SPACES OF TECHNOLOGY, SPACES OF RECONCILIATION: THE RAILWAY SETTING OF *MUGBY JUNCTION* IN "BARBOX BROTHERS" AND "BARBOX BROTHERS AND CO."

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Abstract: *This paper presents an examination of Charles Dickens's depiction of space in the two frame stories of* Mugby Junction *(1866), a collection of stories by Dickens and his four collaborators. I argue that the railway setting of the first two stories, "Barbox Brothers" and "Barbox and Co." become, for Dickens, a means of articulating his response to the industrialised and mechanical modernity brought about by the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution, such as the railway network and the train, represented in the stories as both threatening to the human and also as a metaphor of human contact, linking people with one another, as well as with their past. Benefiting from a number of theories on spatiality, mainly Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, Isobel Armstrong's definition of "inter-spatial consciousness", Henry Lefebvre's categories of "dominated" and "appropriated" space, and Gaston Bachelard's concept of the house, I contend that it is through his representation of the particular public and private spaces in this setting and his characters' awareness and perception of these spaces that Dickens offers his imaginative solution to the ills of the modern industrial world of his time.*

Keywords: *Charles Dickens; Mugby Junction; industrialised modernity; spaces of technology; spaces of reconciliation.*

Mugby Junction was the 1866 Christmas number of the weekly magazine *All the Year Round* edited by Charles Dickens. As traditional for Christmas, it was a collection of stories gathered around a theme. It contained eight stories, the first four written by Dickens, the other four by his collaborating authors. Ruth Glancy draws attention to the importance of the Christmas season for Dickens in her "Dickens and Christmas: His Framed-Tale Themes" (1980) and states that Christmas was to become for Dickens the time when, "of all occasions in the year, memories of the past could flood back and bring about a spiritual regeneration, founded not upon the outward trappings of seasonable charity and fellowship but upon a personal and moral victory over the hardening and destructive effects of age and experience" (54). His Christmas issues illustrated this theme of "spiritual regeneration", and he used a framed-tale structure, in order to provide thematic unity, particularly for the those in which he collaborated with other writers who contributed to the particular issue with their own stories. As Glancy writes, *Mugby Junction*, the last of the Christmas issues to use multiple writers, was the final affirmation of his Christmas theme, and despite the fact that the collection "adapted the framed-tale structure, dispensing with a closing section and setting the stories apart from the

framework by a separate heading, the number achieved the thematic unity which Dickens had been seeking" (68). For although the six stories following the two framing Barbox stories do not actually concern the protagonist Barbox's own life, they come to achieve thematic function and significance as a step in his "spiritual regeneration" since they are stories collected by him on the six lines of the junction as a natural outcome of his growing interest in other people while trying to decide on which line of the junction to take. These stories are later shared with his new friends (but not heard by the readers). By making the framing stories the first two, instead of placing the framed tales between them, Dickens was able to work out the main theme without interruption, and, at the same time, to maintain thematic unity with the following six stories when the protagonist of the frame stories, Barbox, becomes the narrator of the remaining six.

In the first story "Barbox Brothers", a solitary traveller from London gets off the train at Mugby Junction, "a location made by the new technology" (Livesey 216-217), not knowing where to go next. An unhappy childhood, a detested line of work, and an unexpected betrayal by the woman he loved and his best friend, have made him shy and alienated from humanity. He is hoping to escape his past, and is in a gloomy, depressed state of mind. In other words, he is, as Robert Macfarlane puts it in the "Foreword" to the 2005 edition of the collection, "a classic Dickensian character in need of temperamental reform" (ix). It is a time of personal crisis for him, and his decision as to where he will go will be life changing. He meets a railroad worker, becomes interested in him and the different lines that the junction represents. He decides to spend some time in the nearby town and makes the acquaintance of Phoebe, the disabled daughter of the worker, at their home. This acquaintance helps him gradually overcome his shyness and he prolongs his stay at the junction.

