewing the unfamiliar, while he still has the opportunity to combine these new perspectives with his own methods of processing information. Each reader will do this in a different way, but such writing relies on the assumption that everyone who reads the work will do it. The end result of a widely read narrative that uses this approach is that the particular becomes absorbed into the general as individual experience becomes integrated into the way a culture looks at the world around it. Dumas' novel similarly takes the reader through a journey from the main character's experiences, to his or her own, and finally to the level of the society beyond the book. History is placed in the hands of ordinary people—after being filtered through and altered by individual minds. Clearly, this progression from the particular to the general is not a passive one, nor is it solely the product of emotional response to the material at hand; it requires active participation and thought. The implication of this approach is that history, like all narrative created for an audience, is a puzzle pieced together from a wide range of individual experience. In The Count of Monte Cristo, events that the reader already knows to have far-reaching historical significance are shown to have direct consequences in the lives of individuals. The story of the events leading up to the death of the vizier of Yanina as told by Haydée,¹ the vizier's

¹ Her story does not fall into the category of history as seen through the eyes of the elite. Though she has been a princess, she is now a slave and removed from her normal social context. As she makes limited forays into French society, she must be carefully presented by Monte Cristo in order to be received in a manner appropriate to her former rank. Moreover, her story is told in a private context—drawn, as it were, from her reluctant lips—and does not profess to be a narrative that illuminates the story of a nation. That it happens to be just that is due to the identities of the people involved.

daughter, who has become Monte Cristo's slave, is one that Albert de Morcerf has read in various accounts but which becomes real—and horrific—to him only when she describes it as the story of her own past.ⁱⁱ He must first be able to see these events as happening to this young woman before he can conceptualize their devastating effects on the societies directly affected by them. Indeed, for Dumas, this perspective has greater credibility and value than the one to be had in a narrative of the past that unfolds as a catalogue of battles, governmental changes, and of the public lives of the social and political elite.

Dumas' novel encourages readers to look critically at the recent past, where the usual cast of prominent characters may be found—but they are not alone; they are joined by a diverse collection of other personalities. Moreover, these figures are not easily cast in the roles of protagonist and antagonist, of hero and villain. Roles shift and people change places according to the perspective of the characters and, indeed, of every reader. Moreover, Dumas uses physical places—particularly a Gothic fortress—to shape the experiences of his principal character, aware that its presence is a cue for a Gothic narrative. Indeed, though it possesses strong elements of travel narrative, The Count of Monte Cristo uses the narrative structure of Gothic fiction, with its conflict between good and evil, as the matrix in which his treatment of character and of historical and fictional events develops and becomes complex. Yet, by ultimately de-emphasizing the Gothic building and removing all architecture during the course of the narrative, he also uses that very structure as the means through which the genre can begin to transcend its reliance on Gothic device without discarding the novel form.

Alexandre Dumas continued the work, begun in France by Victor Hugo, of reconstructing the novel by using it to create a piece of national history and to present that history to the people who had always been left out of it. However, he chooses the immediate rather than the distant past as his subject and thereby attempts to make sense of a history the French people should already own (as memory and first hand experience) but which had been co-opted by so many of its principal players, among them, Napoleon Bonaparte and Louis XVIII. In spite of the fact that they had busied themselves with re-writing France's revolutionary history—and had each ultimately produced unconvincing tales—writers like Dumas took on the task of looking at recent history through the eyes of those whose lives were most deeply affected by its principal events and who, on their own, still had little *official* political power, except insofar as they were willing and able to seize it en masse.

Presenting, as he did, a character buffeted by the winds of political change, but who nevertheless could be perceived as a threat to the crown, Dumas not only demonstrated these ideas, he also made it difficult for readers sympathetic to Bourbon monarchy to deny the Revolution a prominent place in French history. Chief among those who wished to erase the Revolution was the Bourbon King himself. Effectively denying that the Revolution ever occurred, even as his attitude affirmed the notion that it had become (among other things) a conflict between competing narratives of the past, Louis XVIII led the way in the attempted revision of French history by considering himself to be nineteen years into his reign when he finally came to power in 1814.² Dumas' tale of Restoration, both Napoleonic and Bourbon, places the

² See Francois Furet. Revolutionary France: 1770-1880. Oxford, Cambridge, U.S.A.: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1992. 271

Revolution at the very center of the history, of his fictional narrative, and of the political and social life of France. Moreover, by focusing on the period after Napoleon's abdication, and even after the Hundred Days, Dumas' novel undermined even the Emperor's version of French history by showing how his shift to empire and away from the Republic created an ending to the Revolution that was inconsistent with its ideological foundations in freedom from oppression and the essential equality of all people. Dumas' choice of historical period also highlights Napoleon's defeat and the destruction of the narrative of military victory he had attempted to construct for himself and for France. Most significant of all, however, is that he also shows the reader the separation that had occurred between the interests of the man and of the nation by presenting his return in the light of the gratification of the ex-emperor's vanity and ambition. Instead of reproducing the eighteenth century approach to historiography, by focusing mainly on prominent individuals, Dumas' version of the past draws every sort of person onto the historical stage, including the reader.

The Gothic building, with its ability to conjure up memories of past plots and familiar narrative structures, becomes one means through which the reader has intellectual access to this drama. Like the others writers discussed so far, Dumas exploits these literary associations and the techniques used by novelists writing in the Gothic style to incorporate buildings and historical context into fictional narrative. In addition to taking advantage of the tendency of the Gothic novel to tell its story through the experiences of the main character, he uses the Gothic novel's heavy reliance upon place to evoke the past and provide opportunities for convoluted and

suspenseful plots whose principal occurrences relate directly to the intricacies of the landscapes and buildings in which they unfold.

Dumas also uses the Gothic approach in the creation of his characters. He initially engages in broad characterization of the kind we normally associate with the Gothic and, indeed, with any other forms that place greatest emphasis on action, and in which a severely limited set of non-conflicting personality traits is assigned the main character. This approach appears likely to create problems in a narrative whose tendency is to focus on personalities and motives. However, Dumas differs drastically from Hugo and Ainsworth in that he ultimately de-emphasizes the Gothic devices he employs and encourages the reader to look beyond them. He makes use of the trappings of traditional Gothic fiction as the means through which to make changes in the novel, as his readers knew it.

In Dumas' novel, the Gothic building and the main character become interconnected in strange ways, each altering the other in the process. The building is the means through which Edmond Dantès becomes the Count of Monte Cristo. Dumas' use of the building will ultimately point readers and romancers alike beyond this device in the creation of intricate plots and historical context, while reconstructing it as a tourist attraction, both within the context of the novel and in the world outside of it. His experiments with character in his move away from the Gothic approach toward the portrayal of hybrid, and even conflicted, personalities will lead in the direction of more complex characterization.

The main character in The Count of Monte Cristo is not a building, as it is in Nôtre Dame de Paris, The Tower of London, and other architectural novels.

However, the building is used to add new traits to this character that make him more complex, thereby re-constructing the notion of the Gothic hero. Alexandre Dumas did not use Gothic architecture as the pretext for the creation of his narrative or as its main focus, but he used it to redirect its course, its intricacies and basic structure providing the model for the structure of the novel, as it does for Hugo, Ainsworth, and other nineteenth century writers who were directly affected by the ongoing dialogue surrounding the preservation and restoration of medieval buildings and the construction of new ones in accordance with medieval artistic principles, as they understood them. He never sought to save the Château d'If by making it the center of his intricate narrative, but his novel made it so famous that no enterprising Marseille tourism official of today would calmly consent to the demolition of such an attraction. The Island of Monte Cristo was (and continues to be) a rock inhabited mainly by vipers and wild goats that made no impression on the few people who had ever seen it before Dumas peopled it with smugglers and a certain wealthy eccentric. Even the guide who had rowed the novelist there with his young charge, Jerome Bonaparte,³ was unable to comprehend the novelist's curiosity to see the place. But Dumas insisted and promised Bonaparte that he would write a story about the island and send it to him. In this case, as in the case of every other novel examined in this study so far, the choice of the actual place that lends its name to the title of the novel precedes the composition of the story and is the means through which the novelist extends the intellectual range of the novel in hand and of the literary form in general.

³ See A. Craig Bell's Alexandre Dumas: a Biography and Study. London, Toronto, etc.: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1950. 158, 159

If his treatment of the island of Monte Cristo created this effect, the use of an island fortress that lies just off the coast of Marseille provides an even more striking illustration of the notion that embedding a real place, particularly a Gothic building, in the structure of a novel transforms the building into a tourist attraction and transforms the novel by making it the means through which an historical building becomes part of the cultural wealth of the nation to which it belongs. Yet, since, unlike Ainsworth and Hugo, Dumas is not using his novel to save the Chateau d'If or even to draw attention to it as a physical presence, it is necessary to examine what he *is* doing. Situated, as it is, on a rock offshore, the Chateau d'If appears to have been chosen rather for its remoteness than for its accessibility to the average reader. Dumas' choice is outside of the realm of the average French citizen's day-to-day experience and therefore seems ill suited to the task of imparting to readers a sense of ownership of the building or of the history that it represents. They could not visit it and appreciate its antiquity as they could Notre Dame. Nevertheless, it was received as if Dumas really had written a novel that championed the cause of raising awareness of the building, even as this and other settings in the novel form an important means through which Dumas does something new: he uses the building to afford the reader insight into the inner life of his main character and present history through the personal experiences of an ordinary person. However, he allows it to do little else.

Rather than rely on its physical accessibility to his readers, Dumas used the prison fortress to present people with a potent symbol of political repression of the kind they, and their immediate forbears, had feared and struggled against. The harsh reality of its existence and dark history assisted the novelist in forming a plausibly

vengeful character and inserting him into an appropriate historical and social context. The story on which Dumas based his novel was real. There really was an innocent man who was sent to prison by the machinations of jealous friends who didn't want to see him prosper and contract an advantageous marriage. Upon emerging after seven years of confinement, he went about plotting their deaths until his final victim figured out his plan and murdered his potential assailant.⁴ Yet, though Dumas based his novel on real people and occurrences, he made drastic changes to the basic story. The prison in which his main character is held is not the one in the original version. When Dumas encountered "Le Diamant de la Vengeance" in a book of stories about criminal cases in Paris,ⁱⁱⁱ the story made no mention of either Monte Cristo or the Château d'If.⁵ In fact, it takes place almost entirely in Paris, in very specific areas of the city. Dumas untethers it from these moorings and adds more possibilities for minor narratives and for increasing the complexity of his main character by moving the story through three cities. Moreover, he very deliberately adds to his story a building that is notorious for its role in the sudden and permanent disappearance of politically inconvenient people. The novel began to appear in 1844, by which time the French people had witnessed several dazzling reversals of political fortune for republicans, royalists, and Bonapartists alike (including Bonaparte himself). In placing a prison in a prominent position in this narrative about an innocent man who is snatched from a pleasant life and plunged into misery, Dumas signaled to readers

⁴ See André Maurois. Les Trois Dumas. Paris: Librairie Hachette. 1957. 223

⁵ Dantes' real life counterpart, was imprisoned in the Chateau de Fenestrelle for conspiring with partisans of the exiled Louis XVIII. during Napoleon's reign. He served seven years in prison and was released after the fall of the Empire. (André Maurois. Les Trois Dumas. Librairie Hachette: 1957. p.220)

that the Gothic building was as effective a representative of sudden change as of the kind of permanence people were beginning to associate with medieval architecture.

Retaining Paris as the main, if not the only, setting would not seriously have hampered Dumas in his creation of an exciting story. His critics and friends alike marveled at his ability to see potential in the smallest scrap of a tale and transform it into a thrilling and complex narrative. Anchoring it in Paris would not have presented a logistical problem. But his readers needed to experience the Chateau d'If in order to comprehend and be complicit with Dantès' revenge. The building was needed to make the character a sympathetic and comprehensible figure. Thwarted in his intention of writing a travel book about Paris—mainly by the fact that Eugène Sue had just published a very successful one⁶—and bearing in mind his publisher's request that he write a "romance à la Sue"^{iv} instead, Dumas initially planned Monte Cristo as a novel set in Rome and Paris and centered mainly on Dantès' revenge on his enemies for having orchestrated his arrest on the night of his wedding and his eventual imprisonment for conspiracy against the restored monarchy. This way, he could still write about his beloved Paris, and even include landscapes and other images from the Italian peninsula. The story of the wrongs Dantès suffers and of the false friends against whom he pursues vengeance would be related by a secondary character, after having been appropriately framed by some contextualizing narrative.

The prospects for this formula in creating an exciting narrative were favourable enough. But Auguste Maquet, his friend and collaborator, pointed out to Dumas that having the tale of Dantès' early life told by another character would mean a missed opportunity to extract at least another two volumes from his story.

⁶ *Mystères de Paris*, 1842

Admittedly, the expansion Maquet proposed would translate into more installments to be published in the *Journal des Débats* in which it was to appear and, therefore, into more opportunities for financial gain. What is more significant however, is the fact that the revenge theme is made more effective through this presentation because it allows the reader to follow the development of the idea of revenge as it takes root in the mind of the character.

In a broader sense, such an approach would also allow him to explore the nexus of human ambitions and jealousies, general paranoia, and political instability that could cause a relatively insignificant and guileless individual to be denounced as a conspirator against the government. Dumas adopted Maquet's idea of allowing the early period of Edmond Dantès' life – his happiness, betrayal, and resulting imprisonment – to be dealt with directly and so changed the basic plan of the novel.

