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The Politics of Walking in *Villette* and *Old Curiosity Shop*

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Abstract
In both Bronte's Villette (1853) and Dickens' The Old Curiosity shop (1840) walking becomes a rite of passage that characterises the subject in terms of his/her perception. The subject is valued through that ability to perceive as both the participant and the observer through the walk. As opposed to the vantage point in the sitting room (in a novel like Mansfield Park), the walk in the countryside presents its subject not only allows observation but also introspection. In contrast to the notion of privacy that usually allows the woman of letter to introspect and observe, in Villette it is the outdoors, the walk in the countryside that both make her an object of thought and gives her the spatial freedom to contemplate. The park/garden becomes the intermediary space, located between the open spatial politics of the street and the closed interiors of the domestic household. It allows for new kinds of alliances, and becomes a site for a new kind of social gathering. The social setting of the walk mobilises the strict distinctive spaces of the interior and the exterior, becoming an indicator of a new kind of social interactivity. The walk not only subverts notions of interior and exterior in terms of the domestic household, it also fashions a kind of homelessness that necessitates the walk. Unlike Lucy Snowe who comes back from the 'walk' into the comforts of an interior, Nell's relentless walks lead her away from that domestic space, creating an unfulfilled yearning. The endless walks not only characterise the subjects in terms of action and time, the 'close eternal streets' of London become a death-like process that characterises the city itself.

Keywords: villette, old curiosity shop, walking, Michel de certeau, spaces, interiority, Victorian

Introduction

...Elizabeth continued her *walk alone*, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise. She was shown into the breakfast-parlour, where all but Jane were assembled, and where her appearance created a great deal of surprise. -- *That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it* [1]. (Ital mine)

Jane Austen's exemplary heroine Elizabeth Bennet flouts the decorum of a discreet gentlewoman through the evidence of a walk in her dirty stockings, and a "petticoat six inches deep in mud"—indicating a characteristic unlike conventional femininity and an individuality that shocks her onlookers in the novel. In Elizabeth's unconventional behaviour— the dirty stockings mark her as an individual who stands apart from the rest of the female characters through a marked independence. In Elizabeth Bennet, Austen creates in a heroine who can think for herself outside social conventions of female behaviour.

Walking three miles becomes an indicator of physical exercise and is signified, more importantly through the signs on the heroine's body/dress —signs that acquire a social significance in reflecting upon Elizabeth's character. In Austen's world of propriety the woman's appropriate location is inside the domestic sphere, so that when a woman walks for utility it denotes an "abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum [2]." Although the landscape does not apparently interest the author, or the heroine in the novel, the walk becomes an indicator of the heroine's individuality, setting her apart. From Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1812) to Charlotte Bronte's Villette (1853) the English novel undergoes a crucial change in terms of its spatial ordering [3]. While Austen focuses on the intricacies within the domestic setting, Charlotte's Bronte's Villette steps outside the coordinates of the interior and claims the landscape as an integral part of the novelistic trope.

Charlotte Bronte describes Pride and Prejudice, as a novel which is "[a] carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck [4]." Bronte's Lucy Snowe on the other hand must refuse to be confined only within the sphere of the Pensionnat and step outside the threshold, symbolising a larger shift in terms of spatial ordering and cultural signifiers. Lucy asserts, "I often walked all day, through the burning noon and the arid afternoon, and the dusk evening, and came back with moonrise. While wandering in *solitude*, I would sometimes *picture the present probable position* of others, my acquaintance [5]." (Ital mine) Both solitude and the act of retrospection become crucial in characterising the female narrative which has at its centre a subject who both observes and is observed. Walking, unlike in Austen, becomes a formal necessity of the autobiographical mode of the narrative which constantly shows the protagonist as negotiating spaces, especially through walking. The female protagonist must be allowed to script her own narrative rather than be censored by a male counterpart, as done by M. Paul in Villette: "...[he] generally pruned before lending his books, especially if they were novels, and sometimes I was a little provoked at the severity of his censorship, the retrenchments interrupting the narrative [6]." The walk becomes rite for individuating the narrator who must transcribe her narrative to lend herself a voice, movement and freedom from stagnation imposed by

social conventions within and without the domestic sphere. The walk allows mobility for the governess as she negotiates spaces without allowing herself to be categorised.

In the Pensionnat which is run by autocratic rules, surveillance and espionage, Lucy struggles to find a voice of her own: "So oblivious was the house, so tame, so trained its proceedings, so inexpectant its aspect--I scarce knew how to breathe in an atmosphere thus stagnant, thus smothering. Would no one lend me a voice?" [7] The garden becomes an intermediary space for self expression, a middle ground between the home and the street, a microcosmic symbol of freedom and breaking away from social conventions [8]. Yet it is the map of the narrator's walk that selectively charts spaces and classifies them as domestic or otherwise. It is the path she prefers to take (as opposed to the one she does not), that mark the spatial politics of the novel—thus the Bretton's domestic space is privileged over the demonised attic of the Rue Fossette [9].

The walk apparently unhinges the female narrator from any social codes of conduct and renders her as someone who must go through the rite of passage to come to terms with the self. With this notion is strongly attached a Romantic notion of individual subjectivity that can only come to terms with its original self through a retrospective solitude [10] and yet Lucy is also always an observer, reporting constantly to the reader. The walk is more phatic than objective-"Walking, which alternately follows a path and has followers, creates a mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic topoi [11]." The process of walking and the retrospective solitude allows Lucy a space outside the ever surveillant Pensionnat and that act of retrospection itself reorders the novel in terms of time-depicting the narrator as someone who is not omniscient or despite the omniscience uses the retrospection as a device to strategise a narrative that withholds information from the reader. Hence when Lucy Snowe reveals that she all along knew Dr. John to be John Graham Bretton the reader is naturally distanced from the narrator, henceforth perceived as reliable, so that this device portrays the narrator not as someone who allows access to her innermost thoughts spontaneously but rather crafts the narrative retrospectively and self consciously [12].