In the second story, "Barbox Brothers and Co.", inspired by her view of the junction as a means of connection, he sets out to explore the various lines, but only after travelling on road number seven to purchase a musical instrument for Phoebe. These lines supply self-contained narratives, almost all associated with death and fatal railway accidents, which Barbox recounts to Phoebe and her father, and which become the remaining six stories of the collection. However, it is not these stories that lead to a change of heart for the protagonist, it is the story of the seventh line, on which he travels twice, that effects the change in his life, the change already started by his growing sense of connection with Phoebe and her father. Although he does not expect to find another story on the seventh line, the protagonist discovers that it is the story of his past, which he encounters when a child he meets in the town where the line terminates leads him to her parents, the woman and the friend who had betrayed him. The affectionate bond he has formed with the child enables him to forgive the parents. In forgiving them he becomes reconciled with his past,

and finds that memory can be a source of understanding and connection. He returns to the junction and settles in Mugby where he can have a fulfilling and useful life.

The "spiritual regeneration" of the protagonist, which forms the main theme of the two framing stories "Barbox Brothers" and "Barbox Brothers and Co.", I argue in this paper, is inseparable from Dickens's view of the industrialised and mechanical modernity brought about by the technological innovations of his time, such as the railway network and the train, around which the entire plot evolves, and which are represented in the stories as both threatening to the human and also as a metaphor of human contact, linking people with one another, as well as with their past. Drawing on a number of theories on spatiality, mainly Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, Isobel Armstrong's definition of "inter-spatial consciousness", Henry Lefebvre's categories of "dominated" and "appropriated" space, and Gaston Bachelard's concept of the house, I contend that it is through his representation of the particular public and private spaces in this setting and his characters' awareness and perception of these spaces that Dickens is able to depict the impact of industrial modernity, a historical and national development, on private lives, and to offer his imaginative solution to the ills of the modern industrial world of his age.

As Robin Atthill observes in his "Dickens and the Railway" (1961), with *Dombey and Son* (1848) Dickens had revealed himself "fully cognizant of the railway" and "was to become increasingly concerned with the social malaise of the new industrial-commercial world around him" (130). Atthill describes the railway setting in Dickens's fiction as "a symbol of the power and ruthlessness of the new era" (131). In the "Foreword" to Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (1977), Alan Trachtenberg also underlines the railroad's significance as a setting representative of the age when he states, "Nothing else in the nineteenth century seemed as vivid and dramatic a sign of modernity as the railroad" (xiii). He goes on to explain further and to emphasize the effect of modernity on social relations:

> One feature of modernity as it crystallized in the nineteenth century was a radical foregrounding of machinery and of mechanical apparatus within everyday life. The railroad represented the visible presence of modern technology as such. Within the technology lay also forms of social production and their relations. Thus the physical experience of technology mediated consciousness of the emerging social order; it gave a form to a revolutionary rupture with past forms of experience, of social order, of human relation. (xv)

In view of Atthill's and Trachtenberg's assertions above, and Trachtenberg's reference to "the 'railway journey' which fills nineteenth-century novels as an

event of travel and social encounter" (xv), the railway setting in the two stories can be regarded as a chronotope, Mikhail Bakhtin's term to describe the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84), where, as Bakhtin writes in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1981), "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). In the stories under discussion, it is the historical condition of industrial modernity that becomes visible as a physical setting, that is, the space of the railroad. Since this physical setting is a public one, a space of "travel and social encounter", the protagonist's "spiritual regeneration", achieved through the social and emotional bonds he forms there is not independent of the forces at work in this historical condition. As I will argue, the protagonist's perception of, and response to, the various spaces in the overall technological space of the railroad is made by Dickens an essential and inseparable aspect and sign of his personal crisis, and the act of reconciliation that follows it.