Je crois, me dit-il [Maquet], que vous passez par-dessus la période la plus intéressante de la vie de votre héros... c'est-à-dire par-dessus ses amours avec la Catalane... la trahison de Danglars et de Fernand, et par-dessus les dix années de prison avec l'abbé Faria

Dumas goes on to say that :

Pendant la soirée, la nuit et la matinée, j'avais pensé à son observation et elle m'avait paru tellement juste qu'elle avait prévalu sur mon idée première. Aussi, lorsque Maquet vint le lendemain, trouva-t-il l'ouvrage coupé en trois parties bien distinctes : Marseille.—Rome.—Paris.^v

Monte Cristo is conceived of and divided into its parts according to places and changes in setting. It is also set within a well-defined historical and political context, that of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, the Hundred Days, and the Second Restoration. Dumas also doubled the time spent by his main character in prison,

which allows him to emerge into a different world from the one he leaves when he enters it. Since the novelist's ideas about the setting actually preceded the story itself, it can be asserted that places and buildings have a vital role to play in this narrative, though not the expected one. Furthermore, places—particularly the Gothic building—are directly linked to the main character in interesting ways.

The Château d'If and the other settings mirror the minds of those who dominate them. Buildings are used to arrive, not merely at an ever more convoluted plot, or even at national history, but at characters' interior lives. We need only recall the narrator's description of the gaudy, overwrought house of Baron Danglars, the ultimate parvenu, for a particularly vivid example:

M. le baron... passa dans un salon blanc et or qui faisait
grand bruit dans la Chaussée d'Antin.
C'est là qu'il avait ordonné d'introduire le visiteur pour
l'éblouir du premier coup.
Le comte était debout, considérant quelques copies
d'Albane et du Fattore qu'on avait fait passer au banquier
pour des originaux, et qui, toutes copies qu'elles étaient,
juraient fort avec les chicorées d'or de toutes couleurs qui
garnissaient les plafonds.^{vi}

It is a place filled with expensive things that possess little beauty or intrinsic value, an unsuccessful attempt to create a veneer of gentility for a man of unrefined tastes. It fails to conceal his lack of interest in everything but acquisition. However, in addition to revealing the superficiality of this parvenu and the degree to which his surroundings proclaim his character, Dumas invited readers to contemplate these phenomena in general terms as they presented themselves in the world beyond the novel.

That Dumas conceived of relationships between buildings and minds is evident in his recollection of an incident from the childhood of a family friend who had spent some years living in a monastery and who had been the victim of a flogging: “Hiroux could be as deep and unfathomable as the corridors of his cloisters; he locked up his revengeful determination in his breast and decided to wait until Easter Day should come.”^{vii} Through buildings, and through the way they are handled within the context of Dumas’ narratives, we learn about motives, weaknesses, and methods of reasoning. Monte Cristo’s promise to Mercédès’ that he will not kill her son in a duel translates into death for him since any other result will compromise his honor. His response to her: “Voilà l’édifice si lentement préparé, élevé avec tant de peines et de soucis, ecroule d’un seul coup, avec un seul mot, sous un souffle,” is a clear indication that he views his plans and their destruction in terms of an edifice^{viii} and, furthermore, that Dumas was aware of the existence of a relationship between the medieval edifice and nineteenth century ideas about creativity as it related to other kinds of elaborate structure.

Monte Cristo’s dark plot, with its areas of sublime light, its intricate plan and lengthy execution initially appears to be nothing more than a series of disconnected events to the other characters and can seem that way to an inattentive reader. Moreover, his plan seems to anticipate and exploit or counteract people’s actions. However, as its underlying rationality becomes apparent, the revenge plot emerges as the conceptual and narrative equivalent of a medieval fortress. Near the end of the final volume, the metaphor returns with an oblique reference to the unholy Tower of Babel—another reference that Hugo has already used to good effect: “une heure

aurait suffi pour prouver à l'architecte que l'œuvre de toutes ses esperances était une œuvre, sinon impossible, du moins sacrilege! ^{xix} As Dantès proceeds to the Château d'If to remind himself that his revenge is justified, even though it has inadvertently struck an innocent (if unpleasant) child, the architecture of his revenge plot merges with that of the prison. His insistence on seeing the dungeons he and Faria once inhabited is precipitated by a desire to remind himself of the extremity of his sufferings and assure himself that he hasn't taken his vengeance too far. His project succeeds immediately – as soon as the building comes into view:

Peu à peu comme ces sources dessechées par l'été,
qui lorsque s'amassent les nuages d'automne s'humectent
peu à peu et commence à sourdre goutte à goutte, le comte
de Monte Cristo sentit également sourdre dans sa poitrine
ce vieux fiel extravase qui avait autrefois inondé la cœur
d'Edmond Dantès.^x

As this passage demonstrates, Dumas' novel looks at memory as a mental faculty and as something, which actuates the individual, rather than as the creator or the creature of collective impulse. Constantly contracting the scope of history and memory to the realm of personal experience, Dumas encourages the reader to examine the way memories imprint⁷ (his word) themselves in the human mind. The Chateau d'If is at once the memory and the medium in which memory is imprinted. This is why the Count must return to it in order to give new impetus to his revenge. Near the end of his visit, still seeking confirmation, he examines another impressive construction, the book that has been extracted from the walls of Faria's cell, a monument to his

⁷ In his memoirs, Dumas often refers to anecdotes about his father that have been told him people who knew as the incidents that most clearly imprinted themselves on the storytellers' minds: "de tous les dangers qu'avait affrontés le comte d'Horbourg dans sa longue carrière militaire, c'était que lui avait fait courir le serpent du Nil qui était resté le plus profondément *empreint dans sa mémoire* [my italics]." [*Mes Mémoires*, Texte présenté et annotée par Pierre Josserand. Tome I. France: Gallimard, 1954. 41

prodigious memory written in blood and wine, and his eyes fall upon the epigraph: “ Tu arracheras les dents du dragon, et tu fouleras aux pieds les lions, a dit le Seigneur. ”^{xi} No longer believing he has crossed over into the realm of culpability, he is set at liberty by the building to finish constructing his own edifice, one that will affect an ever-widening circle of people. Memory, in this novel, is shrunk to the size of a single mind but the “ édifice ” it builds is a sign of the broadening scope of individual experience and of the way that experience spills over into the lives of others. The concept of collective influence in the creation of narratives of the past, as we see it in Ainsworth and Hugo, becomes in Dumas’ novel the idea of a variety of minds processing events both historical and personal in ways that affect one another’s lives directly.

The most important setting in The Count of Monte Cristo, then, is the title character’s mind, though we never see all that is there. The intricacies of the Gothic building in romance become those of the human mind in Dumas’ narrative. We are encouraged see narratives and the elaborate schemes the mind can produce the way we see buildings in this novel, as carefully created structures that can be used to do good or bring about untold destruction. Like Hugo, Dumas uses a Gothic building as a stable frame of reference in his narrative. Through it, he can raise a wide variety of issues. However, these are not necessarily political issues, nor do they seem at first glance as universal in scope as is Hugo’s emphasis on the artistic and revolutionary potential of the ordinary people of France. For Dumas, the building is still a potent symbol but in a different way. Nearly all of the buildings we encounter in this novel are the scenes of negative events. Dantès’ home is the scene of his beloved father’s

slow death from starvation and despair while his son languishes in prison; the inn that is to be the scene of his betrothal feast is the place where he is betrayed by supposed friends and where he experiences the humiliation and grief of being arrested and separated from loved ones. The Hall of Justice in Marseilles is where he is betrayed in order to protect the career of an ambitious young magistrate. The prison is the place where madness threatens him, where despair nearly kills him, and where he learns of the ways in which he has been destroyed by people he trusted. Most important, it is the birthplace of the vengeful character that dominates the rest of the novel.

We learn early on to distrust buildings. Dumas' own wariness of attaching too much significance to them is evident in his memoirs: "nothing really remains on the earth's surface; everything springs up only to decay: the lives of monuments, of trees, and of men are all but a question of durability; stone and wood decay just as do flesh and bones." Like the stone edifices to which they are analogous, when carelessly constructed or undermined by unexpected assault, stratagems can also fall apart and even crush the architect. It is within the context of Dantès' architectural interior life that the scope of the narrative enlarges. His mind is reconstructed by the building that looms over the first volume of this novel. But, until the reader witnesses the structures erected by this altered mind, he or she cannot begin to comprehend the ways in which the character has changed. Because it is itself a Gothic edifice and therefore vast and convoluted in structure, the prison offers only limited insight.

The Chateau d'If is of greatest significance as a prison in Dumas' novel. It is presented as the result of the machinations of governments to further their interests as

well as being an effective illustration of this idea of the stratagem and the Gothic building as the outward manifestation of complex creative processes. The conspiracy that leads to Edmond Dantès' imprisonment is constructed on a small scale but is so carefully planned and executed that, even in its simplicity, it rivals the revenge of the victim. Rather than harm him outright, Danglars uses the strength of Fernand's naiveté and jealousy, together with the power of his own suggestions to ensure that the denunciation of Dantès he has supposedly written in jest will fall into the hands of the authorities. The reader is constantly directed to the construction of the edifices the mind can produce. One of these happens to be the prison itself.

Ironically, then, the opportunities presented by the presence of the fortress in the narrative ultimately causes place to lose its connection with architecture. Though it *is* used to complicate the plot, this is done in an unconventional way—by removing it. The introduction of the Chateau into the narrative allows Dumas to address two subjects that underlie the entire novel, that of imprisonment—the imprisonment of the body within the building, and of the spirit within the body—and that of freedom. Even as the reader contemplates Dantès' enclosure within the thick, stone walls of the fortress, he or she is also encouraged to consider the other ways in which he is imprisoned. Dantès is buried in the false accusations that obscure his identity and he is overwhelmed by the anger and self-pity that cause him to appear to those who run the prison as just another mad criminal. However, because the building is not Dumas' focus, the story is also confined unless the writer can narrate the character—and himself out of the Chateau d'If.

The Gothic building is used to transform the character and expand the possibilities in the plot, while preventing any one place, including the castle itself, from taking center stage. The author does not give us many specifics about the prison. We are not treated to detailed descriptions of it, nor are we given much more information about its history beyond the notion that it was a place where political prisoners were essentially buried alive, never to be heard from again. Dantès' plan for revenge is formulated in response to his imprisonment, not in response to the Chateau d'If. The fact that his plans for revenge take shape within its walls serves to intensify the analogy Dumas makes between the physical edifice and the intellectual one. The prison is shown to be the catalyst that initiates changes in the personality of this character. We do not question Dantès' transformation from an effervescent, good-natured youth to a pensive, scheming, and cold avenger whose relentlessness and creativity in bringing about the downfall of his enemies savors of the diabolical. It is presented as a natural consequence of his experience in the Château d'If. The character that is produced by years of solitary confinement and then of interaction only with a polymath, who shows him how naive he has been and how his guilelessness has made him an easy target for his enemies, emerges directly from its walls. In the process of emerging from the building, he appears to become a strange combination of Gothic victim and Gothic villain. Once this change in focus from the building to the character occurs, and his plan for revenge is established, the Gothic landscape moves inward. Dumas is free to dismiss the Gothic edifice from the plot and from the scenes in which the plot unfolds, bringing it back to the narrative only when it can shed light on the characters or their motives.

A consequence of the main character's ejection from the Chateau d'If, that is, the reverse side of the concept of imprisonment is freedom as manifested in the opportunity to reconstruct the self. Though this novel bears a strong resemblance to Gothic fiction in its choice of setting and in some aspects of the plot, the main character comes to represent a degree of mobility and slipperiness of categories that pulls this novel away from the melodrama of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Gothic romance, where good and evil are clearly delineated categories that do not co-exist in any one character. It is reasonable to assume that the concepts of social and physical mobility and reconstruction of identity would have resonated with the middle classes of mid-nineteenth century France. They were constantly renovating themselves politically and socially according to the prevailing situation. Dantès uses the opportunity given him by the death of his friend to achieve freedom, wealth, and the ability to elevate his social status in much the same way that the death of Bourbon monarchy had freed the middle classes of France to garner landed property and achieve higher social standing than was conceivable in the past. Moreover, his ejection from the castle is possible only because he is mistaken for the dead prisoner. In subsequent chapters, he assumes the characteristics of a pirate, a priest, and even a vampire. These instances are certainly extreme but they help to illustrate the fact that from the moment he sews himself into the shroud of his friend and is thrown into the sea, his identity like that of the people of post-Revolutionary France, becomes fluid and he is simultaneously compelled and permitted to change it.

As the narrative moves away from the prison, we are forced to look to other surroundings to provide insight into this essentially new character. The section of the

novel that is set in Rome allows us an opportunity to witness the ways in which he has changed before we are plunged into the intricacies of the revenge plot. Here, we initially find him master of the island from which he derives his name. Its intricate network of caves that contains the secret hiding-place where he finds his treasure⁸ is the appropriate place to become acquainted with the secretive and cunning character Dantès has become. Gone is the open, honest young man whose domains are the open sea and the ports of Marseille; in his place is the self-styled count of a small and barren island, who is known and feared for his inscrutability as much as for his incredible resourcefulness. The extent to which his personality is altered is also revealed through the events of the Roman Carnival as he witnesses an execution. His surroundings there reflect yet another aspect of the new character, rather than another phase in his development.