In the novel the reader moves with closeness to the narrator as the kind of topos also changes the formal rhetoric of the narrative [13]. Throughout the narrative the storms portend of the state of things to come, also indicating a poignant break in the narrative: "Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm--this restless, hopeless cry--denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life [14]." Unmistakably one of the most poignant scenes in the novel for Lucy is when she faints in the face of a harsh stormy weather following a prolonged period of loneliness at the Pensionnat even as she confesses to Pere Silas at the Catholic Church. In such a circumstance when the confession becomes a strong necessity (yet a technique she deploys to mislead the audience) in a spatial realm that symbolises surveillance and lack of privacy, intermediary spaces like the garden and the park or the 'l'allée défendue' become spaces of negotiating with the mode of the protagonist's confessional, the narrative itself (it is only in narrow alleys that the female governess can seek privacy). Thus the act of walking itself becomes an act of rebellion beyond the surveillance of the Pensionnat in what seems to be reclamation of these intermediary spaces by Lucy.

Although her narrative deploys the techniques of a self authored narrative, yet Lucy Snowe [15] willingly "forgets" her own history and only speaks of the loss in symbolic terms, so that her loss occurs through a neurosis of a self-conceived split that is visible in the form of fissures in the narrative [16]. Lucy is only too aware of the split in her roles-as a governess, as authorial self projection [17]. Like herself-Lucy as a governess, as a protégé of the Brettons and as social acquaintance of the Homes, she has various selves- she is conscious of the fact that the public identity of Dr. John is also that of John Graham Bretton's and her narrative only weaves in the complexity of characters that might have seemingly contradictory characteristics as various social projections of the same self-

The reader is requested to note a seeming contradiction in the two views which have been given of Graham Bretton-the public and private- the outdoor and the indoor view. In the first, the public, he is shown oblivious of self; as modest in the display of his energies, as earnest in their exercise. In the second, the fireside picture, there is expressed consciousness of what he has and what he is; pleasure in homage, some recklessness in exciting, some vanity in receiving the same. Both portraits are correct [18].

Her understanding of the distinction only adds psychological realism to her characters and yet apparent misjudgement of characters or shifting her object of love from Dr. John to M. Paul keeps the audience in the dark about her knowledge of things to create a sense of anticipation. The success of the narrative then is predicated on a tactical arrangement/organisation of plot information that is both complex and yet fashions itself on spontaneity. But revelation, recognition and confession both become important strategic elements that shape the novel; but the author uses the formal advantage of the narrative to disguise the recognition and reveal it much later in the chronology of the novel. The two crucial incidents—when Lucy faints after the confessional at the Catholic Church and the Masquerade—are scenes when the heroine negotiates with her sense of loss through the processes of confessional and discovery (the two being linked to each other)—through the mode of the walk. In the first instance, the aimless narrator-streetwalker asserts the shock of encounter, brought about by the walk, by using the incident to enter yet again into the domestic realm of the Brettons—a symbolic escape from exile, and a movement from the streets into the British domestic realm, from the estranging French religion into the comforts of a symbolically named household. Lucy's initial sense of discovery as she finds herself into the Bretton household only adds to the reader's sense of surprise, at the serendipitous discovery of the streetwalker, and the orphaned governess.

The encounter of the *Walpurgisnacht* lends itself to a fantastic description where the fete is almost mistaken by the reader as a dream vision. It provides a microcosm of the novel, as Lucy is haunted by aspects of her past and present [19]. In the crowd of citizens and known characters, Lucy's lonely walk individuates her from any group or family—either the Homes, Brettons or her acquaintances from Rue Fossette. She is a woman *without*— without community, society or a home [20] so that the perpetual state of exile and homelessness are necessities for a constant mobility that symbolise in the process of walking. This process of walking in turn perhaps signifies Lucy's ambitions of upward mobility and strategy:

I went to *my own alley*: had it been dark, or even dusk, I should have hardly ventured there, for I had not yet forgotten the curious illusion of vision (if illusion it were) experienced in that place some months ago...I paced up and down, thinking almost the same thoughts I had pondered that night when I buried my glass jar-how I should make *some advance in life, take another step towards an independent position*; for this train of reflection, though not lately pursued, had never by me been wholly abandoned; and whenever a certain eye was averted from me, and a certain countenance grew dark with unkindness and injustice, into that track of speculation did I at once strike; so that, little by little, I had laid half a plan [21]. (Italics mine)

Lucy as a governess cannot reclaim either the space of the domestic household in which she works neither the streets where she can be threatened and viewed as an object of sexual prey, yet she calls her alley "my own" linking the imagery of the narrow alley to notions of privacy and contemplation. Other spaces, like the carnival, allow Lucy to be invisible as the ultimate voyeur who walks in and out of private conversations without being seen [22]. The carnival in the park, like the garden almost becomes a spatial correlate for the narrative where she observes unseen, misjudges (to think that M. Paul is betrothed to Justine Mary), walks aimlessly towards a surprise of encounters. While recognition becomes an important motif in the novel towards discovery, and towards registering crucial links for narrative progress, Lucy's cognitive abilities are either kept a secret from the audience or she misrecognises in that encounter at the carnival a social gesture —that of Justine and M. Paul walking together-she misrecognises filial love for romantic gesture.

