

# **“of a hue still darker”: Alienated Spaces in John Brown’s “A Memoir of Robert Blincoe, An Orphan Boy”**

**Jonathan Patterson**

University of Kansas, USA.

On June 14, 1819, Lord Kenyon and the Earl of Rosslyn, both Members of Parliament, spoke on the proposed Cotton Factories Regulation Bill. Lord Kenyon’s opening remarks are recorded as having been that the bill “was a question of practical humanity, arising out of the actual sufferings of the children employed in the cotton factories, for which no relief was to be found in any of the provisions of the common law” (Hansard). He emphasizes the need for “legislative interference to prevent that waste of human life which such a system produced” (Hansard). The Earl of Rosslyn refutes the “evidence” presented by Lord Kenyon stating: “legislature ought to be slow to interfere with free labour, the regulation of which would be best provided for by leaving it to the individuals immediately concerned.” The Earl of Rosslyn proceeded with the claim that his evidence “prov[ed] that the average state of health enjoyed by persons employed in the cotton mills was more favourable than in any other trade or manufacturer; that the marriages were generally more numerous and productive; that there was less sickness, fewer applications for parish relief, and consequently less distress among them than among those engaged in any other laborious occupation.” The Earl completes his argument by proclaiming: “Under the present system, the children had labour, food and clothing—under the proposed [Bill], they would have idleness, poverty, and wretchedness” (Hansard). Despite these claims, the Bill passed to the committee when twenty-six voted in favor with only six opposed. This would effectively limit the number of hours a child could work in these factories. It is interesting to note that what was argued as being needed most during this debate was irrefutable evidence, <http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

particularly first-hand accounts from a child who had experienced the inhumane conditions of the cotton mills and workhouses. Perhaps it was this very meeting that John Brown had in mind when he wrote, had “Robert Blincoe...been selected in 1819” he would have been the “most impressive pleader in behalf of destitute and deserted children” (99).

That John Brown’s “A Memoir of Robert Blincoe, An Orphan Boy,” was written, at least in part, as a tool to “remove the veil” and become a witness to the aforementioned “waste of human life” to Members of Parliament is well-documented (97). However, works like John Waller’s *The Real Oliver Twist* or Malcolm Hardman’s chapter on Blincoe in *Classic Soil* to Katrina Honeyman’s use of Blincoe’s memoir in *Child Workers in England* and articles like Andrea Hasenbank’s “Giving Account: Robert Blincoe and the Consequences of Modernity,” all expend a great amount of intellectual energy discussing the importance of this one memoir for its biographical account of the conditions of suffering by factory children. Hasenbank, in particular, notes explicitly that she is “less interested in Blincoe’s self representation, and more interested in the networks into which the textual account is embedded and reproduced” (202). Consequently, much of the scholarship merely discusses the memoir for its historicity. My intent, of course, is not to limit the memoir’s historical significance. Blincoe’s memoir, as told to Brown, demonstrates how mills and workhouses for children functioned as alienated and classed places. An analysis of this often overlooked link can bridge the gap with respect to how ideas of space and class not only intersect but are often inseparable conditions, particularly in texts that deal with work in the mills and workhouses of England. I argue that “A Memoir of Robert Blincoe, An Orphan Boy” is an ideal model for such an inquiry because the city/country and industry/nature binaries are essential components in the way this narrative is constructed by Brown. Consequently, to understand how places like Saint Pancras workhouse, Lowdham Cotton-mill, and Litton Mill are classed and alienated spaces is to add to the conversation regarding Blincoe’s memoir and other working-class autobiographies, but it also shows how combining alienation theory and spatial theory can situate the text within the larger context of child workers in England during this troubled period of labor practices.

Sharon Winn and Lynn Alexander classify Blincoe’s memoir as not only an example of a Victorian social-protest literature but also a social-problem novel. These are narratives that function as a reminder to audiences of the often overlooked conditions of child labor practices in the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century (xi). However, in their introduction to John Brown’s memoir, they also invite an analysis of the text for its representation of spatiality when they explain that “[t]he earliest cotton spinning factories in England were not located in cities but in the country” (1). The reason for this is that the machinery in most of the mills, particularly Litton Mill, was driven by power generated from local rivers. Because of the “remote locations” of such mills, children like Robert Blincoe could be imported into this sparsely populated countryside away from the city and public outcry. This city/country binary is addressed in Raymond Williams’ *The Country and the City* when he observes that “suffering leaves no mark in the country. The processes of rural exploitation have been ‘dissolved into a landscape’ while the city is a place that, in many ways, is ‘the supreme achievement of humankind, [that] also stands as a monument to human greed and guilt’” (79). Jane Humphries refers to the locations of mills and factories in the rural countryside as “tiny islands of modernity” (9). These metaphorical islands, however, are reminiscent of Williams’ argument about the construction of “modern consciousness” as a “product of specific and discoverable social and historical changes”