Since the story is mainly concerned with the connections and emotional bonds produced through social interaction, Henry Lefebvre's categories can be helpful in understanding the significance of Dickens's various spaces in his portrayal of his protagonist's growing ability to form these connections and bonds. As Andrew Thacker observes in *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (2003), "Henry Lefebvre's 1974 *The Production of Space* has been very influential in introducing a number of key concepts into spatial and geographical theory, perhaps the most significant being that of 'social space'" (16). According to Thacker, Lefebvre's "conception of 'social space' is designed to introduce questions of society, history and politics into thinking about space" (16). Lefebvre underlines the continuity between private space and social space in the following words:

> Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. (87)

His distinction between dominated space and appropriated space is also highly relevant since, as Isobel Armstrong states in her discussion of *Dombey and Son* in "Spaces of the nineteenth-century novel" (2012), Dickens uses "the spatial order to combat dominated space" (589). Dominated space, Lefebvre writes, is "a space transformed - and mediated - by technology, by practice" (164). It is the space of capital and power. His category of appropriated space is not so specifically defined, yet he explains that it is the space of limited freedom within the dominated space, often a private space such as a rented

house. It is a form rescued from or outside of the dominated space of technology and power (165-166). He says, "in the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated" (166).

In the stories, against the shadowy and threatening aspect of the station and the junction, the new technological dominated space, and the protagonist's gloomy mind, Dickens presents appropriated spaces and the warmth and kindness of characters who inhabit them and who are capable of recognizing their ties to humanity. The dominated space is the entire railway setting including the rural town of Mugby because the railway disrupts the landscape although it has not yet destroyed it. Since the narrative structure is a journey, which the protagonist started from London where he used to live and work, what the metropolis represents as the centre of industrialised and commercialised modernity is also present in the background. Appropriated spaces are rooms and houses to which individuals can retreat. They are all spaces made inviting, comfortable and attractive by certain imaginative activities that their inhabitants are engaged in, and thus provide a striking contrast to the spaces of technology and their dehumanizing effect.

Both of the frame stories are informed by the protagonist's awareness of the spatio-temporal context of his experience. By remembering his past and engaging with the people he meets in the physical spaces of the railroad setting he realizes his need for a sense of connection. In this sense, the protagonist, the focalizing character, can be regarded as an "inter-spatial subject", or an "inter-spatial consciousness", terms Isobel Armstrong uses in her analysis of the "thickening" of space in fiction. She says:

> *Without* human consciousness space and the things in it would be meaningless. Making sense of space, the spatial self, is something human beings share irreducibly. And space is the structuring element of all social relationships, from the infant at the breast to the configuration of chairs in a salon or drawing room. (577)

Armstrong further argues that the dominant chronotopes of the Victorian novel "both create and are the product of a complex inter-spatial subject, or rather, […] an inter-spatial consciousness" (584). According to Armstrong, "when space 'thickens' in the 19th century novel, as it almost always does in moments of crisis, inter-spatial consciousness comes into being for characters and readers alike" (597). In other words, the "thickening" of space is predicated on the presence of an inter-spatial consciousness, and this is the condition of social interaction.

Barbox's consciousness of space is presented from the very beginning. In fact, the first sentence of the story is the question he asks the guard: "Guard! What place is this?" (3). The guard's answer, "Mugby Junction, sir" (3) draws the character's and the reader's attention to the particular space. It is an

environment dominated by the sounds, sights of the machine. Barbox gets out of the train after, as he says, he "woke up from an uneasy sleep in the carriage" (11), and found himself at the station. He stands on the platform, with his portmanteaus, on which the name is Barbox Brothers, and looks around: "Mugby Junction!" said the traveller…At past three o'clock of a tempestuous morning! So!" (3) The authorial voice introduces the traveller, emphasizing his retiring habits and his alienation from human contact:

> He spoke to himself. There was no one else to speak to. Perhaps, though there had been any one else to speak to, he would have preferred to speak to himself. Speaking to himself, he spoke to a man within five years of fifty either way, who had turned grey too soon, like a neglected fire, a man of pondering habit, brooding carriage of the head, and suppressed internal voice; a man with many indications of having been much alone. (4)

In this early scene, the railway station and the train, in other words the dominated space of industrial and commercial technology, become integrated structurally and thematically with the protagonist's personal story.