Although the narrative begins with Lucy living with the Brettons (symbolically named) in what seems to be a scene of domestic comfort, yet at the beginning of her own narrative she remains an observer rather than a participant, observing the little Polly. It is only when Lucy steps outside the landscape of England and enters into Labassecour that the narrative shifts to her own story. Her entry to Villette is marked by the walk where she not only gets lost in the darkness of the apparently hostile city streets but her precarious position as a single woman becomes visible as she is mistaken as a prostitute and addressed vulgarly. However, Lucy's position changes once she is a governess in Madame Beck's—from being a sexualised object threatened on the streets she becomes a desexualised woman, invisible to male desire, as Dr. John says much to Lucy's dismay that she is 'an inoffensive shadow' [23]. Hence "the figure of the governess thus permits Bronte to rewrite the terms of women's urban walking under the banner of fraternity rather than heterosexuality (the governess rather than the streetwalker) and so, also, to depict bodies as sites of creative shaping and recognition rather than anonymous and contaminating exchange [24].

In Villette while the plot unfolds by borrowing from autobiographical instances of the author herself, [25] the apparent autobiography of Lucy Snowe is represented through the various characters—characters like Ginevra Fanshawe and Paulina Home become figments of her wishful alter-egos. A woman without a community or country, Lucy metaphorically and literally signifies exile in her state of homelessness so that the Protestant work ethic not only becomes a strong motivation for seeking work and identity, she clings to it as a part of recognising the self.

I was walking thus one evening, and had been detained farther within the verge of twilight than usual, by the still-deepening calm, the mellow coolness, the fragrant breathing with which flowers no sunshine could win now answered the persuasion of the dew. I saw by a light in the oratory window that the Catholic household were then gathered to evening prayer—a rite, from attendance on which, I now and then, as a Protestant, exempted myself [26].

The interiors of Rue Fossette, a pensionnat is neither a conventional Victorian domestic household nor is it a convent but rather a middle ground that thrives on the networks of relentless surveillance so that privacy and security of the self as opposed to the streets is denied. If the streets pose the threat of objectifying Lucy as a sexual object, the interiors constantly try to desexualise her and deprive her of an emotional solitude-her letters are inspected, her drawers are searched and even the *grenier* (where she tries to read Dr. John's letter) are spaces that are constantly invaded and probed. Yet in a novel that evidently thrives on a network of voyeurism, Lucy is the only voyeur who discovers the various strands of truth to compile an apparently cohesive plot without being suspected as an observer- "Deep into some of Madame's secrets I had entered--I know not how: by an intuition or an inspiration which came to me-I know not whence [27]. But Lucy's counter-surveillance is neither a result of intuition nor inspiration, rather, it is through an acute awareness of her own precarious position as a homeless governess that Lucy wants to protect her sense of privacy/private belongings. It is a space that only the garden offers her, as she buries her letters near the Methuselah tree. As De Certeau says,

The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors). Within them it is itself the effect of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it and make it the other's blazon: in other words, it is like a peddler, carrying something surprising, transverse or attractive compared with the usual choice. These diverse aspects provide the basis of a rhetoric. They can even be said to define it [28].

However, it is not a simple curiosity but perhaps the awareness of the panoptic eye, the perpetual unseen observer that Lucy is aware of which not only fashions the governess in her but also creates the voyeur who must be ever-vigilant to survive in the pensionnat. She knows that while she is perpetually tested by Mme Beck as a fit governess, she is being watched through the keyhole by a vigilant mistress while she takes on her new role as the English teacher. It is this outmanoeuvring, the ability to be aware of the 'eye' that allows Lucy to find her own voice, and yet her final symbol of privacy is outside the pensionnat in the garden, the alley or in the gothic mansion of M. Paul's.

The novel employs a network of voyeurs to create a metatext of perspectives so that the truth is constantly qualified through layers of other truths. Bronte uses techniques of Romantic idealism and Victorian Realism to construct a narrative that is essentially fissured—so that the Gothic element in the novel

(the constant reappearance of the Nun) is undercut by a realistic justification by the end of the novel, adding yet another perspective to undercut the "romantic rubbish". The seemingly inconsistent narrative then undergoes constant modification only adds depth to her characters, "Reader, if in the course of this work, you find that my opinion of Dr. John undergoes modification, excuse the seeming inconsistency. I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered [29]."

Surveillance as a mode is not only used to observe and control things inside the pensionnat, it is used by characters to examine external signs of faces, minds and actions. Yet even as Lucy describes herself being surveyed, she herself is an observer in this act if mutual surveillance. Surveillance as a strategy is never unidimensional in the novel nor is it confined to the interior spaces of the school, rather M. Paul's "magic lattice" and the 'sleepless eye" of the surveillant Catholic confessional, only hopes to invade the private lives of its subjects through a process of self-surveillance. As Lucy constantly deconstructs the myths of a seemingly composed boarding school and invades the myths of its working, she is the voyeur who demystifies a complex network of panoptic surveillance. She constantly judges and observes Mme Beck and yet her portrayal of Mme Beck is far from being partial, rather Lucy's ability to demystify the complex network of surveillance and her own position as a vigilant observer only allows her to add psychological realism to her characters like Mme Beck and M. Paul-so that M. Paul from being a little, dark man rises in stature to become the potential love interest of Lucy.

Like in Jane Eyre, the marriage vow of Jane and Rochester takes place in the intermediary space of the garden, which is neither the domestic nor the public, it is the garden of Rue Fossette rather than the classroom or the social setting of the ballroom that gives Lucy a novel insight into the complex character of M. Paul. It is in the solitude of the garden or the lonely alley where Lucy can and must reflect upon the characters she encounters and it is these encounters that render her characters in a renewed psychological depth. She recounts: Behind the house at the Rue Fossette there was a garden-large, considering that it lay in the heart of a city, and to my recollection at this day it seems pleasant*: but time, like distance, lends to certain scenes an influence so softening*...There went a tradition that Madame Beck's house had in old days been a convent. That in years gone by--how long gone by I cannot tell, but I think some centuries--before the city had over-spread this quarter, and when it was tilled ground and avenue, and such deep and leafy seclusion as ought to embosom a religious house-that something had happened on this site which, rousing fear and inflicting horror, had left to the place the inheritance of a ghost-story. A vague tale went of a black and white nun, sometimes, on some night or nights of the year, seen in some part of this vicinage. The ghost must have been built out some ages ago, for there were houses all round now; but certain convent-relics, in the shape of old and huge fruit-trees, yet consecrated the spot; and, at the foot of one--a Methuselah of a pear-tree, dead, all but a few boughs which still faithfully renewed their perfumed snow in spring, and their honey-sweet pendants in autumn...On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryste with the rising moon, or taste one kiss of the evening breeze, or fancy rather than feel the freshness of dew descending [30].