Having emerged from a castle and a cave, he is now presented as the principal tenant of a sumptuously decorated renaissance hotel—a very temporary sort of lodging—from whose window he forces Albert and Franz (the son of one of his enemies and the son's friend, respectively), to witness a public execution. His own dispassionate reaction to the spectacle of death in this instance allows the reader to comprehend the psychological change that has taken place without Dumas having to approach the interior life of this character through any defined principles of psychology, as one would expect in our own day. Dantès' surroundings, as well as his actions and reactions allow us to trace the contours of his altered mind. We recall how, in the first volume, Edmond Dantès is seized with horror when the reality of

⁸ This section of the novel could be viewed as symbolic of the idea that the inheritance of revolution is wealth and upward mobility for the formerly oppressed.

death steals across the body of the Abbé Faria: “il comprit qu’il était seul avec un cadavre. Alors une terreur profonde et invincible s’empara de lui.”^{xii} However, in his reincarnated state as the Count of Monte Cristo, he seems to relish the prospect of an execution. Moreover, while Franz becomes faint and Albert becomes “pâle comme sa chemise,”^{xiii} the Count is calm and expressionless. After the event has taken place, Franz has all but fainted, Albert maintains outward calm while convulsively gripping the curtain he has leaned on for support, and the Count is “trionphant comme le mauvais ange.”^{xiv}

The quotation above, in which he is likened to “le mauvais ange” is one of the first hints regarding the kinds of negative Gothic identities this character will try on as he re-enters the world, though at the beginning of the novel, he is clearly identifiable as a Gothic hero. The plot, when we first encounter it, is also readily identifiable with a frequently used Gothic formula. Dumas does little to subvert the expectations of experienced readers of Gothic fiction immediately. At the beginning, things seem conventional enough. The main character is betrayed and wrongfully imprisoned in the requisite dungeon and escape seems impossible. As a Gothic literary device, the prison can play its expected role of imprisoning an innocent and reluctantly affording him the means of escape. However, the circumstances of the hero’s escape force the reader to look beyond Gothic convention, even as the elements of architecture, mystery, and the improbable remain strongly present. Rather than escape through cunning or chance, or be rescued by one who is aware of his innocence and worth, he escapes by sewing himself into the funeral shroud of another prisoner, assuming the role of a scavenger as he draws life from the death of

an inmate and friend. The reader is made to confront the real horror of a man recoiling from the unpleasant realities of death, only to realize that he must embrace them in order to obtain freedom.

Dumas' emphasis on the revenge plot is a clear indication that the protagonist has a darker side and that it is this aspect of his nature that is the most interesting to his creator, since he devotes most of the novel to it. However, it is important to bear in mind the notion that the methodical repayment of past ills is presented as the product of a given set of circumstances, which result from the character's imprisonment in a medieval fortress. We are constantly encouraged to look at this character very closely because, as readers immersed in the language of Gothic fiction even today, we know that Gothic heroes don't generally have a darker side. He must therefore be in the wrong novel—or else this isn't *that* sort of novel. The strangeness of the character provides a reason to examine the entire novel more closely and conclude that it is not really Gothic after all. Though Monte Cristo can never be the archetypal villain of romance, it is also true that he never fully emerges from the shadows. The attraction of other characters to him, in spite of their fears or misgivings, his seemingly endless capacity to control the lives of those he wishes, and his desire to harm unsuspecting victims are all the traits of the late nineteenth century Gothic villain; particularly Stoker's Dracula. In fact, the Italian Countess in the second volume who is frightened by his extreme pallor deepens the comparison when she refers to him as Lord Ruthven, Byron and Polidori's stillborn vampire:

Écoutez, lui dit-elle, Byron m'a juré qu'il croyait aux vampires, il m'a dit qu'il en avait vu, il m'a dépeint leur visage,... c'est absolument cela : ces cheveux noirs, ces grands yeux brillant d'une flamme étrange, cette pâleur

mortelle...^{xv}

Dumas flirts with this idea of a vampyric Dantès having emerged from his tomb, seemingly all-powerful and immortal, having already experienced a form of death, but he never entirely succumbs to the lure of the ready-made Gothic plot.

As the main character of the novel, he is problematic and inconsistent with the Gothic hero. For instance, his reparations of the hurts suffered by the innocent are marked by a cruel delay of gratification of their needs. Yet, when the gratification does come, it is extravagant. In the case of Morrell the ship owner, the delay proves nearly fatal: his daughter Julie enters his office with the money that will save his honor and his company just as the man raises his pistol to shoot himself. Yet this eleventh hour rescue of the Morrells from their patriarch's suicide and later, his readiness to permit the son, Maximilien, to believe his fiancé dead and that he too will shortly die, give the impression that Monte Cristo may be compelled allow these near deaths and interrupt the succession of events leading to them as atonement for not having been able to rescue his own starving father. One may well wonder whether it isn't, perhaps, a partial gratification of a futile wish to change this particularly painful part of his history. His reward of the diamond to Caderousse, the most passive and remorseful of the conspirators, amounts to entrapment of a coward of flexible morals, who would surely have been better off had Monte Cristo left him alone.

The author fosters ambiguities in Monte Cristo by making the righteousness of his actions uncertain at precisely the moments when success is imminent or has just been achieved. When he realizes that his revenge on Villefort has struck his

eight-year old son, his cold, impenetrable façade immediately collapses and he tries to revive the dead boy. This pathetic scene confirms the idea that this character is not meant to be entirely dark, nor is he meant to be an archetypal hero whose steadfast goodness remains untempered by negative passions or flaws in his reasoning. The fact that he fails to revive Villefort's son can be seen as another indication that Dumas had no intention of allowing his narrative to stray irretrievably into the realm of the fantastic, however much it may wander close to it.

Instead, he makes steps in the direction of a new kind of narrative, based in part on some of the oldest of myths. Educated in the classics during his youth, and a professed lover of classical myth,⁹ Dumas was undoubtedly familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and with the poet's depiction of Pythagoras, the "man of Samos," in the fifteenth and final book. Here the idea that the soul is immortal and, upon leaving the body, is capable of entering other bodies, human or animal, is attributed to the philosopher, who asserts: "Our souls are deathless, and ever, when they have left their former seat, do they live in new abodes and dwell in the bodies that have received them."^{10xvi} Dumas appears to develop this idea through the novel's main character.

Dantès' renewed existence outside of the prison bears the salient characteristics of this notion of the soul that leaves one body and takes up residence in another. We are frequently confronted with scenes in which his former acquaintances are unable to recognize a face and figure so altered as to seem to belong to a completely different body. When Edmond Dantès is ejected from the fortress, he is thrown into the sea and forced to swim across, like an old soul traveling

⁹ See *Mes Mémoires*, Volume I.

¹⁰ *morte carent animae semperque prior relictæ sede novis domibus vivunt habitantque receptæ.*
[*Metamorphoses*, Bk. XV l.158-160]

to a new life. This figurative transmigration does not erase his memory, however. Like Ovid's sage, he remembers his former existence all too vividly.

It is this ability to recall his past suffering and act upon it that makes the role of avenging angel (which he assumes) seem strange, though the desire for vengeance is understandable. Throughout the novel, we are reminded that he sees himself as having received special dispensation to carry out the punishment of his enemies that he would ordinarily leave to God. His and other characters' frequent references to his figurative resurrection would even seem to imply some symbolic link to the Biblical image of the Second Coming, or at least to the sightings of Christ by his followers immediately after the Crucifixion. However, the incident of the duel, prior to which he promises Mercédès that he will not kill her son Albert but will instead allow himself to be killed, is an example of the fact that the character and reader alike are never permitted to lose sight of Monte Cristo's mortality. The scene may remind the reader of Messianic self-sacrifice until the next chapter, where Mercédès has left and Monte Cristo finds himself alone with his thoughts about the consequences of his promise. Like Christ, he does not want to die. Yet, in true Pythagorean fashion, he refers to the corpse he will be once he has allowed Albert to kill him as "un peu de poussière,"^{xvii} rather than the Christian body transfigured, and implies that his death will mean the end of his plans for revenge.

Monte Cristo sees death as a release from the burdens of the physical body and an end to the concerns that pertain to that particular existence: "Qu'est-ce que la mort? Un degré de plus dans le calme et deux peut-être dans le silence."^{xviii} However, his one regret about dying is "la ruine des mes projets si lentement

élaborés, si laborieusement bâtis. ” These ideas, that he can be authorized to carry out divine vengeance and that his plans can die with him, seem unlikely to accord with mainstream Catholic doctrine. Following the character along religious lines means rewarding his goodness by having him live in wealth and happiness after he emerges from the prison, having found that his fiancée has been waiting for him. This would align the tendency of the narrative more closely with conventional Gothic romance. Those responsible for his misery would be duly punished, literally and figuratively crushed under the weight of their wrongdoing, like Walpole’s *Manfred*. This is what the experienced reader of Gothic novels might expect him to do if he were the hero of a Gothic novel. But we are not witnessing a linear progression to a pleasant, well-defined end. Instead, his attitude is like that of the migrating soul of Ovid’s Pythagoras:

since I am embarked on the boundless sea and
have spread my full sails to the winds, there is nothing
in all the world that keeps its form. All things are in a
state of flux, and everything is brought into being with
a changing nature. Time itself flows on in constant
motion, just like a river...that which once existed is no
more, and that which was not has come to be; and so the
whole round of motion is gone through again.^{11xix}

There is an eclecticism in Dumas’ handling of both plot and main character. Along with elements reminiscent of Gothic romance and a clear focus on narrative as conceptually related to medieval architecture, we are once again confronted with the decidedly un-medieval idea of time as spiral in nature, in which things and phenomena return in altered form. This is the structure of Dantès’ life and of the

¹¹ “Et quoniam magno feror aequore plenaque ventis/ vela dedi: nihil est toto. quod perstet, in orbe./ cuncta fluunt, omnisque vagans formatur imago/ ipsa quoque adsiduo labuntur tempora motu./ non secus ac flumen...nam quod fuit ante, relictum est/ fitque, quod haut fuerat, momentaque cuncta novantur.” *Metamorphoses*, l. 176-179, 183-185

revenge he devises in response to the events of his past. He can consider his vengeance justifiable because it completes this image of time. The religious way in which he frames his revenge does not entirely obscure the underlying notion that his enemies' victimization by subterfuge similar to, but even subtler than theirs is essentially the fulfillment of this view. One is hard pressed to find justification for such complete revenge in Biblical doctrine. The New Testament¹² contains the exhortation "unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other." Even the Old Testament¹³ demands "an eye for an eye," while the avenger in this narrative exacts a much higher price in at least one glaring instance.¹⁴ Danglars, Villefort, and Fernand, having initiated a series of transformations in Dantès through their jealousies and stratagems, must fall victim to revenge of a nature at least as devastating.

Indeed, these notions, perhaps more Ovidean than Pythagorean (since we can only guess at the philosopher's teachings through the words of detractors or adherents) are of greater significance than the pseudo-Catholic ones in which Dantès clothes his motives. In much the same way that Hardy's Sue Bridehead is modern because she looks *back* beyond medievalism to classicism, Dumas looks beyond the rigid characterizations and simplistic approach to morality of Gothic fiction to the fluid categories of Pythagoras' view as filtered through Ovid's cosmogony of change. Therefore, the narrative and characters that result from this treatment of the subject of revenge are not Gothic, even if they may have been presented that way at the outset.

¹² Mt. 5:39; Lk. 6:29

¹³ Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21; Mt. 5:38 (this last mention is made in the context of revenge. Jesus exhorts his disciples to renounce revenge in favor of forbearance and forgiveness. Clearly, Dumas' character is not following Christian doctrine, and he has taken Mosaic law too far.)

¹⁴ The death of Villefort's young son is well beyond the scope of just revenge.

Both are extraordinarily complex as a result of Dumas' eclectic approach to characterization and narrative technique, since he exploits Gothicism and classicism in each to varying degrees.

Yet, there is another facet to the idea of "constant motion" mentioned by the speaker in the *Metamorphoses*—instability. One of Monte Cristo's most striking characteristics is the fact that he is essentially a nomad. In spite of his island, and various houses and apartments, Monte Cristo is homeless in the physical sense as well as being without a spiritual or emotional center beyond his desire for revenge. Unlike the Gothic villains he and others compare him to, Monte Cristo does not have a physical domain. Unlike the Gothic heroes, in *Otranto* and *Udolpho*, he is never rewarded with a landed estate and legitimate titles. Not only must he invent his title, but he must also borrow his domain. We find him renting houses by proxy in various locations – and they are never Gothic. In fact, many of them seem to be buildings that date only as far back as the eighteenth century when the Gothic began to be set aside in favor of classical shapes and motifs. Moreover, he is never permitted to possess the Chateau d'If in the normal sense. Just as Monte Cristo cannot really be considered a hero or a villain, the building that creates him cannot be considered entirely his.

The ambiguities of this character reflects the plight of modern France, separated from its old, absolutist, monarchic self, it cannot return to its past, for it has changed too much; it has lost its innocent capacity to trust and reverence such authority. The story of France's political history after 1789 can at times amount to a catalogue of forms of government. Having tried to lodge its hopes and aspirations in

a variety of political structures, including several forms of monarchy, France finds itself politically homeless at the time that Dumas is writing. It is unable to go back to absolutism and unsure of where to go post-regicide, post-empire, post-Restoration, as it finds itself discontented with constitutional monarchy. Yet, even in the midst of this uncertainty, new vistas open before the new, old nation, just as the horizon stretches far beyond the rootless Monte Cristo at the end of the novel. Having died to the world, and his former personality having died in the prison, he is a wandering soul, who is able to settle everywhere and nowhere.

One can also view Monte Cristo's nomadic nature as the story of the nineteenth century Frenchman, who is part of a new nation that can recognize itself as such, but who is also increasingly becoming an individual who can determine his own destiny, separate from that of his nation, to a much greater extent than could his forbears. With opportunity of this kind comes a certain instability and disconnection from the world beyond the self. People in this novel have access to the benefits of upward mobility but are also subject to its pitfalls. Yet, ultimately, it is the opportunity that the novel recognizes. Its benefits outweigh all negatives because homelessness is the other side of freedom and freedom is what the Revolution and its aftermath must embrace in order for it not to have been merely an exercise in anarchy and violence. The stability of the *ancien régime* is ultimately proven to be false because it imprisons the individual spirit and binds his disadvantage to the ease and privilege of others, not by choice or by design of those thus disadvantaged, but by accident of birth. The ordinary Frenchman is reborn into a new world in which he is free—and obliged to keep moving. So, even though Albert's father, Fernand de

Mondego, is discredited and demoted in the social hierarchy, he himself is able to make a fresh start, aware that there are no limitations placed on him, simply by divesting himself of his father's name and possessions.