Barbox's machine-like, repetitive movements reveal his state of mind as he wanders up and down the platform: "Thus, with a steady step, the traveller went up and down, up and down, up and down, seeking nothing and finding it" (4). His awareness of space and the objects in it is heightened through the violence of the trains' movements and the sounds. Space thickens, for it is a time of crisis for him, and inter-spatial consciousness comes into being. He is disoriented by the sights, sounds, and in his dejected state he is overwhelmed:

> A place replete with shadowy shapes, this Mugby Junction in the black hours of the four-and-twenty. Mysterious goods trains, covered with palls and gliding on like vast weird funerals, conveying themselves guiltily away from the presence of the few lighted lamp […] Red hot embers showering out upon the ground, down this dark avenue, and down the other, as if torturing fires were being raked clear; concurrently, shrieks and groans and grinds invading the ear, as if the tortured were at the height of their suffering […] An earthquake accompanied with thunder and lightning, going up express to London. (4)

This is a moment of personal crisis for him, for the discordant movements and sounds remind him of his discordant past. The train becomes his train of life, a train of remembrance:

> Now, too, as the belated traveller plodded up and down, a shadowy train went by him in the gloom - which was no other than the train of a life. From whatsoever intangible deep cutting or dark tunnel, it emerged, here it came, unsummoned and unannounced, stealing upon him and passing away into obscurity. Here, mournfully went by, a child who had never had a childhood or known a parent, inseparable from a youth with a bitter sense of namelessness, coupled to a man the enforced business of whose best

> years had been distasteful and oppressive, linked to an ungrateful friend, dragging after him a woman once beloved. Attendant, with many a clank and wrench were lumbering cares, dark meditations, huge dim disappointments, monotonous years, a long jarring line of the discords of a solitary and unhappy existence. (5)

The station becomes a space of memory for Barbox when, "with many a clank and wrench", the train brings before him the memory of a haunting past. The shadowy train turns into a means of mobility into his personal past. In this early scene, the railway setting, the junction and the train enable Barbox, metaphorically, to travel into his past. Later on, in the second frame story, the train on the seventh line will literally enable him to rediscover his past when a coincidence leads to a meeting with the couple who had betrayed him.

Yet at the station, he also makes the acquaintance of a worker who asks him if the portmanteaus belong to him, and introduces himself, by his occupation, as Lamps. Working for the railway company, the man has lost his name and become part of the system. In the name Lamps, Dickens is blurring the boundary not only between human and machine, but also between private and public. Similarly, Barbox is known not by his human name, but by the name tag he put on his luggage, Barbox Brothers, which is actually the name of his firm. The mechanized, commercialized, materialist culture of industrial modernity is responsible for Lamps and Barbox being identified by their work and losing their real names, and hence their human identity, since the railroad company and the firm of Barbox Brothers are commercial enterprises of modernity that dehumanize individuals associated with them.

On hearing the man's question Barbox recalls his eyes from "the waste into which he had been staring, and fell back a step or so under the abruptness, and perhaps the chance appropriateness of the question" (5). The "waste" he has been staring into is the physical space, the view before him, and his past, "the train of a life". The man's question startles him, and he falls back a step or so. The spatial image expresses his surprise at hearing a human voice. The space between Barbox and Lamps becomes conspicuous when Barbox becomes aware of it, and crosses it with his eyes.

When the man offers the warmth of his little room, "the gentleman being by this time very cold" (6), accepts the offer and follows Lamps into his cabin, the first of the appropriated spaces he finds at Mugby:

> A greasy little cabin it was, suggestive to the sense of smell, of a cabin in a Whaler. But there was a bright fire burning in its rusty grate, and on the floor there stood a wooden stand of newly trimmed and lighted lamps, ready for carriage service. They made a bright show, and their light, and the warmth, accounted for the popularity of the room, as borne witness to by many impressions of velveteen trousers on a form by the fire, and many rounded smears and smudges of stooping velveteen shoulders on the adjacent wall […] As Barbox Brothers (so to call the traveller on the warranty of his luggage) took his seat upon the form, and warmed his now ungloved hands at the fire,

> he glanced aside at a little desk, much blotched with ink, which his elbow touched. Upon it, were some scraps of coarse paper, and a superannuated steel pen in very reduced and gritty circumstances. (6-7)

Barbox glances at the scraps of paper and says, "Why, you are never a poet, man!" (7). Lamps explains that he composes "little Comic-Songs-like" (7) to sing not at a public-house, as Barbox thinks he does, but, to Barbox's amazement, "Bedside" (8). Barbox's observation of the room reveals that once the human element has become the focus of his observations, the spatial dimension of the story begins to gain significance for him as a setting with a human interest and meaning. In fact, his interest in Lamps and the comic songs he composes is Barbox's first step in his transformation.

