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Mobile Homes, Fallen Furniture, and the Dickens Cure

Modernization is a process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded, clears away or obliterates that which impedes circulation, and makes exchangeable what is singular.

- Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer

Only later did furniture, like capital, become mobile.

—Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*

t began in Regency England: things started moving-inward, outward, forward, and backward. Conservatory glass vaporized walls, tent rooms were erected deep inside houses, scrolling wallpaper charted journeys down the Nile, and salons were painted to resemble aviaries as the outdoors and beyond were internalized toward decorative ends. In the same period, the new ferro-vitreous arcades adapted the aesthetics of private domestic arrangements to public use, producing sites Walter Benjamin called "bourgeois interiors forced outwards."2 The street became a second home for the flaneur, while opulent rooms appeared on rolling stock as an ingenious solution to the unnerving novelty of rail travel.3 Later, sections of London vanished under the organizing eye of sanitary reform; other sights were scaled, minia-

turized, and set to motion by the new theatrical technologies. The faculty of vision itself achieved independent mobility in the panorama and its related apparatus.⁴ Back on the high street, people encountered household items giant kettles, hats, sides of bacon, tubs of butter-strolling about in the space normally reserved for their consumers.⁵ As commodities thrived and multiplied, their incredible mobility was both enabled and summarized by the explosive growth of the railway and communication industries. At home, however, within certain rooms the ceaseless exchange of goods, the very of noise of commerce itself, was momentarily quieted amid phalanxes of increasingly bloated, comfortingly immovable things.6 The dogmatic solidity of Victorian furniture—its heft further guarded by the ornamental precariousness of carving, gilt tracery, and cut velvet—compensated for the threatened tracelessness of urban life as well as working to conceal the transience of an interior deeply scored by industrial innovation, fervid consumption, and the vagaries of the market.7 The comfort offered by a confortable was protective and perhaps a little knowing—an ambit claim for stasis amid the whirl of money and machines.

The Victorian need for adequate and effective upholstery that kept discomforting movement at bay found new relevance and urgency in train travel. As described by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, the English middle class felt the train journey to be an industrial experience, albeit one consumed passively. Within the carriage, though, elastic, bump-absorbing upholstery worked to limit consciousness of this jarring perception. Reasonably enough Schivelbusch turns this observation into a question directed at the equally padded drawing room chair: what mechanical shocks were dissipated here? "The jolt to be softened was no longer physical but mental: the memory of the industrial origin of objects. The braided and tasseled upholstery cushions rendered the true construction of the armchair or sofa invisible and thus forgettable."8 If plumped chairs were designed to repress the shock of their industrial origin, then the moment when springs perforated velvet must have come as something of a shock. And so it does in this image from the German humor magazine, Kladderadatsch (c. 1850), where the following adventure accompanies the graphic (figure 1): "A visitor comes in and is asked to sit down. He admires the chair's resiliency but will not believe that it contains 24 springs. They cut open the upholstery, and the visitor pays for his distrust by a sudden and not altogether agreeable movement."9 The chair is the work of architect Martin Gropius, great-uncle of Walter and an innovator in furniture design. He is the obliging though invisible



Figure 1. Spring fauteuil, caricature of Martin Gropius, Kladderadatsch, c. 1850

interlocutor who teaches the visitor a lesson in the hidden technologies of comfort with a quick slash of his knife. In the image, the twenty-four springs are reduced to one cyclonic whirl, a physical, psychological, and aesthetic storm in the room's ambience. This irruption dramatically amplifies extant forces, bringing them to consciousness. Now the visitor, who believed that the parlor was a place of repose, not speed, and that comfort was incompatible with mental stress, learns to his manifest discomfort that the very thing that absorbs shock also produces it. It is perhaps no coincidence then that, pending any further pharmacological encroachments, the deeply upholstered couch still remains symbolically central to the experience, identification, and treatment of modern anxiety.

The Kladderadatsch drawing depicts the fireside—the contemplative space reserved for the consumption of certain domestic pleasures, notably

reading—as semi-industrialized, party to a machine ensemble that comprehends both factory floor and seated reader. Looking at this illustration might prompt an uneasy awareness of the viewer's own seating arrangements, but such discomfort is in turn dispelled as the comic narrative compensates for the ruptured cushion to ease the amused reader back into the world of the mechanized domestic interior. Doling out pleasure and displeasure in roughly equal measure, the drawing ruefully reminds us of the ironies of modern bourgeois dwelling, demonstrating how the text, the chair, and the machine might exchange qualities even as they deny affinities. If shock can be produced by revealing the proximity of metal to domestically ensconced flesh (or, say, the factory to the book), then we must begin to think of certain texts as hinged along more than one spine, opening and closing consciousness to this proximity, marshalling effects, and administering compensations. As I will demonstrate in this essay, this is what Charles Dickens does in Dombey and Son.

Like the chairs it contained, the Victorian interior remained mobilized, always poised, despite its bulk, to spring. Inside its gaily papered walls, uncanny and unwelcome ambiences spiraled through domestic interiors, recasting these spaces in a public, commercial, and industrial light. Mobilization—whether in the form of the irruption of the industrial underpinnings of domestic life or the threat of an imminent (and immanent) return to the abstract forces of the market—is a nightmarish prospect imagined as the consequence of death, bankruptcy, or sexual fall.¹⁰ Indeed, one of the central tropes of Victorian ruin (in all its declensions) is the gymnastic display of new furnishings strewn before an emptied house. The domestic response to this threat might be named companionate technology, a term that gathers the multitude of formal and informal gestures of beautification, ornament, and maintenance that collectively hushed the newly affordable, surprisingly clamorous, and occasionally recondite world of goods filling rooms from the mid-Victorian period. Middle-class women, and the servants under their direction, were asked to arrange, clean, burnish, and augment commodities, creating a physical and temporal space between the coarseness of habitual use and the vulgar sheen of newness. Companionate technology is a balancing act, a continual process of translating relations into objects and vice versa, toward the production of a steady state fulfilled in the patina of secure possession. It is here, in the practical disposition of attitudes toward and within living space, that the interior experienced success in apt feminization or failure in mobility.