Dumas understood that readers—particularly those who read Nôtre Dame de Paris, increasingly expected buildings in novels to represent permanence, a sense of belonging, and a sense of history, both personal and national.¹⁵ Rather than gratify such expectations he instead shows how easily they can be subverted. The narrative moves too swiftly from one building to another for the reader to develop more than passing familiarity with any of them. Dantès and the narrative leave the Chateau d'If behind after he escapes and we never learn much more about it than the fact that it was a prison. None of the denizens of the mansions we encounter in this novel are permitted to remain in them, and characters like Fernand possess them under false pretenses, using money got by immoral means. Buildings are resolutely treated as ordinary objects, not the repositories of national history and cultural identity that Ainsworth and Hugo would have readers believe they are. At best, they house personal memories that may or may not be intertwined with historically significant events. As to social place, buildings play the role of telling what false modesty prevents the parvenu from telling people himself. It is the outward sign of upward mobility—or downward displacement. In instances where people are demoted from high to low social status, they must also renounce their domains as well. Albert de

¹⁵ This is as true in the author's own life. Maurois informs us that Dumas wanted to buy the house in which he was born from a friend of his who owned it. Both men seemed to have understood that this friend was merely a tenant who would one day have to make way for the rightful owner for, having been born there, it seemed only right that he should die there, as was his intention. Dumas, in effect, belonged to the house even more than it belonged to him. His ties with the little house at Villers-Cotterets made it more his than the owner's.

Morcerf chooses homelessness and the itinerant life of a soldier of no rank in order to sever his connection with the father Monte Cristo has disgraced.

Social place as a set of rigid, historically determined categories is undermined in this narrative as the reader confronts one instance after another in which boundaries are shown to be quite permeable, though at great cost. First in Rome, then in Paris we see characters elevated from humble stations solely through the dubious acquisition of great wealth, while aristocrats are enslaved, as in the case of Haydée, or disgraced, as in the case of Villefort and Madame Danglars. Dantès, the wrongly convicted revolutionary and the Abbé Faria, a character represented as having materially aided Napoleon's designs, are reduced to the same level of misery in the Château d'If. This mobility would not have been plausible if this novel had been set in the Europe of a century earlier. Nor do Danglars, Morcerf, and Mercédès find soil more fertile for their transformation from poor provincials to wealthy elites than in France in the turbulent early nineteenth century.

Social mobility and the new identities that emerge with it are also presented as something constructed by narrative. They are products of human creativity analogous to fortresses and revenge plots. Dumas conveys a strong impression of the ease with which other characters create new personas by disappearing and reappearing with new stories about themselves. Yet, beyond the fact that some narratives of this kind supersede others in significance and effectiveness (as in the instance where Morcerf's defense of his conduct at Janina is discredited by Haydée's story), he appears to offer no judgment on the subject; it is not represented as something negative or positive in itself. Rather, the idea that narrative can reconstruct identity is a circumstance that

presents new opportunities and challenges for the characters and for his intricate narrative. One may even say that the concept of place, both social and physical, is intertwined with that of revenge in The Count of Monte Cristo.

In all of the instances in which characters experience drastic changes in social status, it is a narrative that precipitates events. Haydée, the Greek princess turned slave, whose name suggests that she also returns from the dead, exposes the baseness of Fernand, Count of Morcerf, by telling his peers how he betrayed the trust of her father by bringing about his murder and selling his wife and daughter into slavery. Through her narrative, the man who begins life as a poor but basically honest Catalan fisherman falls below the rank assigned him by birth. When Monte Cristo begins to set his plans for revenge in motion by having the Danglars, Villeforts, and the illegitimate child that is the result of the affair between Baroness Danglars and Villefort over for dinner, his house is used to prompt the telling of their scandalous story. An acquisition of a mere five days before, the building is initially the main object of attention. Its seeming newness and its oriental furnishings contrast starkly with the ruin it has lately been and with its other life as the scene of the affair between Villefort and Mrs. Danglars, while she was still married to her first husband. But Monte Cristo's dismissiveness of the other characters' interest in the building is indicative of Dumas' relentless focus on the plot and on the revelations he uses the building to effect. Monte Cristo tells a seemingly harmless story—harmless because it is old, unsubstantiated, and could not possibly apply to any of its hearers—that brings about the dissolution of the Danglars marriage and the transformation of a common thief, who has been masquerading as an Italian prince, into an aristocratic

bastard. In this case, a building sets the stage for the narrative that changes the identity of a character.

We have observed that Monte Cristo's revenge plot is framed in terms of architecture and receives new impetus when he sees the prison. Physical place is of such profound importance in this novel that even the perpetrators of Dantès' betrayal, particularly Danglars and Fernand, feel the need to remove themselves from Marseille, their home and the scene of their triumph, for fear that he will return and take revenge. Dumas' portrayal leaves the impression that they are not really part of the environments they choose for themselves. However, they are confident that their removal, once effected, will permit them to assume new identities and amass wealth and influence unhindered by fear of being found out. So convinced are they that changing their location, and changing or obscuring their stories about themselves will suffice to protect them that they fail to consider the possibility of being the victims of Dantès' revenge until their lives are destroyed.

Yet, if his enemies are not really part of their new surroundings, and not really the masters of all they survey, the same can be said of Monte Cristo. However, when he visits the prison, it is clear that he considers it his, though it is drastically altered, and though the people who now occupy it do not know him. He manages to appropriate it at an emotional level, simultaneously disenfranchising Faria and Mirabeau, the revolutionary who actually did occupy a cell in the building. Though Dantès' laying claim to the prison appears to be a symbolic transfer of ownership from the traditional oppressors to the oppressed—à la Ainsworth and Hugo—the author seems to resist this idea of making the building a symbol in this wider sense in

favor of concentrating on the characters within the context of the novel. Near the end, we come to realize that the prison has always belonged to Dantès, even while it is tenanted by others; it is his to renounce. It is at the point where he revisits the Château that the link between the mind of the character and the Château becomes most explicit, even though the building ceases to be a part of the story early in the novel.¹⁶

Like Ainsworth, Dumas concentrated on constructing complex narratives and interweaving them. Because he also published his novels in serial form, he understood the need to present a story that would leave his readers breathless in anticipation of its outcome, while dreading its conclusion. Though Dumas' characters seem more complex than are Ainsworth's, though Dumas shows more subtly how their motives clash and intersect throughout this novel, it is clear from the many instances where they tell stories about one another and about their own past lives that the author is as concerned with complicating his narrative with multiple sub-plots that will gradually become linked and ultimately resolved, as he is with the notion that narratives can alter identity, and one's place in society.

Through Dumas' use of a Gothic edifice to create a character that essentially transcends the building-created and building-dependent villain, he at once acknowledges his debt to the tried and true approach, while pointing to literature beyond it. His character is born of a Gothic building but does not depend on it for existence. Yet, the structure of the story still bears important hallmarks of the Gothic

¹⁶ Of course, since this novel was originally published in serial form in the *Journal des Débats*, readers lived with the presence of the Chateau d'If for a longer period of time than would the reader of today. The experience of the building in this context is prolonged and its influence on the popular imagination would have been more profound as a result.

novel: it is heavily weighted toward the description of events and episodic plot structure. The chapter divisions reflect this structure through titles that indicate shifts from one sub-plot to another. The story itself is loaded with improbabilities that Dumas seems to expect the reader to accept, a circumstance, which ultimately places the burden of deriving meaning and enjoyment from the text upon the reader. This last is a trait shared by all Gothic novels and by the novels examined here. All require the reader to complete their assembly. It is important to remember that this is true in a literal as well as a literary sense, for most first appeared in serially published parts, alone or in journals, as in this case, and were to be collected and bound by the reader.

Whether Dumas was aware of the tendency of novels set in Gothic buildings to transform those buildings into landmarks and tourist attractions is not very important here – though as a successful composer of *Impressions de voyages*, he undoubtedly was. The natural consequence of using a real building in a work of fiction, such as those encountered in this study, is to create an interest in it and in its continued existence by bringing it directly within the realm of the reader's experience and by enduing it with significance that is derived from the fiction. As has been observed in the examination of the novels featured in this study so far, this new interest has a force that is apart from the work, even as it derives its original impetus from it. And Dumas, like Hugo and Ainsworth, consciously employs that force to good effect. What is still more significant is that he is still using the narrative model and even the preparatory methods prior to the composition of the novel that were established by Hugo and used so often by Ainsworth. Like Ainsworth, he spent time

in the places he wrote about with a view to becoming sufficiently acquainted with them to be able to capture their essence on paper.^{xx} As a travel writer,^{xxi17} he was also aware that a faithful representation of chosen settings was as important as having accurate data on the politics of a period so close to his and his readers' present.

He found himself enthusiastically received in the European cities in which he set his novels. He was revered in Marseilles^{xxii} as a result of Monte Cristo. In making Marseilles, its people, and its shores a prominent feature of his story, he added a new attraction to the city and provided his readers with a fiction that also functioned as a travel narrative or guidebook in much the same way that Ainsworth's novels did. His descriptions are not as exhaustive as are those of Ainsworth but they presented Marseilles no less carefully. Yet, The Count of Monte Cristo is not open to the charge of being a failed admixture of romance and guidebook as are Windsor Castle, The Tower of London and Ainsworth's other novels in part because Dumas places emphasis on setting only as the generators and manipulators of narrative. They are part of the novel's structure, not an agenda in themselves; they therefore do not vie with the story for attention. For the author of The Count of Monte Cristo, buildings were also part of a landscape, or cityscape, such as Rome or Paris, where chateaux and town houses are given equal descriptive emphasis to gardens and courtyards.

¹⁷ Dumas had planned to write *Impressions de Voyage dans Paris*, which would be a literary walking tour of the architectural and other historical treasures of the great city. He had already contracted with publishers Béthune and Plon when the great success of Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* induced them to request that Dumas write a romantic adventure story set in Paris instead. The demands of his publishers forced Dumas to think about the setting before generating the plot. This circumstance limited his story options but it also sent him to Memoires tirés des Archives de la Police de Paris, the book that contained the story of *Le Diamant de la Vengeance* from which the main plot of The Count of Monte Cristo is derived.

There is, therefore, no reason to believe that Dumas had any interest in saving the Château d'If for posterity or in recommending it as a national monument. There are no lengthy sections referring to the stages of the building's development, nor are there any chapters devoted to a description of the events that have occurred there during the course of its existence. His novel, therefore, does not press this claim for the building with the same force and so cannot be placed in the category of architectural historical fiction to which we can assign such novels as Notre Dame de Paris, The Tower of London, and Windsor Castle. However, since Dumas makes use of a real Gothic building, and patterns the structure of his novel in accordance with nineteenth century notions of medieval architecture, his novel partakes of some essential characteristics of this kind of novel, including a plot driven narrative, a carefully defined historical context, emphasis on the special significance of buildings and other places in the lives of people, and most significantly, the tendency to generate in the reading public an interest in the building used. The construction of this novel ultimately serves a cause he was not particularly interested in. Although Dumas himself does not make a case for conservation, the fact that the novel produces awareness of the building allows others to do so. Only its entire exclusion from the work could have prevented this result.

Without the focus on preservation of the Gothic building that marks the novels of Ainsworth and Hugo, the horizon of The Count of Monte Cristo would have narrowed considerably had Dumas placed the Château D'If at the center of the novel.

Known to Dumas' public as Mirabeau's prison,¹⁸ the Château d'If, admits of a fairly limited range of possibilities for the plot, but because it is presented as a tomb for the living, Dumas can use it to suspend the plot while the prison and what occurs within it take center stage. He can also resurrect his prisoner from his figurative death, simultaneously re-awakening the plot, and permit it to resume its progress in an entirely different direction.

The island fortress occupies a relatively small part of the novel as the setting in only the first twenty-one of 117 chapters, though its influence pervades the story. People became interested in the building because, though they knew it as an historical presence, as the one-time prison of Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau (1749-1801), they now also viewed it as the scene of the extraordinary events they read about in The Count of Monte Cristo. Dumas introduces a sense of the miraculous into the novel and adds a fictional dimension to the historical building, generating a narrative that accompanies and often eclipses its physical reality. The effect is the same as if the building had been the center of an architectural novel. Dumas had restored it to the public consciousness complete with a new narrative that made the building even more fascinating than it had been in the past. At present, the building is being touted on a tourism web site for Marseille as one that is as famous for things that didn't happen within its walls as it is for things that did:

Célèbre forteresse dont l'histoire se confond avec légende. Construit par François 1^{er}, qui désirait une place forte sur l'île, le château d'If ne servit pourtant guère à protéger Marseille. N'ayant subi aucune attaque, il fut transformé en prison d'état en 1634.