The association of the junction with his past occurs again after his first night in the town of Mugby. The "unsummoned" memories continue to haunt him in the morning. In his room at the inn, looking at the junction from the window, Barbox again travels into his past, and a mental dialogue with the voices from his past bring back his real name, Jackson, an unhappy childhood, and several figures associated with it. He also remembers his schoolmaster who offered him the possibility of further education, then a man who made him work in an office at the firm of Barbox Brothers, "a bill brokers whose reputation for money-grubbing meanness falls on the new clerk" (Glancy 70), where he becomes first a partner, then the owner. When the woman he loves and his best friend elope together, "the discovery", the author-narrator's voice states, "completed what his earliest rearing had begun. He shrank, abashed, within the form of Barbox, and lifted up his head and heart no more" (10). He has finally sold the business and decided to travel.

Since he does not yet know where he wants to go from Mugby, he walks out, to wander the streets of the town of Mugby. He has already become interested in the people, and observes their movements. When he notices Lamps, he remembers the conversation they had, and his comic songs. It is as if he cannot help thinking about this man and his songs. But he checks himself, saying it's no business of him, and decides to go and take a look at the junction, to see if he may decide which line to take. Looking down upon the lines from a bridge he is bewildered by their number and complexity:

> But there were so many lines. Gazing down upon them from a bridge at the Junction it was as if the concentrating companies formed a great Industrial Exhibition of the works of extraordinary ground spiders that spun iron. And then so many of the lines went such wonderful ways, so crossing and curving among one another, that the eye lost them. And then some of them appeared to start with the fixed intention of going one hundred miles, and all of a sudden gave it up at an insignificant barrier, or turned off into a workshop […] there was no beginning, middle or end to the bewilderment. (11)

The reference to the Great Exhibition of 1851, where products of industry were displayed, is apparent in the capitalized "Industrial Exhibition", and strengthens the junction's function as a chronotope. The chronotopic "visibility" of industrial modernity is intensified by a reference to an important historical event; at the same time, the historical and the personal are connected by the inter-spatial subject who feels his forehead has taken on the form of the junction. He stands puzzled on the bridge and passes his hand across the lines on his forehead "which multiplied while he looked down, as if the railway lines were getting themselves photographed on that sensitive plate" (11). The author-narrator's focus on the movements of Barbox's eye enacts this complexity as registered by Barbox, in relation to his fascinated mental state, to imply his awareness of not only the multiplicity of railway lines, but the diversity of possibilities available to him. This idea does not help him to decide as yet. "I have not made my next move much clearer" (12), he says to himself. "No hurry. No need to make up my mind to-day, or to-morrow, nor yet the day after. I'll take a walk" (12). He walks into the country, near to the side of one line of the railway, and sees several little children "merrily trooping and whooping" (12) from one of the cottages. He notices that they kiss their hands to a face at the upper window of the cottage:

> Now, that the children should do this was nothing; but that they should do this to a face lying on the sill of an open window, turned towards them in a horizontal position, and apparently only a face, was something noticeable. (12)

He looks up at the window again and realizes that it is the "delicate smiling face of a girl or woman" (13). Some days later, he is able to talk to her at the window, and she invites him to her room. He sees that she "lay on a couch that brought her face to a level with the window" (16). She keeps busy teaching the children to sing their multiplication table, also working cheerfully at lace pillows. The spatial image of Phoebe lying on a couch from which she is not able to get up, is in contrast with the mobility that the rails represent. Phoebe's disability is functional and important in terms of plot and is also connected to the theme of mobility enabled by the new technologies. Even though her manner is very friendly, Barbox is slightly uncomfortable there in spite of his wish to become acquainted because it is an intimate space where he feels like an intruder. The spatial imagery depicts this: "there was an awkward constraint upon him, nevertheless, as he touched her hand, and took a chair at the side of her couch" (17). Technological space, as it were, invades the domestic space with the entrance of the railroad worker, Lamps, who turns out to be Phoebe's father. The appropriated space of Lamps and Phoebe is a small cottage in the rural town within the railway setting, therefore it is not completely secure from invasion by the dominated space which has changed the landscape.