Mobilized interiors composed of goods purchased, moved, renovated, seized, or evacuated appear as one of the critical shocks that Dombey and Son explores in its depiction of volatile dwellings. Homes are repeatedly opened up by and to external forces—death, bankruptcy, matrimony, and its dissolution—that set things in motion. Dickens offers an early and vivid suggestion of this new domesticity in his account of Staggs's Gardens, the erstwhile home of Paul Dombey's wet nurse, Toodles. Charged with the task of locating Toodles is Susan Nipper, the housemaid repeatedly frustrated in her search because she relies on the obsolete coordinates of an older, vernacular city. Finally, the truth is discovered—Staggs's Gardens has ceased as a location, but continues as a process:

There was no such place as Staggs's Gardens. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer-houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the Railway world beyond. The miserable waste ground, where the refuse-matter had been heaped of yore, was swallowed up and gone; and in its frowsy stead were tiers of warehouses, crammed with rich goods and costly merchandise. The old by-streets now swarmed with passengers and vehicles of every kind: the new streets that had stopped disheartened in the mud and waggon-ruts, formed towns within themselves, originating wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves, and never tried or thought of until they sprung into existence. Bridges that had led to nothing, led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks. The carcasses of houses, and beginnings of new thoroughfares, had started off upon the line at steam's own speed, and shot away into the country in a monster train...

To and from the heart of this great change, all day and night, throbbing currents rushed and returned incessantly like its life's blood. Crowds of people and mountains of goods, departing and arriving scores upon scores of times every four-and-twenty hours, produced a fermentation in the place that was always in action. The very houses seemed disposed to pack up and take trips.11

Although Staggs's has vanished, the shock of its disappearance is replayed in a twenty-four-hour loop that records mountains of goods accumulating, dispersing, and reappearing in a mime where geographical permanence cedes to the logic of perpetual exchange. Throughout the remnants, the

monster train steams ahead, liberally conferring its kinetic qualities across a landscape once distinguished by paralysis-dead-end streets, waste heaps, bridges to nowhere—and now shaped by the mutual flow of people and merchandise. Dickens uses this passage to suggest the architectural consequences of an economic principle. As the goods crammed inside the "frowsy warehouses" prepare to enter the stream of available flows and take up residence elsewhere, the dwellings they fill are themselves caught up in and marked by chaotic movement, spawning an impossible and paradoxical architecture of impermanence, instantaneous classicism, and sanitary overcrowding. The new house built on the ruin of Staggs's Gardens is not only utterly pervious to commodity flow, but also disposed, like the people and goods within it, to "pack up and take trips."

Staggs's Gardens is the most volatile instance of the mobilizations that recur throughout the text. *Dombey and Son* teems with such mobilities— Dombey's house alone is variously reconfigured, renovated, and emptied following Fanny's death, Paul's death, Edith's marriage, and Dombey's subsequent collapse—pointing to an alarming instability within the domestic. This novel filled with domestic tumult actually begins with the desire for profound domestic inertia. Following the death of Paul's mother, Dombey shrouds his furnishings to preserve the interior and obscure residual traces of his wife. This is not postmortem acting out; it is, as we later learn, entirely consistent with Dombey's behavior as a patriarch unprepared, unwilling, and all but incapable of sharing power in the home. Although this fails to register as a problem for Dombey, it is a pathology that the text highlights, even if Dickens seems uncharacteristically short on cures. Readers might reasonably expect a plot that teaches Dombey to learn to live with women and to let them perform their vital work within the home—this is not what they get.

Fanny's death occasions the simultaneous, if temporary, death of the furnishings that lie shrouded under documents that mordantly allude to the occasion of their encryption.

When the funeral was over, Mr. Dombey ordered the furniture to be covered up—perhaps to preserve it for the Son with whom his plans were all associated—and the rooms to be ungarnished, saving such as he retained for himself on the ground floor. Accordingly, mysterious shapes were made of tables and chairs, heaped together in the middle of rooms, and covered over with great winding-sheets. Bell-handles, window-blinds, and looking-glasses, being papered up in journals,

daily and weekly, obtruded fragmentary accounts of deaths and dreadful murders. Every chandelier or lustre, muffled in holland, looked like a monstrous tear depending from the ceiling's eye. Odours, as from vaults and damp places, came out of the chimneys. The dead and buried lady was awful in a picture-frame of ghastly bandages. (24)

The newspapers and journals used to paper over objects place the interior within an uncomfortable circuit of sensational public exposure that Dombey will come to fear as "the haunting demon of his mind" (682) and that will ultimately broadcast the death of both his financial and residential houses. H. K. Browne's accompanying illustration, bearing the deadpan title of The Dombey Family, underscores the futility of Dombey's efforts to secure domestic space by wrapping it up. Dombey is drawn seated and surrounded, a newspaper at his feet, while the female characters—an anxious Florence to his right, the wet nurse Richards with the infant Paul in arms to his left—are framed by architectural apertures: throughways for light and air but also information and goods. In the illustration, the specific threat to the house is centralized in the covered chandelier. As can be seen in the transition from preliminary sketch to completed work (figures 2 and 3), Browne discovered the ominous potential of the pendant bosom. Where Dickens describes the effect of covering the light as lachrymal, Browne renders it a sort of Damoclean breast hanging directly over Paul's head.¹² This has the effect of condensing the removed breast of the repressed mother, the wet nurse's commodification, and the inescapable feminization of the interior. Thus, the threat to Dombey's dynastic and domestic ambitions is severally articulated.

Curiously, covering something over, upholstering it, appears to make it uncannily communicative of the forces that flow or, as Dickens's pun would have it, "Floy," through it. As Dombey unfolds, these forces begin to take a distinctly feminine cast. Having covered his furnishings, Dombey withdraws to his own rooms filled with his father's heavy "old-fashioned" furniture (25). In Dombey's version of strictly gendered, patronymic space, even the air is meaningfully different, a repository of ultramasculine aromatics: "hot-pressed paper, vellum, morocco, and Russia leather, contended in it with the smell of divers pairs of boots" (24). In the following chapter, Dombey's hermetic retreat is given a complex double in the form of the Wooden Midshipman, another apparently paralyzed space sheltered from feminine influence. The Midshipman is a male household, an unupholstered realm of metal and glass that measures advances in production



Figure 2. H. K. Browne's preliminary sketch for *The Dombey Family*, 1848. © Trustees of the British Museum

and circulation against the obsolescence of its own wares. Supplying the technologies that enabled global expansion, yet incapable of exploiting new markets, its tightly packed shelves are filled with moribund things that occupy a curious position within the economy of the text. These are unwanted objects that are nevertheless vulnerable to repossession: a threat realized in the form of Mr. Brogley's bond debt over the Wooden Midshipman. While the meaning of that debt is surely self-evident, Dickens is careful to frame its execution with a detailed description of Brogley's shop:

Dozens of chairs hooked on to washing stands, which with difficulty poised themselves on the shoulders of the sideboards, which in turn stood upon the wrong side of dining-tables, gymnastic with their legs upward on the tops of other dining-tables, were among its most reason-



Figure 3. H. K. Browne, The Dombey Family, 1848, from Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, ed. Alan Horsman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 33. Reprinted with permission

able arrangements. A banquet array of dish-covers, wine-glasses, and decanters was generally to be seen, spread forth upon the bosom of a four-post bedstead, for the entertainment of such genial company as half a dozen pokers, and a hall lamp. A set of window curtains with no windows belonging to them, would be seen gracefully draping a barricade of chests of drawers, loaded with little jars from chemists' shops; while a homeless hearthrug severed from its natural companion the fireside, braved the shrewd east wind in its adversity, and trembled in melancholy accord with the shrill complainings of a cabinet piano, wasting away, a string a day, and faintly resounding to the noises of the street in its jangling and distracted brain. (115–16)

This degree of overcrowding is perilously reminiscent of the aesthetics of the Victorian drawing room. However, Brogley's shop charts the moment

when mass becomes critical, when the display systems of the interior revert to the display systems of the market. In this transition posture is everything: a tilt equals ruin. Released from ownership, furnishings unrepress movement and come gymnastically alive. Sol Gills's obsolete nautical paraphernalia would stand out in a shop like this where virtually everything finds its source in the home. But Brogley's business converts seized contents into domestic goods, playing out a variation on Dombey's conflation of his house's institutional and residential meanings. In the shop, ruin is translated into domestic terms, not simply for sentimental gain, but to flag this place as one of the transit points (Staggs's Gardens, Dombey's) en route to an interior composed of inevitably circulated goods. Here the threat of mobilization is given specificity as the volatility of the furnishings is exhibited through contorted discomforts released and revealed in their second-handedness, their return to the open market in a disgraced state.¹³

Dickens's description of Brogley's goods converts them into lively subjects within the space of a single paragraph. Their posture, animated by micronarratives of fallenness, charts the movement from uprightness to an eroticized sprawl that is Hogarthian in shape. Theirs is a familiar progress: beauty lured and mired ("A banquet array of dish-covers . . . spread forth upon the bosom of a four-post bedstead, for the entertainment of such genial company as half a dozen pokers"), souring into the inevitable dissolution of home ("a homeless hearthrug severed from its natural companion the fireside"), body ("wasting away, a string a day"), and finally mind ("resounding to the noises of the street in its jangling and distracted brain"). Unlike Hogarth, where disordered furniture analogizes the harlot's condition, Dickens's treatment reverses the terms. Sexual fall tells us something about furniture—not simply that the domestic is a feminized domain, but that its constituent elements are already tracing a feminine narrative arc. Their return to the street matches a path encoded in emergent middle-class anxieties, not just in the prospect of fall, but also in the interchangeability of "good" and "bad" women and in the possibility that prostitution might be a stage in the ascension toward respectability. Dickens establishes a situational affinity. Like the bride with a secret (or syphilitic) past, furnishings are of uncertain legitimacy and as such endanger the meaningful division of space.14 Fallenness is an in-built condition, a hidden spring resident in objects that can revert to exchangeability—whether a chair or a woman or, for that matter, a woman in a chair.

In 1854, William Holman Hunt exhibited The Awakening Conscience,

a painting that attracted considerable criticism for, among other things, its technique.¹⁵ The criticism related to the level of detail perceived as an excess that threatened to compromise the viewer's ability to properly read the main subject. Hunt's apparent failure to de-emphasize elements of the composition meant that the entire painted plane—filled with elaborate furnishings, carpets, papers, objects, mirrors, and their reflections—vied for attention as a series of fragmented shocks of recognition.¹⁶ John Ruskin followed this controversy closely and entered the debate with a letter to the Times, instructing viewers on how to extract a morally coherent narrative that would turn disgust into pity:

Even to the mere spectator, a strange interest exalts the accessories of a scene in which he bears witness to human sorrow. There is not a single object in all that room, common, modern, vulgar (in the vulgar sense, as it may be), but it becomes tragical, if rightly read. That furniture, so carefully painted, even to the last vein of the rosewood—is there nothing to be learned from that terrible lustre of it, from its fatal newness; nothing there that has the old thoughts of home upon it, or that is ever to become a part of home? Those embossed books, vain and useless they also now—marked with no happy wearing of beloved leaves.¹⁷

Ruskin recuperates the interior from its critics, making it speak to and for the subject of the work by extending fallenness to the modern avidity for new stuff. This is a risk-filled strategy prompting unsettling questions: What if the furniture was burnished with age? The books heavily thumbed? The carpet deeply worn? Would the interior conceal the fall, even from the fallen herself? Or-terrifying thought-would it confer legitimacy on her? But for Ruskin this remains unquestioned because of the connection asserted between the overtly sexualized relationship and the charged, if ultimately tragic, allure of the new commodities. The room where the lovers sit is not simply a setting for a stagy melodrama; it is a means of understanding the desire prompted by goods imaged in an assembly linking bodies to things and things to bodies. For Ruskin the painting records the critical moment when the woman becomes conscious of her fall and her moral equivalence with the furnishings around her.

Absent from Ruskin's account is the dynamic effect of the woman's awakened conscience on the detailed interior. We see its "fatal newness" because she activates a break between herself and the room, effectively disengaging from the task of value-adding the furniture and stabilizing the decor. When she rejects the man and withdraws her consent from the surrounds, they cease to be homely, or their dubious domesticity can no longer be ignored. Her movement from the chair, her mobilization, links the fallen woman to the fallenness of the interior in an ensemble of related forms of shock.¹⁸ While the moral content of the painting coalesces in the woman's body, the subject matter extends to the more inclusive category of new furniture.

I want to suggest that the subject of the painting is an instance of companionate technology, which draws on the companionate model of marriage as a means of regulating sexual energies. Here it refers to a gendered form of value-adding interiors that prefigures the moment of female consumption per se. Thomas Richards, among others, argues that women do not find themselves specifically addressed as consumers until the late Victorian period. Companionate technology occupies an earlier moment in the history of consumption, one that romanticizes the affinity between the perceived exhibitionary talents of women, capital, and commodities. This ability to bring coherence to the flux of the mobilized interior, to differentiate possessions within from circulated goods without, and to make, in short, transformative sense of the internal and internalized world of things was crucially important as the flow of goods entering the home became less the uncertain trickle of testamentary deposition and more a torrent of new consumer commodities.