¹⁸ See Bell where he discusses how the popularity of Monte Cristo made people more interested in the Chateau d'If as Dantès' prison than as the place where Mirabeau was confined. [Bell, A. Craig. Alexandre Dumas: A Biography and Study. London, Toronto, etc.: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1950. 162]

Dès lors, le château d'If accueillit nombre de
 prisonniers célèbres, réels ou imaginaires. Mais
 bien que Mirabeau ou le Masque de fer y furent
 internés, c'est bien sûr Edmond Dantès, le Monte
 Cristo de Dumas, qui fit son renom^{xxiii}

Not only was there never a prisoner by the name of Edmond Dantès, the Man in the Iron Mask was never in this prison.^{xxiv} The island that gives the novel its title became so well known in association with the novel that the line between fiction and reality blurred. Its inclusion in the novel established the identity of Dumas' own home. A visitor to his new country house,^{xxv} unaware of the exact address, directed the coachman to "Monte Cristo", whereupon the coachman immediately conveyed him to Dumas' yet unfinished and unnamed house. It was called Monte Cristo from then on. An unintended illustration of the fact that Dumas was not a champion of Gothic buildings in general, or of the Chateau d'If in particular, his house also erased the boundaries between architectural styles and for that reason, eludes precise description. Dumas himself referred to it as

ce précieux bijou... Il est à pans coupés, avec
 balcons extérieurs en pierre, vitraux, croisées,
 tourelles, et girouettes... Il n'appartient à aucune
 époque précise, ni à l'art grec ni à l'art moyen.
 Il a pourtant un parfum de Renaissance qui lui
 Prête un charme particulier.^{xxvi}

Begun as a cottage in St. Germain-en-Laye, the land on which it was to be built grew from one to six acres and the cottage became an impressive four-storey mansion. It was, to use Lawrence Sterne's expression, his hobbyhorse, and he poured increasingly large sums of money into it – estimates began at around 12,000 and ballooned to 150,000 francs^{xxvii}. Just as Dumas tended to attract notice wherever he went, his house became the favorite stop of curiosity-seekers and he began, more and

more, to seem very similar to his larger-than-life hero of Monte Cristo. Balzac¹⁹ writes of Dumas' house in 1848 that "Monte-Cristo est une des plus délicieuses *folies* qu'on ait faites. C'est la plus royale bonbonnière qui existe.", linking it with the craze for building Gothic relics and "folies" on one's property that had already had rural England and Ireland in its grip.²⁰ Balzac's choice of this word at once brings to mind these relatively new architectural developments even as it characterizes the activity of erecting these structures. His use of the expression "royale bonbonnière" simultaneously aggrandized and trivialized the building and conveys the idea that Dumas' creation was charming and delightfully complex, reflecting a taste for the antique as well as for the exotic, but perhaps did not merit a place alongside serious architecture. His works have often suffered the same fate, at once praised and belittled as beneath the notice of serious scholarship.

Dumas was undoubtedly as fascinated as Hugo was with architecture but, as his house amply demonstrates, his interest did not cause him to fix his attention on any one style. His thoughts on the subject emerge from fundamental assumptions made about architecture and building, for instance, its rationality as something carefully planned, even if this sense of order is not readily apparent to those outside of the creative process. This view is essentially a nineteenth century conceptualization of medieval architecture that, as we have seen, was common intellectual currency. Notions of the carefully orchestrated complexity of Gothic design and the motivation to build with great attention to detail on a grand scale are

¹⁹ In *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, tome V. Collection Speolberch de Lovenjoul. A. 303. folios 529-530. Cited in Maurois' *Les Trois Dumas*. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957, p. 229.

²⁰ In his book entitled *The Gothic revival*, Chris Brooks presents detailed picture of the development of this fad for building "ruins" and Gothic -style structures on estates in England and Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century. (Published in London: Phaidon, 1999)

transposed to the narrative structure of Monte Cristo the novel and to the organizational principle that underlies and governs the character Dantès' revenge plot. Here, as in Hugo's novel, we see the building as having emerged as a fortress from military necessity and, when it is no longer useful as a fortress, transformed into a prison (rather than demolished) in order to meet new needs. Dumas assumes that his more intellectual readers will also understand the use of the fortress to convey abstract ideas in an era that increasingly recognized Gothic architecture as a separate style (rather than simply being the way one built if one was not interested in using a particular style), as a form of artistic expression, which rallied the support of many French Romantics around it, and even as a mode of political expression (particularly in England but also in France). Even here, it is a narrative capable of being overwritten, having gone from being a fortress, to a prison, to a tourist attraction. In his novel, the use of the Gothic building imparts a sense of the monumentality and of the enormous implications of French history, another edifice to whose construction Dumas sought to contribute. In his memoirs, he introduces a section on recent history with the subtitle: "L'édifice féodal et l'édifice industriel,"^{xxviii} a title that conveys the idea that, as a particularly articulate product of his age, he thought of historical narrative in architectural terms as did Hugo and Ainsworth, but without attaching history to any building in particular.

For all of these authors, the architectural images and terms represented more than the use of metaphor. The structure of the edifice as they conceived it was based on assumptions and practices that have their origins in medieval building methods and have little or nothing to do with the changes occurring in contemporary European

architecture, unless they are in reaction against them. Novels that were written this way are addressed to their own age to a much greater extent than meets the eye. They are novels of transition from one age to another, industrial one; they are hybrid novels that mirror the ironies and ambiguities of an age in which technology threatened the cultural treasures that it was in the best position to preserve. The advent of machine-cut girders and iron tracery was to be a means of building Gothic buildings faster and stronger but these innovations rendered some artistic assumptions about Gothic buildings problematic before it ultimately changed the nature of the Gothic style. For instance, what does one do with the long held assumption that the power of tracery lay in the idea that it made light pass through stone and made this heavy material seem as light as lace? What becomes of a newly developed discourse based in medieval ideas about architecture in an industrial age in which architects were becoming consumers of ready-made goods just like everyone else, instead of innovators of forms and structures that were appropriate for particular sites and needs? For people like Pugin, the thing to do was resist what appeared to him to be the debasement of the creative process and its relegation to the realm of professionals and capitalists. Dumas uses the structural paradigm that medieval architecture provides to build his narratives but within the world he constructs, technology is embraced and employed as a tool in the hands of the main character and his enemies alike. One need only recall the incident where Monte Cristo makes use of the telegraph to ruin Danglars' finances. At the same time, ancient knowledge is also shown to be an instrument of mischief, as in the incident of the poisoning of

Villefort's young son. Technologies, both ancient and modern were merely instruments and were in themselves neither moral nor immoral.

These authors focused on Gothic buildings, not out of nostalgia but out of the assumption made by their age that the methods belonging to the medieval mode of construction are the same as those belonging to the creation of meaningful narrative, whether fiction or history. Dumas could conceptualize the events of history as having foundations built in pre-existent conditions or in previous occurrences in the same way that he was able to see Dantès' elaborate plan for revenge as something for which he needed to lay an elaborate foundation. The entire novel is structured along the lines of this architectural model and is allowed to take its present form as Dumas adds new and interconnected sub-plots—like the additions and intricate passageways added to a Gothic building as it develops according to the needs of its occupiers—to the basic narrative we encounter in the first volume. He accomplishes this while occasionally reminding the reader that successive events in the novel are the natural, if not the only possible, results of the events that take place at the beginning.

Buildings as physical entities are treated in a less pedantic way than in Hugo or Ainsworth's novels. Dumas fully understood and exploited the special resonance of a Gothic building, living as he was in nineteenth century France where people struggled with the legacy of feudalism, even as the medieval period was already an object of fascination and nostalgia in England and the rest of Europe. Moreover, he knew Hugo well and respected his works, so he was familiar with Notre Dame de Paris, with its heavy emphasis on the cathedral as a physical presence, and as the manifestation of abstract principles. Yet, the novelist sidesteps the limitations as well

as the opportunities presented by this approach and uses the Château d'If to stretch his hero and his narrative. His use of the Château for example, is as practical as it is based in the aforementioned abstract ideas about building construction and its conceptual link to the construction of narrative. Once the building serves the purpose of creating an opportunity to shift the tone and tendency of the narrative, it is removed by Dumas to return only briefly at the end. When it is reintroduced into the story, the few Gothic associations allowed it at the outset are swept away and it is no longer permitted to serve the plot in any material way. Dumas essentially relieves it of its duties and proceeds with his story. From this point to the end, all buildings begin to disappear from the narrative and the major characters essentially become transients. The narrative and characters are alike freed from the limitations imposed on them by the conventions of Gothic romance.

- ⁱ Zimmerman, Daniel. Alexandre Dumas le Grand. Biographie suivie de Jacques Bonhomme un inédit d'Alexandre Dumas. Paris: Julliard, 1993. 243
- ⁱⁱ Dumas, Alexandre. Le Comte de Monte Cristo. . Six volumes. Paris: Nelson and Calmann-Levy, 1938. 277
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bell, A. Craig. Alexandre Dumas: A Biography and Study. London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1950. 160; Really a dreadful book in terms of the way it uncritically internalizes nineteenth century assumptions about race. However, it does contain a good deal of information about the progress of Dumas' career. See also Maurois, Andre. Les Trois Dumas. Librairie Hachette, 1957. 219
- ^{iv} Bell, A. Craig. Alexandre Dumas: a Biography and Study. London, Toronto, etc.: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1950. 160
- ^v Maurois, Andre. Les Trois Dumas. Librairie Hachette, 1957. 224
- ^{vi} Dumas, Alexandre, pere. Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Six volumes. Paris: Nelson and Calmann-Levy, 1938. 168
- ^{vii} Dumas, Alexandre. Mes Mémoires. Volume I, Book III, chapter iii.
- ^{viii} Dumas, Alexandre, pere. Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Six volumes. Paris: Nelson and Calmann-Levy, 1938. V, xiii. 244
- ^{ix} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. VI. ch. xvi. 285
- ^x Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. V. ch. xvi. 287
- ^{xi} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. VI. ch. xvi. 300
- ^{xii} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. I. ch. xix. 343
- ^{xiii} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. II. ch. xiv. 308
- ^{xiv} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. II. ch. xiv. 313
- ^{xv} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. II. ch. xiii. 276
- ^{xvi} Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, Bk. XV. T.E. Page, E. Capps. W.H.D. Rouse, L.A Post, E.H Warmington. Eds. The Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958. 377
- ^{xvii} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. V. ch. xiii. 245
- ^{xviii} Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Bk. V. ch. xiii. 245
- ^{xix} Ovid. 377
- ^{xx} Bell. 161
- ^{xxi} Maurois. 219
- ^{xxii} Bell. 321
- ^{xxiii} <http://tourisme.voila.fr/villes/marseille/fra/dec/vil/acc.htm>. Copyright France Telecom. Powered by ECHO [entry found under the subtitle *Des Villes a decouvrir*]
- ^{xxiv} He was held on the Isle Sainte Marguerite from about 1687 to 1698, when he was transferred to the Bastille. [See Furneaux, Rupert. The Man Behind the Mask: the real Story of the ancient Prisoner.] London: Cassell, 1954. 34
- ^{xxv} Bell. 210. Cites *Histoire de mes Bêtes* as source.
- ^{xxvi} Maurois. 228
- ^{xxvii} Bell. 210
- ^{xxviii} Dumas, Alexandre, pere. Mes Memoires, tome 4. Pierre Josserand, ed. Editions Gallimard. 1967. 390

Chapter Six

The Gothic and the Building discarded in Jane Austen's parody

The novels of Hugo, Ainsworth, and Dumas use the Gothic edifice as the reference point for the discussion of history, politics, and building preservation and as a means of achieving the permanence of buildings, the popularization of history, and the assertion of the legitimacy of the novel as the medium for such discussion. Jane Austen's novel can be said to un-do everything attempted in the works of these authors. In it, she insists upon the necessity of separating the Gothic fiction technique from the novel form, she focuses relentlessly on her own present, and she constantly reasserts the primacy of the novelist over that of the Gothic building as the source of material for discussion and as that which determines structure in narrative. Moreover, she places particular emphasis on the reader and on the activity of reading in a work that, like the moralizing novels of her day, relentlessly calls upon those exposed to it to consider issues such as the role of women in society, the power of the printed word, and the degree to which English society and politics were in want of reform. Austen is different from most novelists of the late eighteenth century in that she does not align herself and her reader on one side or another of the controversies that raged in late eighteenth century England. Rather, she forces everyone to consider, and even concede to, the ideas of the other side. Ultimately, the reader is teased into thinking more seriously about these controversies and into taking a more moderate view.

Since human beings are at the center of Northanger Abbey, the reader is forced to focus on them—and on himself, rather than on the abbey of the title. The cast of the characters' minds is revealed through what they read, through what they

say, and through the way they negotiate the various kinds of social interaction in which they are required to engage. Her focus on ideas expressed by people, rather than on those expressed by buildings allows her to be more potentially controversial than any of the other novelists discussed so far have been by allowing those ideas to interact with and contradict each other, especially within individual characters. Moreover, Austen strives to create a novel that is inherently better suited to depicting this interaction among people and (conservative as well as liberal) ideas. Hence a debate arises that can easily be transferred into the world beyond the novel concerning the degree to which the reading of Gothic novels is ultimately corrupting, if not to the morals, at least to reason.¹ Its inherent dangers are conveyed through the novel's heroine, the consequence of whose avid reading of such fiction is a strong inclination to interpret circumstances in the world around her in terms of the Gothic plots with which she is familiar.

Yet, Austen, unlike Hannah More, Elizabeth Hamilton, and other conservative writers of her day, does not involve the character in moral ruin as the consequence of her misguided reading. Nor does she imply that it will forever destroy her capacity for good judgment, yet, that capacity is shown to be severely compromised by the main character's insistence on transferring the feelings, thoughts, and ideas expressed in Gothic novels into her own experience—the very thing Austen's successors would strive to do in the service of ancient buildings. Austen makes clear that this approach to literature has its pitfalls for both writers and readers.

¹ Of course, for people like William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, reason is the seat of morality. Real morality cannot exist where there is no rational capability for the so-called Jacobin intellectuals. Jane Austen knew that for some the two concepts were closely intertwined.

Like most of her contemporaries, she understood the subversive potential of reading. However unlike Hannah More and her counterpart, Mary Hays, who aligns herself with the politically and morally liberal New Philosophy of people like Thomas Paine, Mary Wollestonecraft, and William Godwin, and whose novels always look to the wider implications of individual error, Jane Austen considers this concept in her novel mainly in terms of its implications for the individual and for the family unit, not as directly affecting society as a whole.