Unlike Lamps's little room, an appropriated space by virtue of being a place of retreat and rest, this house is appropriated in the sense that it is a place of domestic security, "our corner of the world" (4), as Gaston Bachelard described the domestic house in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Bachelard's theory of the house as a place of security and belonging is relevant to, and complements, Lefebvre's concept of appropriated space. In Bachelard's opinion, "by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms', we learn to 'abide' within ourselves" (xxxvii). The house is a domestic space, storing memories and associated with the sense of identity: "Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are 'housed.' Our soul is an abode" (xxxvii). For Phoebe and Lamps, their house is a space that stores their memories of their life together. It is a place made warm and secure, in other words "appropriated", by the close bond between them. Concerning Dickens's depiction of the house in his novels Armstrong remarks that "though Dickens is well aware that the domestic ideology that sets up a division between public and private, work and leisure, is suspect, he puts intense value upon the home" (p. 587). In the Barbox stories, he makes the home an important stage in his protagonist's transformation. However, he also shows that it can become a space of imprisonment, thus questioning the domestic ideology.

The bedroom of Phoebe can be regarded as, again in Armstrong's words, another dominant chronotope of the Victorian novel, "a deeply inter-spatial realm" (588). It is a space "where attendance, nursing, and comforting take place, where, in recognizing loneliness, consciousness is not set over and against a public world but defined as a social entity with social needs, the need for another." (588-89) Phoebe's room, both a living room and a bedroom for her turns into a setting for human connection and social interaction during Barbox's frequent visits to Phoebe and her father, to whom he recounts the stories he finds on the six lines of the junction, and finally the story of his own life as he finds it on the seventh line. In its function as a living room where Lamps and Phoebe receive visitors and engage in social activities, the room also corresponds to Bakhtin's chronotope of the salon, which he finds mainly in the nineteenth-century novel (246). The fact that the salon is not a separate unit in the appropriated home of Lamps and Phoebe is yet another marker of their social and class position. It is in this room that her father sings the comic songs he composes in another appropriated space, his room at the station, which he occupies in his role as Lamps, the railway worker. It is also a place where Phoebe, in spite of all her cheerfulness, has to make lace in order to earn some money to support herself. It is also a room of confinement. Her inability to move contrasts with Barbox's freedom of movement. This is one aspect of his realization that he can also make a change in his unhappy life by means of contact with others and interest in them and their lives. Phoebe, in spite of her restricted condition, has established connections. The children are her students

and companions. The window from which she watches them as they leave and send her kisses is literally her space of connection. It is through the window that Barbox is finally able to achieve social connection to her. Phoebe's window is, in this sense, both her literal and metaphorical connection to the outside world, and a symbol of her desire to escape her confinement. She says to Barbox:

> And those threads of railway, with their puffs of smoke and steam changing places so fast, make it so lively for me […] There is the great Junction, too. I don't see it under the foot of the hill, but I can very often hear it, and I always know it is there. It seems to join me, in a way, to I don't know how many places and things *I* shall never see. (18)

As Armstrong notes, "the woman at the window, from *Jane Eyre* (1847) to *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), is one of the commonest chronotopes of the novel" (587). The window becomes "an expressive outlet", where "desire and domestic space are in constant dialectical tension" (587). In the story this tension is indicated by the spatial arrangement, for Phoebe's bed is placed by the window. Dickens articulates the tension but emphasizes Phoebe's capacity to turn the window into a social space. The inter-spatial consciousness of Barbox recognizes and values her "happy disposition" (25), which has made her window a space of connection, rather than a space of desire.