Frances Power Cobbe, one of the finer theorists of companionate technology, described the risk attendant on domestic failure in language sensitive to the link between the feminine and the uncanny instability of property:²⁰

The unhomeliness of the homes . . . of women in whom the feminine is lacking is pitiable. . . . The more womanly a woman is, the more she is sure to throw her personality over the home, and transform it, from a mere eating and sleeping place, or an upholsterer's showroom, into a sort of outermost garment of her soul; harmonised with all her nature as her robe and the flower in her hair are harmonised with her bodily beauty. . . . A woman whose home does not bear to her this relation of nest to bird, calyx to flower, shell to mollusc, is in one or another imperfect condition. She is either not really mistress of her home; or being so, she is herself deficient in the womanly power of thoroughly imposing her personality upon her belongings.²¹

Cobbe's language is haunted by the prospect of fragile ambiences evaporating in the face of some crisis of the feminine. Her recourse to metaphors drawn from nature to describe the relationship between woman and home seems at once obvious and yet also subtly aware of and guarding against industrial alternatives such as printing, die stamping, embossing, and electroplating. After all, England was the "home" of mechanized adornment that laminated interiors with images of decorative women, birds in nests, flowers, and calyxes. Cobbe's task was to make the home distinct, to remove it from a shocking continuum with marketplace and factory. The aim was to do this while obscuring all traces of the effort this demands. Yet the person entrusted to preserve the interior from shock is, like the unstable interior, herself a potential source of shock. The Awakening Conscience documents the moment when a form of domestic or companionate technology fails. As an image, it occupies a discursive space between sexual fall and industrial calamity. For Dickens, this space goes by another name: the train.

Following his son's death, Dombey travels by rail to Leamington Spa to recuperate. The train window delivers views of a series of astonishingly open dwellings-entire rooms revealed through glass-to his disengaged eye. It is here that Dombey confronts home, obliquely, but critically, in the unfixed face of his daughter:

There was a face—he had looked upon it, on the previous night, and it on him with eyes that read his soul, though they were dim with tears, and hidden soon behind two quivering hands-that often attended him in fancy, on this ride. . . . It was a trouble to him to think of this face of Florence.

Because he felt any new compunction towards it? No. Because the feeling it awakened in him — of which he had some old fore-shadowing in older times—was full-formed now, and spoke out plainly, moving him too much, and threatening to grow too strong for his composure. Because the face was abroad, in the expression of defeat and persecution that seemed to encircle him like the air. . . . One child was gone, and one child left. Why was the object of his hope removed instead of her? . . . Her loving and innocent face rising before him, had no softening or winning influence. He rejected the angel, and took up with

the tormenting spirit crouching in his bosom. Her patience, goodness, youth, devotion, love, were as so many atoms in the ashes upon which he set his heel. He saw her image in the blight and blackness all around him, not irradiating but deepening the gloom. (277-78)

Florence is a figure of grief who shades gradually into annoyance, reproach, and then, as Dombey reflects on the pain of her survival over Paul's, into dismissive contempt. These thoughts come to Dombey on the train, placing or projecting Florence amid the darkly open houses that precede and prompt her image. Her face rises up in a moment that fuses train shock (the architecture dissolving effects of speed and elevation) to its apparent opposite the comfort of the feminized home—thus suggesting the train as an incursive pathway into the heart of the domestic. Florence's appearance within the magnate's train of thought attaches her to the symptomatic modernity of the rail and the strange new architectures it reveals; she is its apotheosis. Floy's face makes something of a mental transit as Dombey charts the development of his ill will, from an image in situ at Paul's deathbed to the final dislocated and disembodied face deepening the surrounding gloom of the carriage and the city. For Dombey, Florence's meanings are reversed; where ideally she should preside quietly over the lambent hearth, she is instead exteriorized (facaded), accelerated dark matter, an antiangel with the face of home that will not stay put. Dombey glimpses her face as if it were a transmitted image ("Because the face was abroad"), following the very same pathway (the rail-print nexus that delivered text to commuters and vice versa) as those media that disseminated images of companionate technology-serialized novels, newspapers, and journals.

Later in the text, Dickens provides another, more grounded account of the facialized home, glimpsed not in transit but at rest. Like the earlier instance, the face-home is invoked by a male relation, but this time not in a manner that precludes its proper operation. This occurs in the architecturally themed chapter "Contrasts," where John Carker—the wronged brother of the novel's villain—describes his relationship with his wife, Harriet, in the following terms: "The cordial face she lifted up to kiss him, was his home, his life, his universe" (457). Although Harriet's face, as a sign of secure (but of course radically mobile) domesticity, is the inverse of Floy's ironically dislodged angel, both images are linked by Dickens's insistent pattern of uncanny doubling in which many of the female characters are echoed or plagued by a figure of disorienting similarity. Between them,

these "homely" women articulate the domestic as a *haunt*, in all its available senses.

As if anticipating her capacity to overflow, Dombey takes great pains to secure Florence before he begins his train journey to Leamington. As she stands at the foot of the stairs after having received yet another chilling rebuke, she learns the dimensions of her circumscribed domain: "'The whole house is yours above there,' said her father, slowly. 'You are its mistress now. Good-night!" (253). Yet, in spite of this command, Florence appears to him on the train and amid those open houses as a premonition of the shocking permeability of the Dombey household under Florence's stewardship. As Floy portends flow, Dickens moves from the train to the house in a test of the rejected angel's capacity to order, to beautify, and to absorb shock.

At the beginning of chapter 23, the facialized dwelling makes another appearance, although this time the terms are reversed—this is a house as face—and conventionalized in the form of a facade. The "never smiling face" of Dombey's mansion is likened to a Gorgon determined to stare Florence's beauty into stone, a rendering of the loveless and threatening relationship that pertains between father and daughter. The forbidding house-face is thus a kind of architecture parlante in which the rigid and admonitory patriarchal force generated within finds expression without. But this is complicated by the Gorgon's sex, thus mutually feminizing the exchanged glances between Florence and the walls, although only the latter have, somewhat reflexively, succumbed to petrifaction. The Gorgon's stare monstrously literalizes what might otherwise be described as a sentimental identification of the face as home. Under this image of doubled domestic faces, one stone, one flesh, one exteriorized, one confined, Dickens explores the meaning of the feminized home.