Through reading about the foibles of a relentlessly realistic and personable heroine, readers can become as engrossed as the characters themselves in discussion of the merits of feeling versus rationality, of adherence to social norms when they conflict with one's sense of the morally right, or even of political freedom when it gives free reign to ideas and interests that have the potential to threaten the stability of the state and social order. They can consider the extent to which they resemble Catherine Morland, the heroine of Austen's novel, in her ignorance and readiness to force evidence to conform to the Gothic narrative structure she brings to the examination of issues, rather than allow the nature of the information before her to determine the way it is processed. Though the presence of the Gothic building in the title promises an exciting and suspenseful story, these other issues begin to dominate the narrative early on. Yet, there is never a disquisition in favor of a particular view concerning any of these controversies. As Marilyn Butler points out, Austen never really expresses an opinion about anything controversial. She rightly uses the word "participates" to describe Austen's relationship to the currents of thought and expression that characterized the period in which her full-length novels were

produced.² Through her or his own participation, the reader also gains access to the discussion that takes place in this, and indeed, in other novels of this ilk. Before any of the other novelists discussed so far could possibly have done so, Austen created a dynamic relationship between the reader, the principal characters and the major ideas of her novel that not only renders the building obsolete as a subject of discourse and as a frame of reference for abstract topics, it also renders the other characters relatively insignificant, except insofar as they interact directly with the main characters and ideas.³ We cannot expect any subsidiary narratives here. As we will see further on, there is a prime opportunity for a lengthy and interesting digression in the story of the Tilney family and of their acquisition of the Abbey that Austen never uses. We never learn more about peripheral characters than has direct bearing on Catherine's story and on the narrative in hand.

Northanger Abbey is the story of an unremarkable young woman, Catherine Morland, who is an avid reader of Gothic romances and who finds herself in the resort town of Bath. Her first encounter with society other than her immediate family and a vapid family friend, who acts as her chaperone there, yields a friendship with the shallow and flirtatious Isabella Thorpe and her overbearing brother John. Isabella augments her new friend's already steady diet of Gothic novels with a list of still more sensational ones. Catherine also meets the members of the Tilney family, including the younger brother Henry, with whom she becomes infatuated. On being invited by the Tilneys to their family home, the abbey of the title, her imagination is

² 1798-1817

³ Marilyn Butler raises this issue in the context of sentimentalism fiction, a literary experiment into which Jane Austen was born in Jane Austen and the War of Ideas [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. pp. 17-28]

aroused by the image of a medieval building and the ghastly images and twisted plots associated with such structures to which her reading has accustomed her. Catherine's expectations of horror and adventure blind her to the drama that really is unfolding around her as her new friends' father bestows extravagant praise and attention in hopes of wooing her away from her suitor, John Thorpe, on the assumption that she is a wealthy heiress. Once he finds out her true situation, he insults her by abruptly sending her home unaccompanied. Henry Tilney makes everything right again when he visits her at her home and proposes marriage. The novel ends with their union.

Without sacrificing the now familiar Austen marriage-plot and without sounding pedantic, the author analyzes and comments on literary and social conventions of her day, while maintaining a strong voice throughout the novel. There are many instances of discussion between characters in this novel that illustrate Jane Austen's awareness of certain trends in historiography, literature, and artistic discourse that were ushered in by Conjecturalists, Romantics, and others and that imply the notion that an essential similarity exists among all three fields. This chapter will certainly take into account the historical and intellectual backdrop to Austen's age, and unhesitatingly assert that she was aware of, if not fully immersed, in the debates, trends, and momentous events, that swirled around her and which were intricately co-mingled more often than not. It will not, however, occupy itself with proving that Austen was not as sequestered from the world around her as many still assume.⁴

⁴ A perusal of movie reviews on Amazon.com leads me to conclude that most casual readers of Austen's works view her novels as the charming writings of an innocent who never had an impure or improper thought. Furthermore, they seem to believe her novels to be exercises in escapism, deliberately shutting out the world beyond them, when quite to the contrary, they take it all in.

Austen entered the Revolutionary conflict that was then raging in England as well as in France, though she never participated directly in the events that took place around her. However, aside from the shock of revolution and regicide in France, there were fundamental changes in the nature of hostilities between nations that emerged from the events unfolding across the channel. Warren Roberts has pointed out that “the objectives of war changed” during the period that marked the first outbreak of violent revolution in France, “from the capture of towns, colonies, or provinces to the survival of conflicting ideologies and social systems.”ⁱ This meant that the people could also ‘participate’ in the conflict simply by arguing about it since its roots were not in the annexation of territory but in persuading people that a particular ideology was in fact the right one and should be endorsed and submitted to by all.

The other side of this notion of a war of ideas and of questioning of long-held notions is, as we have already noted⁵ that reading any material that engaged in the discussion of these conflicts, or that accorded with a particular ideology could be looked upon in the light of subversive activity during the years following the French Revolution. The writing of novels, particularly of novels that questioned the nature of English society and its political system were always looked upon as subversive, it seems. Censorship in England and France kept most objective material out of the hands of the vast majority of the reading public for at least the previous two centuries.

Marilyn Butler in Jane Austen and the War of Ideas and Warren Roberts in Jane Austen and the French Revolution have each written books that effectively discredit the notion that Austen was blinded by her circumstances or by design to the tensions and dangers of the times in which she lived. Many scholars whose works have appeared in the period spanned by these two works have also contributed greatly to silencing critics who have tended to see Austen’s novels as escapism.

⁵ See especially chapter two of the present study.

However, as writers, such as Lawrence Sterne⁶ find ever subtler ways of flouting the rules of censorship, and as the rules governing literary production are gradually relaxed, the novel's potential to be subversive increases. During the late eighteenth century, people were extremely sensitive to anything that could be construed as critical of the English government and of the nation's time-honored social institutions. As Marilyn Butler remarks: "that English society was not being undermined from within in 1797-8 is obvious now. But at the time it was far from apparent, and the sense of crisis generated a formidable witch-hunt."ⁱⁱ Yet, rather than shy away from this subversive potential, Austen allows herself and her readers to encounter it at various intervals and to varying degrees in all of her novels. Henry Tilney alludes to the sensitivity of the times when, in response to Catherine's unfounded suspicions regarding his father, he implores her to "consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained" and reminds her that they live in a country where "every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies."ⁱⁱⁱ The passage from which these lines are taken is quoted at greater length below. It is a stark illustration of the degree to which English society had imbibed the fear and suspicion that reigned in France. Yet the authorial voice does not intrude on the narrative in order to raise and discuss this in greater depth than would have been permitted in polite society. They are presented as arising naturally during the course of interaction between characters of different opinions and backgrounds. Austen was

⁶ The novel The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman is a splendid example of writing subverted the rules of propriety but could be subject to criticism for having done so only if the critic were willing to admit understanding the innuendos with which the novel is loaded. Moreover, any critic would and did risk having his own sense of propriety called into question for choosing the worst interpretation of language that operated on at least two distinct levels of meaning.

attempting to convey real thoughts and ideas about the age she lived in—an age she knew to be historically significant—through the medium of fiction.

That she, like the Conjecturalists, equates historical with fictional narrative is evident in her assertion in the novel that both are works of invention, a notion that was still a departure from the norm when she was writing this novel, sometime around 1798, and which could still spark lively debate when it was finally published in 1818. Indeed, Eleanor Tilney rather boldly speaks of her willingness in the reading of history

to take the false with the true. In the principal facts they have sources of intelligence in former histories and records, which may be as much depended on I conclude as anything that does not actually pass under one's own observation; and as for the little embellishments you speak of, they are embellishments, and I like them as such."^{iv}

This assertion of the role of imagination in historiography is the strongest evidence of her relationship to the Scottish Enlightenment, which helped give rise to Sir Walter Scott and to his imitators Ainsworth, Hugo, and Dumas. Austen's novel is an example of the blending of the real with the fictitious that, developed still further in the decades after her death, would allow novelists to place invented characters in historical circumstances and incorporate historical buildings and notions of the need for their preservation into their discussion. The new approach to narrative allowed the novel form the ability to expand to accommodate a wide variety of complex subjects.

Eleanor Tilney's description of the history she prefers gives an indication of intellectual sophistication, which surpasses that of Catherine, who is presented as

never having ventured beyond the reading of Gothic novels to get any sense of the new things happening in the literary world. Eleanor's image history is characterized by dynamic interaction between fact and invention and, in this, is unlike that of the history Catherine thinks of when the subject is mentioned. For her, history is a catalog of the "quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all." It is an image of the past in which she cannot see and therefore cannot immerse herself. Austen's presentation of these differing views of history indicates her awareness of a shift occurring in historiography toward narrative methods used in fiction.

The idea that "facts must be understood as well as narrated, seen from within, and not only from the outside"⁷ complements Austen's perspective as a creator of narrative. It is generally understood that she describes the world of the English landed gentry from within its own context, but she also treats the historical context in the same way, not only because this is what she knows best, and because she is living the era she describes, but also because she values this approach. In Northanger Abbey, she places this narrow focus on a particular segment of society and its concerns, as described by a narrator who is a part of it, alongside yet another one in which events and characters' actions are presented by an outside voice—a narrator who is uninvolved in the contrived Gothic world of Catherine Morland. Austen reveals herself as an author and thinker who places greater significance on close intellectual involvement on the part of writer and reader alike in the world presented in the novel.

⁷ associated with Kant.: see chapter one (p.23) of the present study.

Like Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson, as well as the countless novelists who wrote sentimentalist fiction, Austen creates a sense of intimacy between the main character, the reader, and the narrator of the story, among other ways, by setting it in a time and place that fall within the experience of the average middle class reader. It is a perspective that brings the novel into the world, rather than inveigle its readers into thinking themselves in another. The world she wishes to avoid is essentially a literary, rather than an actual, age and place—an obviously contrived one that is presented through descriptions and observations of strange events unfolding in exotic settings and within labyrinthine corridors of medieval buildings, among people quite unlike any the reader is likely ever to have met. It is also a world in which the events of a story, no matter how fantastical, must ultimately conform to the conservative moral ideals of the society to which it is presented, however artificial or uninteresting the result. Austen sets herself the task of thinking her way into characters' minds and lives, while getting the reader to do the same, and encouraging him or her to follow her lead and reject the Gothic approach, which depends heavily on quick-paced action and forces an emotional response to frightening or pathetic events without real examination of the implications, plausibility, or propriety of the ideas and circumstances from which they arise.

In her novel, which so self-consciously compares the genre with history, there is a careful attention to the actions that arise from a given pattern of thought. Special emphasis is placed on the kinds of actions that arise from faulty reasoning. Characters often retrace actions to the reasoning that produces them, only to discover that the premises upon which that reasoning is based are invalid. This approach has a

precedent more recent than Vico and his immediate intellectual descendants, to whose ideas that actions need to be traced to the minds that produced them in order for the past to be retrievable and comprehensible to the present day, Austen's approach bears some resemblance. Mary Hays in Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796)^v refers to the composition of her novel in the Preface in terms that indicate that the idea of a realism ultimately centered on ideas of causation that were themselves subject to debate was bringing the novel within the realm of philosophical inquiry at the close of the eighteenth century: "Whether the incidents, or the characters, are copied from life, is of little importance—The only question is, if the *circumstances*, and situations, are altogether improbable? If not—whether the consequences *might* not have followed from the circumstances?" This argument can be viewed as one of many approaches to the charge against novels that, as works of imagination, they dealt in falsehood. Hays, like Austen, focuses on the plausibility of the situations she presents by considering whether circumstances of a particular nature can lead to the situations she presents. Delving into the mind itself, Austen illustrates how, in the case of Catherine Morland, failure to think correctly leads to an inaccurate assessment of the actions and motives of the other characters she encounters. When she acts on her conclusions, she finds herself in humiliating, and even painful situations. Her failure to base her reasoning on sound premises also causes her to remain ignorant of the drama of which she actually is the heroine. These misunderstandings have much wider implications for the character and for the novel in general, as Catherine is also found to be incapable of judging the merits of other characters correctly as a result of the same tendency toward faulty reasoning. Austen's focus on the main character's

judgment and mistakes places the burden of guilt for the negative situations that befall her squarely on her shoulders. We as readers are permitted to pity her difficulties but we are made to understand that the idea of passivity as it relates to this heroine has no place in this novel.

In Northanger Abbey, the notion that characters—even the good ones—have motives that are neither so pure nor so wicked as represented in Gothic fiction places them outside of its territory, and beyond its influence, among other ways by placing their actions outside of the realm of stock Gothic plot lines. Radcliffe would never allow the heroine of Udolpho to know that she was charming and able to capture the attention of the dashing hero. Such an approach to characterization implies that the character is not completely innocent and guileless and would introduce a degree of self-awareness, complexity, and even moral ambiguity that would make Emily St. Aubert an unsuitable Gothic heroine. Yet, we are influenced to question the main character's motives when we encounter Austen's Catherine more than once assessing the power of her charms and correctly judging herself capable of attracting Henry Tilney, rather than merely waiting for him to select her. In light of the fact that he is much wealthier than she, the reader is apt to wonder whether this character may not be as materialistic as the Thorpes, if not as grasping. Much is made in this novel of "the power of refusal." Catherine certainly makes use of it to eliminate John Thorpe from among her suitors but, in further defiance of the notion of the Gothic heroine, she is shrewd enough to understand when she is in a position to encourage Tilney to choose her, and makes use of this insight.