In the description of the garden Lucy not only struggles with the realism as opposed to Romantic Gothic but also shrewdly tries to demystify the myth of the nun while keeping the suspense. It is the open space of the garden where she can encounter the ghost of the Nun without being hysteric (as opposed to the attic) while reading Dr. John's letter where her frenzied cries probably signifies her repressed desire and love for him. It is the space of the garden as well where Lucy must purge her repressed love for Dr. John before progressing to her love for M. Paul in the novel so that she buries Dr. John's letters symbolically and literally near the Methuselah tree- "But I was not only going to hide a treasure-I meant also to bury a grief [31]." The garden unlike the schoolroom or the city does not present her on extremes of sexual objectification (neither the prostitute to be chased nor the desexualised governess), but it is a site where she can be mistaken for Ginevra Fanshawe without the observer's prejudiced notions of categorising women so that it is the apt space where some semblance of the self can be articulated to M. Paul in the form of a dialogue.

Lucy's rite of walking then generates new spaces for the homeless governess, not only to articulate her privacy into a narrative but also creates an avenue for the female subject to articulate her self-image without defining herself through the male gaze [32], but by negotiating her subjectivity in relation to other things-primarily the setting itself, "Still, while walking in the garden, feeling the sunshine, and marking the blooming and growing plants, I pondered the same subject the whole house discussed [33]." Introspection becomes integrally linked to the process of narrative, as does the condition for introspection. The attic, the closed schoolrooms or the dormitory become impossible locations for thought, so that at certain points in the narrative feeling above seeing is an avenue for knowledge [34]. But the symbol of the walk itself perhaps also characterise the ever restless neurosis of loss, exile and homelessness, necessitating the need for upward mobility- Lucy's path of progress is self authored [35], "I am a *rising character*: once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher [36]. The teleology of growth is registered in the "I", the chronology is carefully measured in the "then" and "now" of the narrative and Lucy rises in her own narrative as a character of focus, she goes beyond it to impress herself upon the imagination of the reader.

The Old Curiosity Shop

Of the thousand millions of human beings that are said to constitute the population of the entire globe, there are – socially, morally, and perhaps even physically considered— but two distinct and broadly marked races, viz., the wanderers and the settlers – the vagabond and the citizen – the nomadic and the civilized tribes [37].

The Old Curiosity Shop (1840-41) in many ways oscillates between the polarized setting of the domestic and the wanderer —the adventures of the sojourner on one hand and that of the prison house on the other. Dickens builds the novel on a structure of severe contrast(s) [38]—the spatial politics of the novel moves between the open endless roads on one hand symbolised by Nell and her grandfather; and domestic rootedness on the other through the Garlands, Kit and Barbara

on the other hand. The restless momentum of the novel is picaresque in form [39], so that the adventure is necessitated by the relentless eternal walk—the road becomes an emblem of the never-ending journey of Nell. Yet in novel's restless anxiety of the walk, is borne out an impulse quite the opposite, for the journey to end, to escape the eternal streets that relentlessly prod the walker to walk—and instead to find a place to rest. While critics have described the novel as walking from one death to another death, perhaps it is also a walk from an urban home to a more idyllic one—and yet that movement becomes symbolic in its reconstruction of time as progress, by making the walk retrogressive.

In the novel, Dickens blends the actual blight of Victorian industrialization with echoes of past literary traditions— the picaresque novel. Both the tradition and the form are necessitated by the acute sense of dislocation felt by the protagonist and her grandfather, imposed by the social and economic setting of the novel—the alienating effect [40] of the urban city life as a result of industrialisation—Dickens describes people who live in the city as those "who live solitarily in great cities as in the bucket of a human well." [41] Written in 1840-1, the novel anticipates the oncoming decade of severe industrial depression [42]-the 'Hungry Forties' [43] and perhaps retrospects on a more personal level on the death of Dickens' sister-in-law Mary Hogarth [44]. The last decade had also seen the beginning of the Chartist Movement which lasted well till the end of the next decade [45]. The walk is a crucial as a metaphor of homelessness (the central motif of relentless walking) yet in turn also becomes a communal artefact in representing a collective experience in the desire for class mobility—the walk/escape is prompted by the desire for upward mobility by Nell's grandfather. Perhaps in the figures of Nell and her grandfather Dickens represents the acute sense of dislocation generated by the rapid industrialisation of Britain—resulting in a higher cost of living and a lower wage for the worker [46]. Written like an allegory of the pilgrim's progress, the bleak vision of an industrialised city is illustrated in the morbid critique of the Black Country in the inferno-like industrial town through which Nell passes [47]. It is post this mise en scene that Nell's spirit never recovers from the shock of encounter.

The two pilgrims, often pressing each other's hands, or exchanging a smile or cheerful look, pursued their way in silence. Bright and happy as it was, there was something solemn in the long, deserted streets, from which, like bodies without souls, all habitual character and expression had departed, leaving but one dead uniform repose, that made them all alike... Some straggling carts and coaches rumbling by, first broke the charm, then others came, then others yet more active, then a crowd [48].