Phoebe becomes a teacher to the shy, unsocial Barbox, educating him in human sympathy and contact. His decision to provide her with a musical instrument because she is so fond of music, leads to his journey on the seventh railway line. In the second frame story, "Barbox Brothers and Co.", he repeats this journey at Phoebe's suggestion, after the stories of the other six lines have been recounted. In the town," a fictionalized Birmingham" (Livesey 218), he goes out for a walk in the busy streets. He now has a different view of the junction:

> And now it began to be suspected by him that Mugby Junction was a Junction of many branches, invisible as well as visible, and had joined him to an endless number of byways. For, whereas he would, but a little while ago, have walked these streets blindly brooding, he now had eyes and thoughts for a new external world. (29)

He now perceives himself as "a little part of a great whole" (29). It is in this town that a chance meeting with a very young child who announces that she is lost and puts her little hand in his, eventually unites him with the woman he once loved and lost, and her terminally ill husband, who was his best friend, before he was betrayed by them. Before this meeting takes place, not being able to discover who the child is (she can tell him only her first name, Polly), or where she lives, he takes her to his hotel, informs the hotel authorities that he has found a lost child, and spends the evening with her. After the time he

has spent with Lamps and Phoebe, he responds to Polly spontaneously, much more easily than he did to Phoebe. She begins to tell him fairy stories before they arrive at the hotel and they become friends. Polly herself turns out to be a fairy in terms of her ability to attract and engage Barbox's attention. His consciousness of space stresses this effect:

> Truly he was a fine sight, Barbox Brothers, with serious attentive face, and ear bent down, much jostled on the pavements of the busy town, but afraid of losing a single incident of the epic, lest he should be examined in it by-and-by and found deficient. (32)

"Seven lines, we learn, run into Mugby, and seven out of it" writes Robert Macfarlane, "and these charmed numbers, are our first clue that Mugby is a place that hovers halfway between the fairy tale and the real" (viii). Macfarlane's reference is obviously to the seven wonders of the world, which occurs in the story when the next morning at breakfast with his little new friend, Barbox proposes going to the circus to see "many other wonders" (39. He has already been "charmed" by the "wonders" he found in the appropriated spaces of the dominated space of technology. First the comic songs written by Lamps in his "greasy little cabin", the "trooping and whooping" children kissing their hands to the face at the window, and the cheerful music and lace-making of the disabled Phoebe, another fairy-like figure who seemed to him to have "an ethereal look, and a fanciful appearance of lying among clouds" (16) when he first entered her room, are all activities that have the power to nurture the imagination and form connections. Learning stories from Polly, making paper houses with her, and playing with her doll, change the public space of the hotel room into an appropriated space of comfort and interaction. They dine and play together in one of the private rooms at the hotel, and this rented room soon becomes for them a comfortable domestic space where the "finest sight of all, was Barbox Brothers on his footstool, with a pint decanter on the rug, contemplating Polly" (34), as she built houses with cards, and Barbox grew blue in the face "with holding his breath, lest he should blow the house down. (34) When Polly's mother finally appears Barbox realizes that it is his old love, Beatrice who is now a teacher of music. The meeting with Polly turns out to have been arranged by the mother, who has seen Barbox in the music shop where he bought the musical instrument on his earlier trip to the town.

The meeting between the couple and Barbox, whom they address by his name, Mr Jackson, is an encounter in spatial terms: The husband, Tresham is, like Phoebe, ill and bound to his couch, lying "stretched on a sofa" (41). Barbox is reminded of Phoebe and her music: "Was Phoebe playing at that moment on her distant couch? He seemed to hear her" (37). Now that the past has caught up with him, he finds that he can freely forgive Beatrice and

Tresham, for the sake of Polly, of whom he has grown very fond. Spatial imagery as well as music connects the rooms. These connections complete his transformation, his "spiritual regeneration", already set in motion through his affectionate relations with Phoebe, Lamps, and Polly.

At the end of the second story, Barbox goes back, and, instead of moving on, becomes settled in a house at Mugby Junction. The junction forms a connection between new friends and old friends, Phoebe and Beatrice, as well, since he plans to get Beatrice to teach Phoebe music. Mugby Junction has, indeed, become a setting of warm human contact where he can participate and share in the imaginative world of the people he met in the appropriated spaces of the railroad setting.

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