(“Lecture” 3). This reading of Blincoe’s memoir is to unearth the plight and sufferings of alienated children who are indeed a product of practices within a specific time and place.

Having been “imported” from their homes or orphanages in the city and, as Blincoe says, being “placed” in these distant mills, the very nature of their concealed journey to the mills, and sequestered life within them, signifies an extreme form of alienation. These sentiments are only compounded by the actual nature of the work required of children like Blincoe in the mills, in which he feels trapped by “an impassable barrier, ‘a wall of brass,’ [which] cut him off from all mankind” (96). Importantly, Blincoe’s internal struggle is described by Brown with terminology similar to the 1819 debate between Lord Kenyon and the Earl of Rosslyn. For instance, Blincoe “considered [conditions] inhumane in the extreme” (95), which is reminiscent of Lord Kenyon’s speech. Blincoe’s experiences, as Brown portrays them, place his sentiments in direct conflict with the Earl of Rosslyn’s earlier claims because Blincoe is noted to have felt “the extreme and long-continued wretchedness he had endured in the den of vice and misery, [which] renders [the heart] impenetrably callous” (95). Moreover, Blincoe’s internal struggle is enhanced to the level of rage by the refusal to give to him his parents’ name and records. Consequently, he is not only placeless, but without a name to call his own (95).

This process by which Blincoe becomes an alienated subject begins at a very early age. As Humphries notes, in the more than 600 biographical accounts of child workers, all begin their life story with the date at which they began working and not their actual date of birth, which, in many cases, was unknown (401). The process of alienation of workers was, of course, famously articulated by Marx: “the more the worker externalizes himself in his work, the more powerful becomes the alien, objective world that he creates opposite himself” and “the worker is degraded to the most miserable sort of commodity; that the misery of the worker is in inverse proportion to the size of his production” (85). The point that is essential to my argument is the notion of the alienated laborer feeling like a “stranger.” Marx writes:

First, that labor is exterior to the worker, that is, it does not belong to his essence. Therefore he does not confirm himself in his work, he denies himself, feels miserable instead of happy, deploys no free physical and intellectual energy, but mortifies his body and ruins his mind...The worker only feels a stranger. He is at home when he is not working and when he works he is not at home. . . . External labor, labor in which man externalizes himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice and mortification. (88)

Robert Blincoe’s account certainly qualifies as him feeling like a stranger who becomes so alienated that he is mortified by the physical state of his body and struggles with the concept of home and place. This is evident with how the memoir presents Blincoe near the end of his story. Brown consciously depicts Blincoe as a stranger who, though he has fulfilled his mandated tenure at Litton Mill, he is a “poor little wanderer” (171). He travels the countryside in search of work. On one occasion, after walking eighteen miles with all he owned in a “bundle slung upon a stick,” he found employment at a factory in Bollington (170). The actual working-conditions, however, were still found by Blincoe to be “the most laborious and unwholesome...on account of the great quantity of dirt and dust” (170). Certainly, it cannot be said that he enjoys any kind of real “physical” or “intellectual energy,” as described by Marx. Brown eventually leaves Blincoe to the reader as a “nearly ruined” man after his building caught fire and burned to the ground. The final line of the memoir says that Blincoe “is completely sick of the business

altogether” (177). Blincoe has been externalized by his life-long work in mills, factories, and workhouses that his only option for employment as an adult is to pursue the work he values least.