At the beginning of the novel from Master Humphrey's walk being a mode of "speculating on the characters and occupations of those who fill the streets", the walk becomes a mode of discovering through encounter. He encounters Nell lost in the vast streets of London so that it sets off the first among a series of incidents and episodes that further the adventure in the plot. But the walk in The Old Curiosity Shop doesn't remain just that—it goes beyond the picaresque mode of encountering adventure to becoming a symbol of a journey which does not have an aim, although the aimless walk extends the plot. The 'eternal streets' symbolise the ceaseless traffic of people and become a symbol both for the social realism of the novel as well as its spiritual allegory—symbolising perhaps through the unceasing walk the ceaselessly changing contemporary world of novel. For Dickens who tries to allegorise the economic crisis into a spiritual one—the only property that the poor have is their "household gods which are flesh and blood, with no alloy of silver and gold...so that he has no property but in the affections of his own heart [49]." The poor man for Dickens has "his love of home from God, his rude hut becomes a solemn place." In the novel material inadequacy almost becomes a condition to be exalted in an inverse link to a generalised virtuosity and spiritual ascension and vice-versa—"The ties that bind the wealthy and the proud to home may be forged on earth, but those which link the poor man to his humble hearth are the truer metal and bear the stamp of Heaven [50]"-of this Kit and Barbara are the ideal examples, as the story of Nell acquires a happy legendary afterlife in their domestic household (even as Kit can't remember where the shop stood and a new *road* has been built in its place).

The dizzy inexorable character of the walk that transforms into a metaphor of a spiritual quest is but an escape from a harsh, material reality—it is perhaps the unyielding change of the real world of an urban London, "the constant pacing to and fro, that never-ending restlessness" that fails to accommodate those that cannot accept change—as Master Humphrey describes at the beginning of the novel as the incessant "stream of life, that will not stop pouring on, on, on". Yet the walk is as much a trial for Nell, as it a quest towards an idyll of peace. In contrast to the spiritual sanity of Nell, her grandfather is like the childish Lear for whom realisation only comes with the death of Nell. In the face of her grandfather's sinfulness, theft and greed for gambling-Nell is the total symbol of spiritual purity who sees the walk very early as a quest for peace and remembers Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress [51]. This religious and spiritual superimposition in the novel almost makes it work like an allegory of the progress of soul-like Dante's inferno, she too must travel through water and fire. But Dickens combines the spiritual allegory with the realism of an industrialised Britain to mark the rapid decline of Nell after her shocking encounter of the hellish town—her decline then, is physical, spiritual and psychological. The industrial town is a harsh imposition of realism on the allegorical framework-the lurid pictures of poverty and unemployment in the Black Country belong unmistakably to the contemporary world of Dicken's England.

The allegory of the spiritual progress reasserted through a parallel to The Pilgrim's Progress does not affect character as much as the setting of the novel, or its place. While Nell represents the steadfast seeker in Christian, her grandfather represents the aspect of Christian when he vacillates and takes shortcuts [52]. Also the intention of the journey unlike Christian is not the road to salvation but to escape from temptation and escape from Quilp. In that the form of the novel blends the idea of adventure and progress. London is obviously similar to Bunyan's City of Destruction. Nell and her grandfather's second flight from temptation leads to the Black Country as Dickens's imaginative reconstruction of Birmingham and of the road to Wolverhampton bears a strong resemblance to Bunyan's description of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is the crucial encounter of this allegorical town that foreshadows the death of Nell as the contact shocks her into an illness from which she never recovers. Dickens's description

of the horrors of an industrial town parallels Bunyan's description of the mouth of hell,

In a large and lofty building, supported by pillars of iron, with great black apertures in the upper walls...echoing to the roof with the beating of hammers and roar of furnaces, mingled with the hissing of red-hot metal plunged in water, and a hundred strange unearthly noises never heard elsewhere; in this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke, dimly and fitfully seen, flushed and tormented by the burning fires, and wielding great weapons, a faulty blow from any one of which must have crushed some workman's skull, a number of men laboured like giants [53].

Similar to this is Bunyan's Hell,

About the midst of this Valley, I perceived the mouth of Hell to be, and it stood also hard by the way side: Now thought Christian, what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises... that he was forced to put up his Sword.... Thus he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him: also he heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the Streets [54]

While the walk in The Old Curiosity Shop is located in an allegorical and real context, so is Dicken's critique of the whole experience of dislocation brought about by industrialisation. The final walk into a temporary idyllic home then is an emblem of both-the collective experience of displacement from community/home which is at one hand forced and at another an escape; and an allegorical escape from the urban landscape into a move back to pre-industrial rural England. While the real context only makes the dénouement more poignant, it is the relentless pursuit of escape and adventure that furthers the plot of the novel.

The pace of the novel is triggered by the adventure scene-which is the escape of Nell and her grandfather from the misanthrope, Quilp on one hand, even as the other part of the novel retains its anxiety about the chase. While the momentum of the novel is carried forward by the adventure scene-after Nell's flight from London, the novel proceeds by tracing Nell and her grandfather, and yet the restless nervous momentum of their adventure trickles into every domestic concern in the novel-mainly into Kit's, yet grotesquely into Quilp's and Brass'. Of course Bevis Marks is a farce of the domestic household held together by concerns of family welfare—Sally Brass' only connection to her brother Samson seems to be one of economic profit. Bevis Marks as a home is a travesty, and foil to a household like Kit's-Bevis Marks is a household run by the economics of profit and business, so that its rooms are occupied by tenants, clients and in its underbelly is a prison like labyrinth where the Marchioness suffers anonymously.