With Dombey away, the house is left to the haunting presence of Floy. The effect of her abandonment is immediately registered in the writing: "Florence lived alone in the great dreary house, and day succeeded day, and still she lived alone; and the blank walls looked down upon her with a vacant stare, as if they had a Gorgon-like mind to stare her youth and beauty into stone" (311). This passage, repeated with minor variation two more times in the chapter (312, 315), is one of a number of effects that signal a cessation of the master syntax of the text in favor of the tropes of fairy tale: repetition, supernatural threat, and transformation. The London setting is suspended while the narrative elaborates on the gothic faciality of the house: "No magic

dwelling-place in magic story, shut up in the heart of a thick wood, was ever more solitary and deserted to the fancy, than was her father's mansion in its grim reality, as it stood lowering on the street: always by night, when lights were shining from neighboring windows, a blot upon its scanty brightness; always by day, a frown upon its never-smiling face" (311).

The permeability of the Dombey house-to decay, infestation, and rumor—is initially registered in this unexpected openness to other genres. In effect, Dickens weakens his proprietary right over the novel expressed in the form of his distinctive style by surrendering description of the house to other writings—to the gothic fairy tale style of the narration, to the boys who chalk the railings and draw destabilizing ghosts on the stable door (311), to the growing "reputation" of the mansion as haunted (315), or to Florence's own imaginary rescripting of the plot in which she and her father find mutual comfort for their loss (313-14). Florence presides over this intense generic redecoration (in advance of the actual redecoration before Dombey's wedding to Edith) in which other traces, tastes, and ownerships repeatedly invade the text. She cannot secure the domestic against the forces that flow through it. Indeed, her easy adoption of a role within this (foreign) fairy tale ("like the king's fair daughter in the story"; 312) isolates her as a conduit for exotic material.

Within this enchanted house, where grass grows on the roof, clocks strike unearthly numbers, trees are blighted, and gilded lions are tarnished, Florence flows from room to empty room. Thwarting his express embargo, she enters her father's private chambers, much as she enters his thoughts on the train. Not only is Dombey physically removed, but his forbidding face has no persistence and, unlike Floy's, no means of transmission. All prohibitions on spaces and objects are removed, and for the first time, Florence, who has been held at bay, is now free to attempt to produce the techne of the domestic. She does so through an array of practices and disciplines; touch, superfluous labor, ornamental craft, arrangement, surveillance, and the subtle application of bodily fluids:

She could go down to her father's rooms now, and think of him, and suffer her loving heart humbly to approach him, without fear of repulse. She could look upon the objects that had surrounded him in his sorrow, and could nestle near his chair, and not dread the glance that she so well remembered. She could render him such little tokens of her duty and service, as putting everything in order for him with

her own hands, binding little nosegays for his table, changing them as one by one they withered and he did not come back, preparing something for him every day, and leaving some timid mark of her presence near his usual seat. To-day, it was a little painted stand for his watch; to-morrow she would be afraid to leave it, and would substitute some other trifle of her making not so likely to attract his eye. Waking in the night, perhaps, she would tremble at the thought of his coming home and angrily rejecting it, and would hurry down with slippered feet and quickly beating heart, and bring it away. At another time, she would only lay her face upon his desk, and leave a kiss there, and a tear. (313)

True to its growing reputation, the mansion is haunted, not by specters but by the spectralized daughter who insubstantially inhabits rooms, secretly moves objects, and leaves uncanny traces—her "timid marks." In spite of Florence's admittedly weak and phantasmal efforts to domesticate Dombey's mansion, the chapter documents the spectacular opposite as the house regresses to an ur-dwelling. In short order it succumbs to an impossibly accelerated form of decay, infiltrated by lush rot, rust, mold, and fungus that creep up walls and in between the folds of shrouded furniture. Florence's tremulous and sentimental production of vanishing nosegays is an accurate if ironic gauge of the quality of domestic space under her charge, yet it does indicate a decorative response impelled perhaps by the oppressive "blankness" of the Gorgon walls. Far from value-adding its interiors, though, Florence fails to preserve it from the most gruesome decomposition. As the house unmakes itself by degrees, it reverts to an atavistic organic state—a sinister variation on the angel's responsibility to naturalize objects within the home. Although Dombey's superlatively abyssal mansion is immune to her efforts, curiously, even magically, "Florence bloom[s] there" (312) and opens a gap between the doubled faces of the house. Florence "blooms" amid the vivid failure to secure the dwelling under circumstances apparently better suited to its success.

Dickens plots a rupture at the core of this enchanted house between the promise and the actual effect of the domestic angel who leaves her scarcely detectable traces across the surfaces of the interior. At once sentimental and punitive, threatening yet impotent, distinct yet generic, the Gorgonized dwelling becomes synonymous with the reasons for its own avoidance, a place from which death, vacation, flight, and exile trace lines away from its mobilized center. This impulse is above all figured in the shunned form of Florence, who is at once homebody (in all of its implications), the spirit of the uninhabitable home, as well as its presiding angel. Florence is this house and vice versa. Dickens's point concerning the appalling prospect of living in such a home is not restricted to a moral account of Dombey's particular perversion of the domestic. He suggests a larger critique of modern dwelling fashioned under the sign of companionate technology. This is not to say that Dombey never glories in the rich spectacle of feminized domesticity, only that it appears to him under rather peculiar circumstances. Following a meal with Edith and Florence, Dombey retires to the drawing room and the comforts of an easy chair. There, he covers his head with a handkerchief and surreptitiously watches his daughter at her needlework: "As he looked, he saw her for an instant by a clearer and brighter light, not bending over that [Paul's] pillow as a rival—monstrous thought—but as the spirit of his home, and in the action tending himself no less, as he sat once more with his bowed-down head upon his hand at the foot of the little bed" (484). Here Dombey experiences an alternative, slightly ludicrous vision that reveals the collaborative, if not the industrial, underpinnings of the mode of domesticity he has, to this point, vehemently rejected. In order to properly misrecognize Florence as the spirit of home, Dombey must be both comfortable and veiled. Thus configured in his easy chair, his violently eliminationist impulses toward Florence vanish, replaced by a vision of "hearth." The spirit of home appears to him as an aesthetic effect contingent on the confluence of his body and shock-absorbing technologies: upholstery (of the body and the face), the architectural provision of cohabitant space ("You can come and go here, Florence, as you please. This is not my private room"; 482), and the enchanted spectacle of particular forms of ornamental labor.