Through her heroine, we learn how artificial the methods of characterization used by novelists working in the Gothic mode can be. The omniscient authorial voice emerges at times from Austen's intimate treatment of the story in a way that effectively distances the reader from it as if to show, in yet another way, how such distancing of the reader and the author from the action creates a different novel. Her anxiety to meet Miss Tilney again is initially described by the narrator in terms the experienced reader of the Gothic novel—i.e. Catherine as well as the reader of Austen's novel—would understand as suspenseful: "Catherine's resolution of endeavouring to meet Miss Tilney again continued in full force the next morning; and till the usual moment of going to the Pump Room, she felt some alarm from the dread of a second prevention."^{vi} However, the situation clearly does not warrant it, as the very next sentence informs us: "But nothing of that kind occurred, no visitors appeared to delay them, and they all three set off in good time for the Pump Room, where the ordinary course of events and conversation took place."^{vii} While Catherine often tacitly identifies herself with the heroines of the novels she reads, Austen is careful to characterize her as capable of being very practical and reasonable. She is also careful to make sure the reader identifies with the 'right' Catherine. When this character is carried away by her Gothic reading of her world, the narrator uses the distancing techniques of emphatic expression, omniscience, and irony:

'This is strange, indeed!...An immense heavy chest!
What can it hold? Why should it be placed here? Pushed back,
too, as if meant to be out of sight! I will look into it, and directly
too—by daylight. If I stay till evening my candle may go out...'

Her fearful curiosity was every moment growing greater;
and seizing, with trembling hands, the clasp of the lock, she resolved,
at all hazards, to satisfy herself at least as to its contents.^{viii}

The result is unappealing and often takes on a tone that mocks readers and characters equally. Such passages are an image of the narrative technique she wants to move the genre away from. When Catherine is sensible and rational, the narrator shows us the very plausible anxieties of a girl from a small village, who is placed in a much wider and completely unfamiliar social environment than the one to which she is accustomed: “when at last arrived in the Tea Room, she felt yet more the awkwardness of having no party to join, no acquaintance to claim, no gentleman to assist them... ‘How uncomfortable it is,’ whispered Catherine, ‘not to have a single acquaintance here!’”^{ix} This scene, which takes place in Bath, has the effect of involving the reader in the lead character’s sense of awkwardness, with which nearly everyone can closely identify.

Rather than see the Gothic building as the generator or embodiment of either history or fiction, she deliberately denies it a voice in her narrative. Like her character, General Tilney, Austen seems to insist on showing the modern parts of the Abbey and ruining any sense of a medieval edifice. Northanger rather mutely represents the isolation of Catherine in an environment rendered hostile by the Tilney’s irascible and mercenary father, not by its physical structure or layout. The events that take place in it, such as her discovery that the mysterious room to which General Tilney is reluctant to admit her is just an ordinary bedroom, decorated in modern style, afford the reader insight into her mistaken notions. Yet, they also provide him or her the opportunity to observe the Tilney family closely. Catherine is also afforded these opportunities but is blinded to them by her insistence that a Gothic building must contain a Gothic narrative that she is shrewd enough to unearth and

assemble. This last point is important; we know from her conversation with Henry Tilney as they drive to the Abbey that she does not expect to be involved directly in the narrative she assumes she will find there. He embarrasses her by revealing his awareness of her propensities to read the experience before her in terms of The Mysteries of Udolpho or some other such novel by spontaneously creating the very narrative she thinks she will uncover: "Oh! Mr. Tilney, how frightful! This is just like a book! But it cannot really happen to me."^x She expects at some level, to play the role of *creator of the narrative*, assembling its various elements into a coherent whole; hence her insistence on finding out what is in the chest in her room and on discovering the "true fate" of Mrs. Tilney. Yet, she cannot even see the evidence clearly, nor is she capable of connecting it in a plausible chain of causation.

The contrast between the Abbey and the neo-classical buildings of Bath seems calculated to mock the reader, as well as the character, who expects a Gothic plot, especially when we consider the fact that Catherine never finds her Gothic narrative at Northanger, not even when something like one actually occurs. Her abrupt expulsion from the Abbey, penniless (until Eleanor lends her money) and alone, is certainly at least the germ of a Gothic narrative, but having resolved not to read her reality that way, she focuses instead on the mysterious circumstances of her departure, on the social awkwardness it must create once it is generally known, and the way it must surely affect Henry Tilney.

Treating it as an intrusion between the writer and the reader, Austen excludes architecture from her discussion, and refers to novels as "works in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human

nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language."^{xi} Nowhere is there expressed a wish to delineate the Abbey. There is no room in such works as Austen describes for a type of building "that one reads about," as Catherine expresses it: one whose presence in a narrative suggests a virtual encyclopedia of literary devices, plot lines, and stock characters, one that comes with its own view of the world beyond it, and its own approach to narrative.

Like the authors examined in this study, Austen saw a dynamic interrelationship between various forms of narrative. Unlike the others, she very pointedly moves away from the notion that narrative can be other than written discourse, not because she disagrees with this notion—she must have at least acknowledged it to be plausible or this novel would not have been written by *her*, if it were written at all—but because she does not want a hybrid novel. She wants a novel that is capable of effectively presenting real thoughts in verbal, not architectural, terms.

Austen strives to demonstrate that the novel can be a good deal more satisfying than it is. Novels of 'sensibility' in the nineteenth century sense, sought to override the intellect and appeal directly to the emotions. Elements of this approach certainly existed in the Gothic novel. We have seen in earlier chapters of this study how this tendency could be turned to good account in the creation of an emotional link with national architecture; nevertheless, for Austen, it was not a positive aspect of Gothic novels. No one who lay claim to a serious mind could fully enjoy them without shutting down the mental faculties that permitted critical analysis of the

material at hand. The Tilneys' recognition of other forms of reading as a counterbalance to novels like Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* points up the idea that Austen saw Gothic fiction as suffering these deficiencies.

The other kind of book discussed is the variety of novel that mocks the genre itself and denies even its main characters the pleasure of perusing a work of fiction. In calling attention to this type of novel, which is actually conservative diatribe designed to remedy the evils imputed to the reading of novels, Austen moves away from yet another extreme view and aligns herself more closely with contemporaries such as Elizabeth Hamilton whose works delve into the evils of imbibing philosophical principles solely from the uncritical reading of novels, while they allow open-minded appraisal of the New Philosophy, the term for the views that arose from a sympathetic stance toward the principles behind the French Revolution—as Englishmen and women of the period understood them. Among these were the rights of women to the same education that was available to men, the notion that morality emerges from ideas of utility and other rational principles and can therefore be formulated by any rational being, regardless of whether that being's sense of morality accords with that of the general society. To the New Philosophy was also imputed the notion that the needs and desires of the individual, as opposed to the general good, were paramount. Most of these views can be traced to the writings of William Godwin,⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft,⁹ and Thomas Paine,¹⁰ though there were many others who contributed to this lively debate. Both Austen and Hamilton, through

⁸ *Political Justice* (1793), and *Enquirer* (1797)

⁹ *Indication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

¹⁰ *Rights of Man* (1791), written in response to Edmund Burke's conservative essay, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)

their own thought-provoking writing, choose moderation, albeit of different kinds, instead of adhering to the views of New Philosophers or Anti-Jacobins to convey a sense of “the instrumental role that she felt improved reading would play in bringing about female advancements.”^{xii}

The third category of prose work discussed in Austen’s novel is history of the kind that is blended with judicious speculation of the kind advocated by Dugald Stewart and practiced by Walter Scott in the nineteenth century. The novel as Austen encountered it was dominated by the Gothic style. Since people perceived this category of novel as representative of the genre as a whole, it was not well suited to provoking serious thought. Steeped as it is in the unfamiliar, it cannot encourage readers to view their own reality through fresh impressions and perspectives. Those novels that were pointedly not Gothic seemed bent on heavy-handed moral conservatism or on a brand of liberalism that, in its shrillness, particularly in writers like Mary Hays and Mary Wollestonecraft, often comes across as being beyond the reach of ordinary, reasonable people. Austen’s novel seeks a place for the genre as a whole that is at least as distinguished as the place occupied by Eleanor Tilney’s kind of history. As we have observed elsewhere, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this certainly was not a place of undisputed respect, but it was certainly worthy of discussion by the greatest minds of the age. She wants an entirely new kind of novel, one that cannot easily be dismissed as trivial.

At the same time, the Gothic building featured in her novel does not wholly disappear, as do buildings of all descriptions in Dumas’ novel, rather they are put in their place as Austen returns the Abbey of the title to the status of a retired country

residence, subject, as are all others of its ilk, to the usual schedule of maintenance and restoration, without the antiquarian's strict regard for preservation or the faithful restoration of ruins to their original forms. We are constantly reminded of its physical structure; it is only a building, and certainly not "the kind one reads about." Moreover, she relegates the Gothic novel to the status of a sub-category of prose fiction, among other ways by having Catherine and the Tilneys discuss other kinds of prose that rely on invention. While she does this, she also turns her attention fully and self-consciously to the novel she is writing and to the genre it to which it will add its voice.

Austen's distinction between writers of history in Catherine's sense, that is, history written by men who torment children with their works, and writers of novels (women who combine taste and genius...) is not one that sets fiction in opposition to history, but that sets the narrative methods associated with traditional history in opposition to the narrative method of the fiction she advocates. Reading this novel, one comes away with the distinct impression that Austen resented the idea that history, the creation of narrative, and historical thinking were most appropriately the province of men in general or of scholars in particular, while the novel is facilely trivialized as feminine reading. She seems also to have been impatient with the tacit complicity of many of her sister novelists with this view; so many of them addressed their thinly veiled ideologies to women, confident of their ability to influence them. Henry Tilney very pointedly identifies himself as a reader of novels, while his sister evinces a preference for history. In this way, Austen claims both history and fiction for all people.

We have observed that history is presented in this novel in two distinct forms. One is the variety praised by Eleanor Tilney and that conforms most closely to the work of the Conjectural school; the other is obviously meant to be the kind that was more traditional in her day—i.e. a form of narrative manipulated by those close to sources of power in society. However, it is a subject looked at mainly in relation or comparison to fiction. Her main character is unable to see the merit in traditional history as entertainment mainly because she misses the suspense, the dialogue, and the human element that characterizes the fiction she prefers. Austen saw the novel as being in a unique position to treat the subject that underlay both history and fiction—human nature—in an interesting, non-pedantic, and thoughtful way. That she obviously saw herself as equal to the task points to an incipient democratizing sentiment consistent with the new ideas being discussed in her day and to the notion of opening such exploration to a wider range of people, especially women. From a practical standpoint, it is perhaps reasonable to say that more people had the potential to write excellent novels than could write comparable histories, since access to secondary materials is not required.¹¹ The major obstacle in the progress of the novel toward a deeper inquiry into human reasoning and interaction, however, was Gothic fiction, with its focus on the irrational, its medieval buildings and strange settings, its focus on the distant and ill-defined past, as well as its reliance on characters whose unalloyed goodness or evil transformed them into caricatures of humanity. These excesses needed to be counteracted by an alternative to, if not a replacement for such fiction.

¹¹ See also Persuasion where Anne Elliot tells a friend of Frederick Wentworth's that women may have always been represented as unfaithful but most often in works written by men.

Northanger Abbey is a work of literary criticism focused unrelentingly on the novel. Yet, it also looks at art, its appreciation and the language used to discuss it, as well as the creation of works of art. As Catherine Moreland deplores her ignorance of the terms and expressions appropriate to a discussion of the picturesque, as she reveals herself unaware even of what to look at and from what perspective she will best appreciate the landscape before her—"If Henry had been with them, indeed! but now she should not know what was picturesque when she saw it"^{xiii}—we are struck by the ways in which art, as well as history and the writing of fiction are still, in 1798, the province of experts, more focused perhaps, on displaying their erudition than on imparting knowledge and insight, and of those who have access to private instruction or advanced education. Austen shows them being quietly reclaimed by amateurs such as she by the simple acts of reading and writing and trusting to one's own reasonable assessments of the subject at hand. Even Catherine can finally comment on the building and the landscape without further instruction than that offered by her own honest impressions when, "without waiting for any better authority, she boldly burst forth in wonder and praise."^{xiv}

The popularity and ubiquity of Gothic fiction permitted too many people to take the part for the whole and consider it to be representative of the entire range of the genre, so that those who approved and those who deplored the form were equally mistaken in supposing the entire genre to be limited by the formulae that made such novels work. Though she appreciated them and grew up reading Gothic tales of mystery and horror openly and free of parental censure, she was also aware of the potential of the novel as literature, not just as mindless entertainment—or

entertainment for the mindless. She was not blind to the artifice writers of Gothic fiction liberally employed to elicit strong, emotional reactions from readers without their enquiring too deeply into the intellectual merits of what they read.

The existence of Northanger Abbey is a testament to her belief that such fiction only obscured the fact that the novel was capable of a great deal more. In it, she provides a well-developed alternative to the narrative technique, characterization, and subject matter of Gothic fiction. Austen had high hopes for the novel and they entailed the abandonment of Gothic buildings and a shift in focus to characters, to their motives, their foibles, and their interactions with each other. These were things that could be developed in any setting, even in a neo-classical town like Bath. However, before discarding Gothic imagery at the end of her novel she made sure it was completely discredited by making it and those who were taken in by the mechanics of the Gothic, even in the absence of substance, laughable.

The seeming willingness of the public to devour sensationalist fiction to the exclusion of more deliberative works would preclude their deriving intellectual benefit from reading, and distort the proper goals of the novelist. For Austen, the idea that one could treat literature as a commodity that could be altered to conform to the demands of the consumer, no matter how self-defeating they happened to be, was probably unappealing at best. Her aspirations for the novel most likely exceeded any notions of the remunerative potential of novel writing, but probably extended to the point of provoking people to think about familiar things in new ways. In this, she is a great deal like the other writers in this study.