The walk in the novel apart from its symbolic value is also a marker of class and condition of the walker. The financially secure-like the Garlands and the single gentleman-all travel in carriages. The incertitude of financial security is symbolised in Nell and her grandfather lost in the solitude of London and yet the symbolic losing of oneself is only initiated by an economic crisis in the novel. Moral greed becomes relevant in Nell's grandfather's destructive penchant for gambling and it registers a 'moral economy' [55] antithetical to the work ethic of an industrialised England where hard work must be the only resource of an economic reward. The guardian figure in The Old Curiosity Shop is naturally rejected because of his excess, substituted by Nell who becomes a little picaresque girl who unlike a traditional picaresque protagonist has no particular direction except away from London, and toward no particular destination. Schwarzbach comments that the activity of seeking a fortune (traditional in a picaresque novel) is reduced to the old man's obsession with gambling and even further to blatant sexual aggression [56]. The journey away from urban London is a retraction from the politics of an industrialised economy to the pre-industrial idyll of the countryside almost as if outside time and history. Nell and her grandfather choose the alternative of the city and migrate by retreating in the opposite direction from the city so that the ultimate retreat is like the sentimentalised village of Augustan Poets—with the ideal schoolmaster as their guardian [57]

The idyllic village where she ultimately rests with her grandfather and the schoolmaster, has to be a place that allows her a home, a garden and open spaces in contrast to 'closed walls' and narrow streets. It is as if Nell not only travels along a map of anonymous landscape but retreat backwards in time from the economic and social context of contemporary history. The walk becomes the ultimate symbol of reverse migration in reconstructing notions of both space and time [58]. Quilp in a way becomes a symbol of a contemporary money-minded villain who must chase away the possessor of curiosities if not only take over the antiquated business—he enjoys the idea of St. Paul's clock crushing a bone finger to dust, as in an attempt to get the better of time, Quilp twists off the minute hand of his clock to use it as his toothpick. The escape is then symbolic, of a collective experience—a symbolic escape from the wretchedness of the present social and economic milieu. The idyllic village is the ultimate space of unthreatened rest as the home accommodates the comforts of a warm hearth. The landscape in the novel is more symbolic than real—throughout the novel Dickens indicates it to be England yet never names his landscape. The walk foregrounds the subjective experience of Nell and her grandfather rather than the setting in itself, so that unlike Lucy Snowe the topography of countryside is not marked for its beauty or the influence it has on Nell's psyche. What follows Nell finally, more urgently than her real pursuers is her fear of her grandfather's spiritual degradation and the fear of religious corruption—her escape is also a transcendence of practices of lower class culture. Yet within the picaresque tempo of the flight itself— her grandfather's greed sets up a rhythm of temptation and flight so that the final space of rest is a space without the trappings of economic profit or loss. The journey backwards into the quaint house in the anonymous garden perhaps in many ways replicates the old curiosities left back in London, in that both Nell are her grandfather fit in the antiquated olde world, rather than an industrialised space of modern economic exchange—their movement backwards is emblematic of a deep dislocation and alienation brought about by the process of industrialisation. As the novel oscillates between movement and the desire for rest, Nell's anxiety is also expressed in a metaphor of moving crowds; her grandfather's "wavering and unsettled state" causes "thoughts in restless action" to come "flocking on her mind in crowds [59]." The walk not only disturbs the sense of time as defined in terms of progress, but time is also reconfigured in a countrified quest for rest ultimately symbolised in death, as Steven Marcus says, "The strongest impulse with which the novel is charged is the desire to disengage itself from energy, the desire for inertia." [60] The

walk in the novel then, is ultimately a walk backwards. The collective experience of a displaced community symbolised in Nell's story-is perhaps as the initial narrator, Master Humphrey indicates at the end of the novel-a story whose afterlife is drowned in the "incessant tread of feet",

There are some few people well to do, who remember to have heard it said, that numbers of men and women – thousands, they think it was – get up in London every day, unknowing where to lay their heads at night; and that there are quarters of the town where misery and famine always are. They don't believe it quite- there may be some truth in it but it is quite exaggerated, of course. So each of these thousand worlds, goes on intent upon itself... [61]

While Master Humphrey's walk at the beginning of the novel presents him with an encounter—that introduces the story—the walk transforms into many symbols. It is the walk of the initial narrator which enables Master Humphrey to individuate a character like Nell from the multitude and yet in her represent the communal pathos of her context. Although Nell represents numbers in a walk that stands for shared experience yet it is the depressing "crowds of wheels and chain" she must escape in her retrogressive walk. The curiosity shop and its original possessors ultimately are the classic icons of misfit in an Industrialised economy, unwanted—they are old like their curiosities, they are an oddity in the urban context—and hence must move to a former version of time, an idyllic past where "even change was old in that old place". Yet Nell's is a walk from one death to another. As the walk traces backwards, the narrator must return to remind the audience that the idyll is a figment of art, and although death makes Nell memorable yet it is the fate for the thousands who remain "numbers" yet uncertain of their lives, under the dehumanising effect of an incessantly changing world.