This domestic reverie is as fragile as it is brief. Within moments of hailing Florence in her "true" form, Edith (Dombey's new wife who embodies his reckless conflation of sexuality and capital) shocks him with a display of warmth toward his daughter. Her maternal gesture is consonant with the sort of tableau Dombey has been slyly consuming, yet it has the opposite effect and signals the return of agonistic gender relations within the house. Edith's entrance disrupts Dombey's comfort as it distorts Florence's companionate spectacle.

As the two women withdraw to the remote room where little Paul died, Dombey remains fixed to his chair: "He sat in his shadowy corner so long, that the church clocks struck the hour three times before he moved that night. All that while his face was still intent upon the spot where Florence had been seated. The room grew darker, as the candles waned and went out; but a darkness gathered on his face exceeding any that the night would cast, and rested there" (484). Dombey's dark face, "exceeding any that the night would cast," directed at the evacuated hearth, recalls his vision of Florence on the train, her face projected onto the houses viewed from the carriage, "not irradiating but deepening the gloom." In these two darkly illuminated images, Dickens links Dombey's intense stillness to the furious movement of the carriage via the memory of Florence's face as a ligature between train, house, and the house-face. In this process, the chair joins the machine ensemble, but the shock it now cushions is of a purely domestic sort, that of the feminine playing out its forces within the house. By extending the passage thus, Dickens draws attention to Dombey's posture. His uneasy position in the easy chair furthers an ongoing project whereby the very presence of upholstery alerts us to the uncomfortable and unsettling.

Dombey's failure to properly, and thus therapeutically, absorb Florence and Edith's tender scene is one of a number of signs foretelling the devastation of his house. Domesticity requires an addressee, and Dombey's refusal to hear these particular speech acts consigns the very language to oblivion within the house. In short order the newly minted Dombey union is brought to a crisis through the combined effects of Dombey's glacial hauteur, the treachery of his assistant James Carker, and Edith's tragic self-consciousness as a bartered good. Edith's dramatic exit from the marriage proceeds as a series of domestic renunciations: of Dombey, of her bride price in jewels and furnishings, and finally and most shockingly, of Florence herself: "Don't touch me!" (632). Following this, Florence, too, will renounce the house, not in Edith's direct fashion, but through irony: "She awoke to a sense of her own powerlessness; and hiding in one of the great rooms that had been made gorgeous for this, felt as if her heart would burst with grief" (636, italics in original). As a domestic angel, Florence should strive to protect the residence from the very force she now levels at it or at least allows to ripen in her presence. She rallies, though, for one last act of devotion, a consolatory gesture of affection that is met with a decisive act of paternal violence. In the face of this, Florence flees the house and finds shelter of sorts with Captain Cuttle. Dombey's assault provokes Florence's withdrawal not just from this house but from houses generally, at least in their conventional incarnations. Cuttle, an asexual eccentric who

lives in dread of his erstwhile landlady, takes up residence in the Wooden Midshipman while Sol Gills is off in search of Walter Gay, his nephew who is missing and presumed drowned. This refuge is comically eccentric and peripheral, a farcical vision of the absurdly narrow possibilities that now sustain Florence's version of the domestic.

It is here in the Midshipman that Captain Cuttle lays the groundwork for his revelation that Walter (Florence's rather feeble love interest) is not in fact, as has been supposed, dead. Cuttle's excruciatingly distended narrative veers between the frequently repeated question, "Poor Wal'r! Drownded ain't he?" and strict prohibitions against Florence's mobility. The captain is adamant that she must not see Walter, as he is the conclusion the captain wishes to defer: "Look at me, pretty! Don't look round" (661), "A minute more my lady lass!" (661). In Browne's illustration of the scene, the potential shock of this moment is considerably amplified (figure 4). Walter's menacing shadow looms, and thus mars, what appears otherwise a model of domestic snugness. While Cuttle toasts bread at the hearth and Florence sits on an upholstered chair with an open book on her lap, Walter's silhouette points with one hand to the clock while the other seems to reach for a knife lodged in a cottage loaf, glossing the concerns of the chapter as violent shock and time. As Browne elects to depict the moment before Florence is relieved of her suspense, Walter's return remains on the verge of a perpetual detonation suspended between Cuttle at the hearth and Florence in the easy chair, a summary of the largely failed domestic technologies surveyed by the novel. What Cuttle (and Dickens) must finally resolve, Browne need not, dwelling instead on the susceptibility of the parlor to the intrusions of gothic theatricality. Domestic space appears inadequate to the task of absorbing the shock effect until the addition of a supervening narrative. Cuttle's story dissipates shock through the technique of dilation. Releasing information in small amounts over a period of time absorbs and regulates the excess energy that Walter's uncanny return from the dead would otherwise express as trauma.

As formulated variously by Sigmund Freud, Georg Simmel, and Walter Benjamin, nervousness and anxiety protect the subject from traumatic incursion by forming a layer or shield.²² Cuttle unsettles Florence but also hints at rewards that tie her as reader to the unfolding tale, securing her consent to his serialized narrative as it unfolds over the course of two days. In a knowing reference to the techniques of nineteenth-century authoring, Cuttle then seeks to confirm and guarantee the closure he has wrought by



Figure 4. H. K. Browne, The Shadow in the Little Parlor, 1848, from Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, ed. Alan Horsman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 660. Reprinted with permission

making over a settlement of property "jintly" (662) to the reunited couple. Cuttle's narrative supplements and thus cures the apparent deficiencies of the interior, allowing it to function as the proper setting of heterosexual reunification.

In the Cuttle sequence, Dickens outlines a discursive ensemble of sorts, a connection between bodies, furnishings, ambient spaces, and admittedly crude narratives that combine to produce anxiously contrived but ultimately protective immobility. If only for a moment in this, the strangest but, significantly, the most quirkily Dickensian of domestic settings, shock is managed; things stop moving, and the center holds. I would suggest that this is the first time in the text where the hearth is a component in the warding off of trauma.

Dombey and Son announces an uneasy account of the modern domestic,

placing unusual pressure on Alexander Welsh's formulation—"If the problem that besets [Dickens] can be called the city, his answer can be named the hearth."23 This doesn't seem right in relation to this novel, or at least and when it does apply, it is only under conditions that read as exceptional. In Dombey, the hearth is routinely if not systematically discredited and identified as (and with) a source of feminine shock prior to its Cuttle-ish rehabilitation as an integrated and integrating reception point for a distinctively Dickensian narrative that alone appears capable of managing domestic trauma. This revised domestic cure gives shape to the novel's curious conclusion, where security and immobility finally come to settle over the ruins of Dombey's house.