By relentlessly focusing on realism, Austen implies that truth and profundity belong to the novel form, so Gothic fiction, however enjoyable, is to some degree a betrayal of the novel. Focused on action and circumstance, like Enlightenment history, it fails to explore the thinking that leads to action. In fact, because characterization is so generic and superficial, and because the action takes center stage in Gothic novels, tracing actions back to the mentalities that produced them is not really possible. Moreover, there are so many distractions, owing to the overbearing presence of the Gothic edifice and of the copious descriptions of landscape, costume, and people. Ainsworth turned such techniques and devices to good account but Austen discarded them.

What should the novel be and what would it be without broad characterization, medieval buildings, wild and exotic settings? Her response to the popularity of Gothic novels was not only to parody the form, but to suggest an alternative by shifting emphasis in her novel from place to people, from past to present, from action to motive, from the external and visual to the world within individuals and small groups. An illustration of this shift is provided in the scene in which Catherine's friend Isabella, who is engaged to her brother, is seen encouraging the attentions of Captain Tilney. Catherine's response is to puzzle over the motives of both characters, which encourages the reader to do the same.¹²

What makes Austen of greatest interest to this study is her obvious preoccupation with the Gothic edifice as the means through which to discredit Gothic fiction and point to the possibility, and indeed the desirability, of a novel without its devices, particularly the standard Gothic building, as primary generator of plot and

¹² See Austen, p. 202

principal setting. One of the defining characteristics of the Gothic, exploited even today by the makers of horror films, is its heavy reliance on the setting to generate the appropriate mood and determine the course of events throughout.¹³ In the process of creating a different kind of novel, she must discard the building, since it is one of the Gothic novel's most powerful devices. Ironically, in order to do this, she first writes it into the plot of her novel. As Ainsworth would do after her, she must, in effect, write a Gothic novel alongside the kind of novel she wants to write in order to discredit the one through unfavorable comparison with the other. In her case, however, the parallel narrative to this one is not a historical one constructed on the foundations of an actual Gothic building.

Rejecting the approach that would be taken by those who succeeded her in the composition of novels, such as Scott, whose model of the genre prevailed well into the nineteenth century, and whose influence is still discernable even in the twenty-first, Austen also seeks to distance the novel from its preoccupation with the past—specifically the middle ages—and with the trappings of this past. In an effort to do this, while still making her point about Gothic buildings, she invents one, just as Anne Radcliffe invented one before her, the primary benefit of a fictitious building being the fact that she would not ultimately defeat her purpose by using a building whose physical characteristics, story, and literary associations would become as interesting as the novel. Jane Austen is not interested in creating a tourist attraction.

Austen appears to accept the present—her present—on its own terms, allowing the structure and tendency of her narrative to emerge from the age she was

¹³ Stephen King has simultaneously exploited and upended this convention by using nondescript American towns as the primary settings for his novels, bringing horror to the ordinary world and thereby heightening its effect.

writing about and from familiarity with the ways of the people in question. Catherine Morland tries to impose a reality of her choosing and invention and fails to notice the one actually unfolding. Hence her puzzlement at learning of General Tilney's attempt to win her away from John Thorpe, a man whom she dislikes anyway.

Austen points out a different path for the genre, while using the conventions of Gothic fiction to question the motives of its readers and writers. Her assumption is that, only in distancing itself entirely from the sensationalism and artificiality of the Gothic romance form can the novel truly become literature, capable of challenging the minds of readers and novelists alike as they examine human nature and interaction. Some thirty-six years before Ainsworth's Preface to Rookwood,¹⁴ Jane Austen attempted not to pronounce the death of the "old dame" that was romance, but rather to point to some of her other, younger relatives in the sickroom.

Taking issue with the idea of reading as mindless entertainment, she ridicules her heroine, and the reader for limiting the scope of reading activity to works that cannot stimulate the intellect except to frustrate it. She ridiculed those readers seeking momentary gratification of base emotions and learned expectations. Austen's main character is a caricature of the female reader. Possessed of an ability that is hard won, particularly by women of the eighteenth century, Catherine squanders it on a kind of reading that causes her to distort the world around her, rather than see it from new perspectives. Even the Tilneys are able to see the merit of varied reading.

¹⁴ See chapter three of this work, footnote 12.

in contrast to Isabella Thorpe, who reads only Gothic fiction, and her brother John, who reads the most morally controversial among them.¹⁵

However, though she encourages readers to laugh at themselves, Austen is also writing to writers; in hopes that they too will see the merit of varied writing. Henry Tilney's hastily produced tale ridicules the writers of such formulaic fiction¹⁶ as much as it ridicules those who avidly devour them. This incident is a reflection of the degree to which Austen saw such plots as requiring little effort or thought to produce. However, she reserves her most scathing criticism for the reader. Beyond the context of the novel, both the reader and the writer are rendered ridiculous as Austen singles out individual commonplaces of characterization in the Gothic novel and takes a pin to inflated Radcliffean descriptive style as observed, for example, in the description of Emily St. Aubert:

She had discovered in her early years delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace... In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness.^{xv}

As descriptions become more detailed, Catherine becomes rather mundane and disappointing in comparison with Radcliffe's heroine. One almost strains the powers of imagination to find the Morlands the least bit interesting. But among them,

Catherine [was] for many years as plain as any. She had a thin, awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features...she was fond of all boys'

¹⁵ He mentions reading Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, a work considered unfit reading for men, let alone for women.

¹⁶ One is reminded of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk-Tale*, in which he gives a detailed description of system of motifs that could be interchanged and placed in a given order to produced a wide range of folk- and fairy tales.

plays, and greatly preferred cricket...to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose bush. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid.^{xvi}

It is perhaps important to point out here that Austen is not ridiculing the main character's plainness, nor does Catherine undergo a dramatic metamorphosis—just an ordinary one of the kind most people undergo when passing from adolescence to young adulthood. Austen refuses the opportunity offered every teller of tales to make her main characters superficially appealing. She immediately sets herself apart from Radcliffe and disappoints reader expectation. One must look for something other than the usual female attributes if sympathy with the main character is to be created. Austen's opening sally against Gothic romance appears to be an indictment of her fellow novelists, whose motives are questioned by her parody. This description is an introduction to the novelist's unflinching appraisal of the role of literature in the lives, not of entire cultures, but of individual people. Faced with the question of whether literature should challenge, entertain, or gratify the emotions of readers, she appears to assert that all achievements are within the purview of the novel and well within the power of a good novelist, without the end product being Gothic. However, she seemed equally certain that no one capable of really writing well would deign to compose a novel, or read one if he or she could only associate it with the silly stories with which she and her "heroine" had beguiled so many tedious hours of their youth.

Austen's handling of character is an indication that this is where her interest lies. Her main character embodies the ridiculous assumptions made by the mindless reader and the equally ridiculous examples of humanity sketched in such heavy

strokes by the mediocre novelist. Even before she takes on the Gothic building as plot device, Austen attacks the notion of the Gothic heroine in the very first line: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine.”^{xvii} The ridicule with which the main character is attacked intensifies. Catherine is the star of a novel named after an abbey yet there is absolutely nothing remarkable about her. Moreover, her father’s name does not conjure up ideas of ancient European lineage; he is only Richard and respectable in the early nineteenth century English sense: unobjectionable, and conforming to generally accepted ideas of decency. Yet, her parody is carefully crafted; these characters are not made to appear laughable for being ordinary, decent people. Catherine alone is subject to this treatment as the novel proceeds because she alone insists on reading the world around her in terms of Gothic fiction plots.

Jane Austen reasserts the central role of the novelist in the creation of narrative. By claiming this for herself and other writers, she challenges herself and her colleagues to conduct a study of the world around them, rather than examine the works of others, as they develop their craft. Her approach is an indication of her assumption that such sincere effort would add to the stature of the novel and prove its legitimacy as literature.

In order to render the Gothic building incapable of taking center stage in her novel, and point to the possibility that it can be just an ordinary setting in other novels, she shows how silly its literary associations often are. The Gothic building is presented as modernized for everyday use. This presentation of the building typifies English handling of Gothic buildings in the early nineteenth century. As many of

them were still in use, they had to be made comfortable and convenient for their inhabitants. General Tilney's pride in the restoration he has caused to be done on the section of the Abbey that replaces a much older, ruined one illustrates this tendency. By the end of the novel, the building has become a place marker in the history of a family and of the country in which it is supposed to exist. Now an historical document, in the way that a birth certificate is, Northanger Abbey is also an ordinary family residence and after her disastrously faulty reading of the building, Catherine also knows this.

We, as readers, are also denied a lengthy subsidiary narratives; Austen never explains exactly how the Tilney family has acquired the abbey in a country whose history is marked by a violent change of religion, the dissolution of religious orders, and the selling off of their property. Austen deliberately passes over this opportunity to delve into a fictionalized national past and re-asserts the importance of living in present realities. If it is true, as one scholar asserts, that "epic, whether its subject is mythic or not, negates sequential time," and that "When historical events enter epic, they are adapted to the mythic patterns of repetition," as certainly was happening in the field of historiography as the eighteenth century came to a close, it is also true that Austen's relationship to history in this novel is one marked by a sense of uneven progress, not retrograde motion, or eternal return. She has Henry Tilney chide Catherine for her Gothic reading of his family history in terms that re-affirm the present and the notion that so much progress has been made as to render the flights of fancy Catherine allows herself incomprehensible to a modern and informed intellect:

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained...Remember the country

and *the age in which we live*. [my italics] Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?^{xviii}

He reaffirms the importance of religious belief for the benefit of Catherine and the reader at a time when the French people had declared themselves emancipated from religion of any kind. At the same time, he reveals a rather sinister undercurrent of oppression and fear that prevents his statement from presenting his age and nation as the best of all possible worlds.

Divested of the building, with its cumbersome associations with Gothic romance, the novel as a study of human manners and motives becomes more agile, yet remains entertaining. In short, a work in which "the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the greatest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language."^{xix} It can be intellectually stimulating as characters and readers alike contemplate the motives of other characters and, by encouraging more complex characterizations, and asking thoughtful questions, it can move on to respectability.

Austen obviously felt that some Gothic novelists exploited Gothic buildings as settings far too readily and relied on them to do the work of creating an interesting narrative. If she hadn't, she would never have written Northanger Abbey, a novel so

much about the novel that it means little to an audience unfamiliar with the conventions of Gothic romance. Fortunately for us, they are still in use.

Austen, and indeed all of the novelists featured in this study, allows the novel form to question its purposes, potential, and essential composition without permitting it to dismantle itself. Austen, in particular sees its potential to delineate human character and society in a way the Gothic sub-genre will not permit, in part because of its ultimate subservience to one or another set of ideals. In her own novel, she does not abstract her characters' actions from their professed ideas, nor does she make it easy for the reader passively to absorb any one ideology from reading her novel. Jane Austen is advocating a rational appraisal of both Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin views and culling each for their best ideas. The notion of finding a middle ground, of rational moderation in ideology does not seem particularly radical or interesting until we recall that in the late eighteenth century, as in our own times, when the prevailing anxieties concerning violence perpetrated by radical elements on one's native soil created heated and emotional debate that forced people to align themselves with one ideology or another, the notion that there was merit in each constituted a radical reframing of the dialogue, which is a risky thing for anyone to do, let alone a young lady from the country.¹⁷

By discarding the Gothic imagery, and taking greater care to develop realistic characters, Austen sought to demonstrate the novel's potential to be respectable,

¹⁷ Marilyn Butler reminds us: "That English society was not being undermined from within in 1797-8 is obvious now. But at the time it was far from apparent, and the sense of crisis generated a formidable witch-hunt." Butler's remark makes me wonder whether Henry Tilney has this witch-hunt in mind when he warns Catherine to mind what she is about in her idle speculation about his father's activities and past. This remark also serves as a reminder that anyone who questioned the government's response to this perceived threat was risking being considered sympathetic to the Jacobin element in English society.

thought provoking, as well as entertaining. That she could write a novel of this kind, one that deconstructs popular notions of the genre and of the Gothic form in particular, is a testament to the fact that the late eighteenth century, characterized as it was by political, social, intellectual, and ideological upheaval, was a time of questioning of fundamental ideas. The development of the novel during this period is not linear, but takes place in a great variety of different ways. Those who came after her, such as the other novelists whose works are examined in this study, approached the restoration of the novel form by first acknowledging the hold of Gothic fiction on the popular imagination and using it as the medium through which to stretch the range of subject matter that could be treated in novels. Through Northanger Abbey, Austen wills the genre to enter the realm of respectability at last. Through the ones that succeed her effort, it begins to attain this goal.

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- ⁱ Roberts, Warren. Jane Austen and the French Revolution. London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1995. 70
- ⁱⁱ Butler, Marilyn. Jane Austen and the War of Ideas. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. 93
- ⁱⁱⁱ Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. (1818) London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1994. 182
- ^{iv} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 97
- ^v Hays, Mary. Memoirs of Emma Courtney. Eleanor Ty, ed. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 4
- ^{vi} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. (1818) London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1994. 59
- ^{vii} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 59
- ^{viii} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 148
- ^{ix} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 9, 10
- ^x Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 143
- ^{xi} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 25
- ^{xii} Hamilton, Elizabeth. Memoirs of Modern Philosophers. Claire Grogan, ed. Ontario: The Broadview Press, 2000. [intro.] 24
- ^{xiii} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 162
- ^{xiv} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 162
- ^{xv} Radcliffe, Anne. The Mysteries of Udolpho. ed. by Bonamy Dobrée. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. 5
- ^{xvi} Austen, 2
- ^{xvii} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. (1818) London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1994. 1
- ^{xviii} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 182
- ^{xix} Austen, Jane. Northanger Abbey. 25

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