Reference

1. Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice, London: Lord Benteley, 1853, 27
2. Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice, London: Lord Benteley, 1853, 30.
3. Janet Wolff in The Invisible Flaneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity, in Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, offers an unusually efficient survey of socio- logical writings identifying modernity with city life and locating the onset of modernity in the mid nineteenth century, with its flourishing ideology of separate spheres, 1990, 34-50.
4. Charlotte Bronte to G.H Lewes, reprinted in Critical Heritage, 1848, 126
5. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1853, 158
6. Ibid, 351
7. Ibid. 449
8. Yet as one sees, even the garden is not free from surveillance. M.Paul watches Lucy's movement closely from a magic lattice even as she protests when she finds out.
9. Michel De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press, Berkley, The process of selection of the walker "[C]ondemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others spatial "turns of phrase" that are "rare," "accidental" or illegitimate. But that already leads into a rhetoric of walking, 1984, 99.
10. Lucy Snowe is perceived by critics as having strong resemblances to Lucy of Lucy Poems by Wordsworth. Yost however feels that Bronte in Lucy Snowe seeks to subvert Wordsworth's Lucy to create her own. See David Yost, "A Tale of Three Lucys: Wordsworth and Brontë in Kincaid's Antiguan 'Villette"
11. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press, Berkley, 1984, 100.
12. Urbanistic techniques, which classify things spatially, can be related to the tradition of the "art of memory", in Frances A. Yates, The Art of Memory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,). Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life says, the ability to produce a spatial organization of knowledge (with "places" assigned to each type of "figure" or "function") develops its procedures on the basis of this "art." It determines utopias and can be recognized even in Bentham's Panopticon. Such a form remains stable in spite of the diversity of its contents (past, future, present) and its projects (conserving or creating) relative to changes in the status of knowledge merely by their organization of "details," of transforming a human multiplicity into a "disciplinary" society, 1966, 219.
13. The walking of passers-by offers a series of turns (tours) and detours that can be compared to "turns of phrase" or "stylistic figures" Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 101.
14. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1853, 35.
15. "I can hardly express what subtlety of thought made me decide upon giving her a cold name but first I called her "Lucy Snowe"…which Snowe I afterwards changed to Frost. Subsequently I rather regretted the change and wished it "Snowe" again." Charlotte Bronte to W.S Williams, November 16, 1853, quoted in Clement Shorter, The Brontes: Life and Letters, London 1908, 286.
16. Besides, I seemed to hold two lives--the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter.
17. Margaret Drabble says that one of the themes in the book is the search for the self-respect and independence which could be seen characteristically as a Protestant enterprise. For her, Lucy and Madame Beck are spiritual opposites- "Lucy is poor, plain, straightforward to a fault … Madame Beck is Luxurious efficient but indolent, devious and greedy." Introduction, pp. xvii-xviii. However the opposite has also been argued by critics like Kate Brown in her essay titled "Catastrophe and the City: Charlotte Bronte as Urban Novelist" argues that Lucy is a victim of indifferent market forces rather than as a character striving for social and personal improvement. Nineteenth-Century Literature, 2002; 57(3):358-9.
18. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1853, 198-99.
19. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar the Madwoman in the Attic, New Haven: Yale, 1979. 435.
20. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the Madwoman in the Attic, New Haven: Yale, 1979, 400.

21. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 173-4.
22. Enid Duthie in The Foriegn Visions of Charlotte Bronte (London: Macmillan,) suggests that the carnival seems to be a democratic space, merging spatial barriers of the park and the street, and also that of class distinctions with the peasantry participating in it. However Lucy is misled by her jealousy into thinking M. Paul is in love with his ward, but it is also her last illusion literally and metaphorically as she retreats into Rue Fossette to encounter the Nun, which is only a costume. Her "frenetical violence" with which she tears the veil of the puppet is her long suppressed reaction against superstitious fears, illusory legends, a surveillant, ineffable panoptic eye and her deep repressed desires. 1975, 101-3.
23. Kate Millett in Sexual Politics talks of Lucy, [she is] a pair of eyes watching society; weighing, ridiculing, judging. A piece of furniture whom no one notices, Lucy sees every- thing and reports, cynically, compassionately, truthfully, analytically, 140.
24. Kate Brown. Catastrophe and the City: Charlotte Bronte as Urban Novelist Nineteenth-Century Literature, (Dec., 2002; 57(3):352-3
25. The plot of the novel apart from being a retelling of her first novel The Professor is said to have been about her own experiences in Brussels where she met M. Heger, a character on whom supposedly M. Paul is modeled.
26. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 105.
27. Ibid. 454
28. Michel De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press, Berkley 102
29. Ibid. 192
30. Ibid. 103-4
31. Ibid. 300
32. Although Harriet Martineau critiques the novel by saying that all female characters "in their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by their reader in the light of that one thought—love", I do not agree because the denoument of the novel unlike Jane Eyre does not resolve in domestic bliss. The ending is interesting—leaving it open to the imagination of the reader to decide the fate of the protagonist in her search for happiness and respectability as well of her search for love. But Bronte's plot in Villette is not just about love, or finding domestic bliss—the ending is too uncertain to support the genre of a conventional domestic novel about love. Eventually, however one could argue that Bronte sacrifices her plot of love for a realistic ending. The prospect of M. Paul and Lucy as a couple linked romantically is suggested quite late, although their affair acquires poignancy and realism through this delay which is a result of the complex portrayal of the Lucy-Paul relationship. Apart from the fact that the novelistic plot cannot sustain the romantic outcome of the relationship in terms of the space given to it, Lucy and Paul are also quite different in their attitudes to be resolved in marital bliss—with Lucy as someone who is an independent Protestant and Paul as a Catholic who likes to exercise patriarchal control. Miriam Allott. (ed) Charlotte Bronte: Jane Eyre and Villette, a Casebook London, Macmillan, 1973, 75-78.
33. Charlotte Bronte, Villette, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 479
34. Robert Heilman in "Charlotte Bronte's 'New Gothic' in Jane Eyre and Villette" in Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* (ed. By Miriam Allott), 200-03
35. Throughout the narrative Lucy represents her sense of grief or movement through a series of water imagery. Both her loss of family and M. Paul is denoted through a symbolic imagery of drowning and shipwreck. Even her symbol of walking as progress is signified through images of water, "That goodly river on whose banks I had sojourned, of whose waves a few reviving drops had trickled to my lips, was bending to another course: it was leaving my little hut and field forlorn and sand-dry, pouring its wealth of waters far away."
36. Ibid. 313
37. Henry Mayhew. London Labour and the London Poor, Volume 1, chp. 1. Accessed at Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia library. Web. Rachel Bennett says, "Quilp and his associates, the Londoners, are life-centred, Nell and her grandfather, the wanderers, move towards death. Londoners and wanderers are divided from each other by the structure of the book." However, it is not only death in its literal sense that Nell and her grandfather move towards, the book is allegorical and so is death symbolic and escapist in many ways—an escape from the post Industrialised age of London, I argue that the walk is a walk backwards into a pre-Industrial London. That walk is many ways symbolises the collective experience of angst and dislocation felt by the lower middle class in London and in Nell and her grandfather, Dickens invests a larger escape, which is also mainly symbolic. Rachel Bennett, 'Punch versus Christian in The Old Curiosity Shop' The Review of English Studies, New Series, 22(88):423
38. In the preface to the 1848 edition Dickens says, "I will merely observe, therefore, that in writing the book, I had it always in my fancy to surround the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions, associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed." Charles Dickens, Norman Page The Old Curiosity Shop, Penguin, 2000, 8-9
39. In the original preface of the 1841 edition, Dickens clearly goes back to an earlier tradition of the picaresque/road novels by referring to Tom Jones.
40. Alexander Welsh says, "Dickens knows nothing of alienation in the philosophical sense of Marx and Engels, but he understands that alienation is a common condition of urban man. Walter Bagehot wrote that Dickens' genius was "especially suited to the delineation of city life" for this very reason. "London is like a newspaper. Everything is there, and everything is disconnected. There is every kind of person in some houses; but there is no more connection between the houses than between the neighbours in the lists of 'births, marriages, and deaths.'" "Satire and History: The City of Dickens", Victorian Studies, Symposium on the Victorian City (1) 1968; 385(11):3
41. Throughout his writings Dickens comments on the loneliness of the city-dweller. "Thoughts about People" in