Following Edith's flight, the death of his tormentor Carker, and the failure of his business, Dombey experiences a near-suicidal collapse that coincides with the termination of his house. In the wake of bankruptcy, Dombey's possessions not only spring into movement, but, like Brogley's objects, they fall into an orgy of inappropriate use: "[Men] sit upon pieces of furniture never made to be sat upon, and eat bread and cheese from the public-house on other pieces of furniture never made to be eaten on, and seem to have a delight in appropriating precious articles to strange uses. Chaotic combinations of furniture also take place. Mattresses and bedding appear in the dining-room; the glass and china get into the conservatory" (790). Fallen furniture succumbs to energies that have preyed on the domestic throughout the text. At the close of the novel, these objects are released from the walls that would normally contain them, setting the scene for a conclusion that unfolds in a weakly spatialized and inconclusively sheltered realm. In recognizing the paradoxical restlessness of the things that fill the interior, Dickens questions the capacity of angels to hold the house together in a space where new forms of sexual and technological shock reverberate. By releasing his hold on houses and allowing Dombey's goods to realize their escape velocity, Dickens evades these problems with an alternate vision; what was previously understood as a shameful conclusion now becomes the precondition for an evasive resolution.

Dombey's recovery occurs away from London, in a house "on the borders of a fresh heath" (816). Given the detailed accounts of homes of every type, style, and condition, it is noteworthy that here there is no description of the place where Dombey and Florence are finally reconciled. As if satisfying a clause, the absence of architecture and the attendant host of vexing, ironic, and mobile objects finally allow Dombey to rightfully recognize Florence as

an angel. With the Dombey family healed, if not restored, the novel closes on a note of Eucharistic celebration with and for a single, purified commodity—a bottle of Madeira—that has loyally remained with its owner in the face of illness and bankruptcy. Its liquid contents are shared among a mostly male group whose indifference to class and income suggests a reformist community. But this utopian moment is predicated on the disappearance of the built world itself, the goods that flow through it, and most of the women who preside over its homes.

In spite of the absence of a clearly described shelter, the warmth of the hearth radiates through this chapter. Its comforts define the shape of what is otherwise an invisible house. In its transparency, Dombey's final home recalls the impossible sights of his train reverie. In its indifference to obstacle this vision is pregnant with the possibilities of the seamless transmission of content through densely urban space. This is matched by a recurrent metaphor for the broadcasting of narrative (voice) across time and space. Although innocent of Guglielmo Marconi, this is, in its own way, oddly prescient:

The voices in the waves speak low to him of Florence, day and night plainest when he, his blooming daughter, and her husband, walk beside them in the evening, or sit at an open window, listening to their roar. They speak to him of Florence and his altered heart; of Florence and their ceaseless murmuring to her of the love, eternal and illimitable, extending still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away. (833, n. 6)24

The sound of waves, what they were saying, resonates throughout the novel, heard first by the dying son and, finally, by the living father. For Dickens, the hearth is a point of reception and transmission where one reads and is read to. If the problem is the mobility of the domestic interior, the answer is the hearth, not as a location for the expression of homely virtue, but as part of a discursive ensemble that joins upholstered fabrics, architecture, ambient illumination, and certain types of narrative toward the production of mildly anxious domesticity. Dickens offers his reader the thrall of serialized narrative, a form of consensual paralysis the effects of which radiate outward from the seated reader to quiet the boisterous and attentionseeking objects of the interior. Simply put, things stop moving.

From the beginning of his career, Dickens's articulation of the pleasures of the hearth embeds its purpose as a mode of transmission. In a letter to E. M. Forster, he outlined a scheme for a new periodical to be named after the "cheerful creature that chirrups on the Hearth." Of his plans for The Cricket, Dickens writes:

I could approach them [his audience] in a different mode under this name, and in a more winning and immediate way, than under any other. I would at once sit down on their very hobs; and take a personal and confidential position with them which would separate me, instantly, from all other periodicals periodically published, and supply a distinct and sufficient reason for my coming into existence. And I would chirp, chirp away in every number until I chirped it up to—well, you shall say how many hundred thousand!²⁵

The thrill of exponential multiplication expresses Dickens's acquisitive impulse but also the way in which the singular hearth always implies more — as Ada discovers in Bleak House, where it is "paved all around with pure white tiles, in every one of which a bright miniature of the fire was blazing."26 The hearth replicates itself endlessly for a numberless mass audience bound together in the joys of snug invention.

The Cricket was itself designed to capitalize on the extraordinary response Dickens received from the publication of A Christmas Carol. In 1844, Dickens wrote to C. C. Felton, informing him that he had sent a package containing his celebrated work:

Over which Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed. . . . Its success is most prodigious. And by every post all manner of strangers write to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself.27

Among the familiar elements here—the tears, the arch tone, and the nocturnal composition habits—there is something else: the joyfully received news that Dickens's readers not only consent to the alignment of writing and the hearth, but that they have undertaken the task to literalize key aspects of the discursive ensemble through the medium of carpentry. The sitting room now incorporates a little shelf exclusively for the amplification of Dickens's distinctive, integrating voice.28

In *Dombey and Son*, these ensembles incorporate increasingly traumatic forms of technology, including, as I have argued, companionate technology itself, to undermine the possibility of dwelling with commodities. Dickens, who links the destructive train to the hearth, continues to elaborate on this relationship. Penetrative forms of shock beset the domestic throughout the novel. What changes, what makes possible the assimilation of shock, is Dickensian narrative itself. The train enters buildings and psyches before it aligns itself with storytelling, "a great roaring and dilating" (741) machine that produces narratives of protective anxiety, carried on transmitted waves (or on trains) to the invisible hearths of a mass readership.

Dickens was never able to exploit reflexively the image of his domesticating voice fluidly emanating from the hearth. He did, though, leave a trace of an incomplete work, an idea that finally found an apt analogy in an emergent technology. In his Memoranda he writes: "Open a story by bringing two strongly contrasted places and strongly contrasted sets of people, into the connexion necessary for the story, by means of an electric message. Describe the message—be the message—flashing along through space, over the earth, and under the sea."29 Here Dickens distills his craft to one urgent, representative hook, a permanent fusion of medium and message dispensing snug calm across London's dark and troubled night.

Notes

I am indebted to Grant Farred, Helen Groth, and Isabel Karpin for their generous and thoughtful readings of this essay.

- I On the history of the glass wall and its curious blending of the interior and exterior, see Christoph Asendorf, Batteries of Life, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 26. See also Alan Gore and Ann Gore, The History of English Interiors (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 119. Didier Maleuvre discusses the work of Jean Zuber, a French decorator active in the 1840s, who devised a "panoramic wallpaper that unfolded a continuous scenic view around the room with a choice of such favorites as 'Italian Landscape,' 'French Gardens,' 'Greek Landscape,' Chinese Décor.'" See Didier Maleuvre, Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 150.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 135.
- 3 On the trauma of industrial travel, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 84.
- 4 Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 64; and Stephan Oettermann, The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 5-47.

- 5 Among George Scharf's remarkable drawings of London street life is a sketch featuring six walking pots of Waren's Blacking-a rival firm to Warren's Blacking, the site of Dickens's childhood trauma. George Scharf, George Scharf's London: Sketches and Watercolours of a Changing City, 1820-50, ed. Peter Jackson (London: John Murray, 1987), 37. Thomas Richards discusses the appearance of strolling commodities in The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 48-49.
- 6 Asendorf notes the comforts of the immovable in Batteries of Life, 137. See also Richards's discussion of "cramming" as an aesthetic principle in Commodity Culture, 2.
- 7 See Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 46; Phillipa Tristram, Living Space in Fact and Fiction (London: Routledge, 1989), 261; and Asendorf, Batteries of Life, 134.
- 8 Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 123.
- Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 381.
- 10 Robert Braithwaite Martineau's The Last Day in the Old Home, painted in 1862, offers a powerful account of the terror, humiliation, and tragedy the of mobilized home: a family portrait set among items tagged for sale.
- II Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, ed. E. Alan Horsman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 217–18; hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.
- 12 On the significance of the wet nurse, see Laura Berry, "In the Bosom of the Family: The Wet Nurse and the Railway in Dombey and Son," Dickens Studies Annual 25 (1996): 14.
- 13 Jeff Nunokawa explores the complex and contradictory relationship between ownership and exhibition in The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 176. See also Andrew H. Miller, who quotes Charles Mamby Smith on the personalized spectacle of pawned goods behind glass: "In dim, yet dazzling confusion, the inharmonious collection floats before the vision, and will not be disembarrassed of the living forms and faces with which imagination connects each single item in the endless catalogue." Andrew H. Miller, Novels behind Glass: Commodity Culture and Victorian Narrative (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4.
- 14 Among others, William Acton gave anxious voice to this possibility. See Deborah Nord, Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 10-11.
- 15 I rely here on Caroline Arscott's account of the critical reception of the work. Caroline Arscott, "Employer, Husband, Spectator: Thomas Fairbairn's Commission of The Awakening Conscience," in The Culture of Capital: Art, Power, and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class, ed. Janet Wolff and John Seed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 160-87.
- 16 Ibid., 181. The unspoken shock of recognition belongs to Annie Miller, Holman Hunt's model, who, in Susan Casteras's reading of the work, is the subject of the painting's disciplinary intent. Susan Casteras, Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art (London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 140.
- 17 Quoted in Arscott, "Employer, Husband, Spectator," 172–73.
- 18 Hunt's account of a domestic interior through which mobilized and fallen women might

flow out into the world reads like an excerpted misquotation from Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts's vision of Urania Cottage. Dickens and Burdett-Coutts sought to export improved women who would otherwise continue their downward spiral through the market. Under their scheme, the "home" was a holding cell, where, through processes of reflection, instruction, and invigilation, the fall might be redirected laterally. There is no sense in which the inevitability of that momentum is questioned, only that its course can be altered away from its terminus in the cold Thames and toward the sculleries of Paramatta. In Dickens's words, "They came there to be ultimately sent abroad" (Charles Dickens, Household Words, April 23, 1853 [London: Bradbury and Evans, 1853], 169). For Dickens's involvement in the scheme, see Elsie B. Michie, Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 81.

- 19 Richards, Commodity Culture, 65.
- 20 Cobbe joins a list that would include obvious candidates such as John Ruskin, Sarah Stickney Ellis, Felicia Hemans, and Coventry Patmore, as well as the lesser-known contributors to Household Words, The Home Friend, Family Herald, The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, and similarly titled journals. We might also add M. B. H., whose work Home Truths for Home Peace, or "Muddle" Defeated (London: Effingham Wilson, 1851) offers the following axiomatic reflection: "It is from persons, and not from things, that the feeling of comfort must arise." Quoted in Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.
- 21 Francis Power Cobbe, "The Final Cause of Woman," in Woman's Work and Woman's Culture, ed. Josephine Butler (London: Macmillan, 1869), 10-11
- 22 "I do not believe anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis. There is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses." Sigmund Freud, quoted in Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 163.
- 23 Alexander Welsh, The City of Dickens (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 142.
- 24 This penultimate paragraph appeared in the first corrected proof and was subsequently removed because of an overrun of the forty-eight pages allotted to each number. See Alan Horsman, introduction, Dombey and Son, 36. The Penguin edition rightly restores the
- 25 Letter to John Forster, quoted in Chase and Levenson, Spectacle of Intimacy, 95.
- 26 Charles Dickens, Bleak House (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1985), 115.
- 27 Letter to C. C. Felton, January 2, 1844, in Charles Dickens, Letters, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 4:2.
- 28 In 1851, William Pickering published a sentimental novel, Home Is Home: A Domestic Tale. Putting aside the insecurity expressed in the tautological title, the work contains a passage vividly illustrating the Dickensian function as integrator of the hearth:

[Mr. Dalton] opened the door which led from the shop, and closing it behind him, found himself in his most snug and comfortable of sitting rooms, where his pretty wife and fine curly headed boy of some three years old hailed his entrance with

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delight. A bright fire, tea ready, and the kettle sending forth its full puffs of steam, all announced that he had been for some time expected; and now his boy is on his knee; his wife prepares his toast, and he draws from his pocket the new number of Dickens's last work which has just come in: this is a charming surprise to Mrs. Dalton, she calls him a "dear good man," and they prepare for an hour of unmixed enjoyment, after a day of industry and careful attention to their respective duties.

Home Is Home: A Domestic Tale (London: William Pickering, 1851), quoted in Chase and Levenson, Spectacle of Intimacy, 8.

29 Quoted in John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (London: Chapman Hall, 1890), 579.