Sketches by Boz begins: "It is strange with how little notice, good, bad, or indifferent, a man may live and die in London. He awakens no sympathy in the breast of any single person; his existence is a matter of interest to no one save him- self; he cannot be said to be forgotten when he dies, for no one remembered him when he was alive". Charles Dickens, Sketches By Boz, 215

42. Hobsbawm EJ, Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour, London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1964, the chapter titled "The British Standard of Living 1790-1850" gives a detailed description of the change in economic and social indice of the time. He argues that it is not "improbable" that post the Industrial Revolution in the 1780s (he places it in the 80s than 60s) the living standards did not improve but declined. Both the mid 1790s and 1840s were a turning point. 64-105
43. Schwarzbach FS. Dickens and the City, London: The Athlone Press 1979, 73-74
44. In May after spending an evening with Dickens and his wife, Mary Hogarth fell ill suddenly and few hours later 'died in my arms' as Dickens put it. Mary was seventeen years old and had formed a close attachment to him and Dickens wrote to a friend saying that 'I solemnly believe that so perfect a creature never breathed, 1837,
45. Chartism was a political reform movement in Britain from 1838 to 1848. The word is derived from the People's Charter, the name applied to a legislative program submitted to Parliament in 1837 by the London Working Men's Association. The Chartist movement, which the association sponsored, resulted from widespread dissatisfaction with the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Poor Law of 1834, legislation that workingmen considered discriminatory.
46. Hobsbawm EJ. Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour, London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1964, 67.
47. Colins says that such [the industrial town] scenes had never before been witnessed in human history is finely expressed in the novel: Little Nell and her grandfather, arriving at "some [unnamed] great manufacturing town," feel "as strange, bewildered, and confused, as if they had lived a thousand years before, and were raised from the dead and placed there by miracle." Phillip Colins says that he knows of no better image of the culture-shock experienced by such newcomers to the industrial scene. 'Dickens and Industrialism', Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 20(4):659.
48. Charles Dickens, the Old Curiosity Shop, New York: D. Appleton, 1868. 47.
49. Ibid, 13
50. Ibid, 171
51. The Old Curiosity Shop to some extent retraces the pilgrim's progress of Oliver Twist. Its orphan heroine is another child wandering through the urban and provincial woods, whose burdens are increased by the gambling habits of her prodigal grandfather. Like Oliver too, Nell has an inherent goodness that seems unshakable.
52. Rachel Bennett 'Punch versus Christian in the Old Curiosity Shop' the Review of English Studies, New Series, 22(88):423-4.
53. Charles Dickens, the Old Curiosity Shop, New York: D. Appleton, 1868, 132-3.
54. John Bunyan. The Pilgrim's Progress, London: Simpkin Marshall, 1864, 66.
55. [1]Sue Zemka, From the Punchmen to Pugin's Gothics: The Broad Road to a Sentimental Death in The Old Curiosity Shop Nineteenth-Century Literature, 48(3):294
56. Schwarzbach FS, Dickens and the City, London: The Athlone Press 1979, 71.
57. The pictoral scenes of rural bliss yet the looming threat of the city not far off chasing Nell, the setting in the graveyard and the ideal schoolmaster almost brings to mind Thomas Gray's "Elegy written on a Country Churchyard.
58. I think that although Dickens takes a walk back into time as an ultimate escape into wish fulfillment (as soon as Nell sees it she knows "visions of such scenes…had always been present to her mind"), yet Nell's death does everything but validate that kind of escape. The wish for a pre-industrial England not only had its economic ramifications but political as well—perhaps politically it would imply a return of aristocracy—yet as Dickens moves further into the novel as towards an idyll of peace, Nell's death is an indication of the fact that the return of an pre-industrial London is impossible. Also Nell's death in the far removed realm of the countryside church doesn't level her death as another among 'numbers', it doesn't level her among the many who die in the city—Dickens rescues her from what Raymond Williams calls "repressive uniformity" of the city-life.
59. Philip Rogers. The Dynamics of Time" in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 1973; 28(2).
60. Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965, 142.
61. Charles Dickens. Master Humphrey's Clock Philadelphia: Jesper Harding, 1847, 215