Part of Blincoe’s externalization has been shaped, at least unconsciously, by the spaces he inhabited throughout his life. The more he worked within the work spaces; the more those spaces became what was familiar to him. Marc Auge, a prominent space/place theorist whose book *Nonplaces*, establishes a new term to be discussed in relation to the familiar spaces people inhabit in modernity and daily life. Auge lists two determining factors for what becomes a non-place: “spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces” (76). He says later, “[t]he possibility of non-place is never absent from any space” (86). But Auge’s work finds its clearest relation to alienation theory when he observes: “[t]he space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude” (83). The workhouses and mills, for instance, become a place where children are isolated from their identities outside of the assigned space. They are stripped of self-identify and alienated from relations not only to family and community but to the surrounding landscape itself. As they work in the mills, their bodies adopt the mechanized movements of the machinery they use. This essentially reduces them to being nothing more than material subjects, an extension of the machinery itself. Their later removal to Lowdham Mill only further emphasizes the children’s alienated relations to the self when the crowd at Lowdham assembles around wagons to get a better look at the “*live stock* that was just imported from the metropolis” (107, emphasis original). Brown notes how Blincoe felt that they were “pitied, admired, and compared to lambs, led by butchers to slaughter” (108). This produces a visceral image which, when contrasted with the ideals of childhood innocence and their experience, is compared to being butchered by the need to support the very metropolis in which alienated children have become commodified property.

Blincoe’s memoir is frequently cited by scholars such as Jane Humphries, Andrea Hasenbank, and others, as the most “famous” of the autobiographical accounts of this era. However, this claim is problematic given that it is not strictly autobiographical. Much of the story was told to John Brown, who no doubt took liberties in order to place the story in a larger narrative to then be distributed in pamphlets and later book form to the public. Moreover, Hasenbank’s article does not provide an analytical reading of the memoir, she is correct when she claims that most, including Jane Humphries, often leave off John Brown’s role as the author when discussing Blincoe’s text as “autobiography” (215). While Humphries is not explicitly a Blincoe scholar, her work focuses more generally on the autobiographical accounts that discuss the hardships of child labor practices during the time Blincoe would have been working in the mills. Since Humphries’ work is used to compile statistics and graphs of child worker and their gender, ages, years worked, and locations worked, her work is frequently cited by literary scholars, political scientists, and historians.

But even with this auditory account from Blincoe to Brown, the memoir can be read as a symbol of Subjective Expressionism, what Raymond Williams calls “the cry of the lost individual in a meaningless world” (174). But it is important also to remember Fredric Jameson’s dictum: “always historicize” (1). British literature, as well as its culture, is inherently linked to class struggles. At its core, Robert Blincoe’s memoir grapples with the division of labor within English society and culture while simultaneously chastising the very existence of the extreme and unjust divisions of labor. Because of this, for Emile Durkheim, alienation is a direct result of

workers lacking a sense of community and engagement with their work. This “mirage” of alienated personalities produces the exploited subject that Blincoe becomes at an early age and who remains until the end of his, one who has been alienated by the work he performs (78). Consequently, what readers observe in Blincoe are the inherent dangers of children becoming disconnected from what Marx terms the *Gattungswesen*, or collective essence (91). Not only are people who work in factories divorced from their cultural heritage and their colloquial language, but their traditions and are suppressed with daily, quotidian actions now wed to mechanized labor practices. The children assigned to workhouses, as particularly is the case with Robert Blincoe, become reclassified, or compartmentalized, into a kind of fringe group in society. Blincoe struggles greatly with identity and brings a new angle to Durkheim’s understanding of “division” and “society” as the historical context and political rhetoric for this kind of project will show.

Thus, the classed spaces of the mills and workhouses are closely aligned with Guy Debord’s “more intensive form of alienation [in which] critical, alternative, or oppositional thinking and relations” are eliminated (2). Blincoe is, to again use Debord’s terminology, introjected and an individual who “automatically identifies with manufactured needs and the dominant” (17). For Marx, dominant ideologies were always the values supported by the dominant class projected onto the remainder of society (432). Blincoe is not only suppressed by dominant value systems but he is also living under the burden of dominant spaces. The mills are classed spaces that are controlled in support of the dominant class and their value of material wealth over equal conditions among people outside of their class.

The fervor behind mass production of Britain’s industrial revolution and the natural resources needed alongside it fall under what Herbert Marcuse calls “New Forms of Control,” wherein “manufactured ‘needs’ raise alienation to new intensity” (18). These forms of control are also his way of calling attention to and warning against what is now the near categorical disconnect from the *Gattungswesen* in favor of conforming to the dominant. This is particularly the case when Blincoe manages to escape from Litton Mill but is unable to fully articulate his complaints in front of the overseers at the counting-house who ask him, after “looking at the distorted limbs of this victim of the parochial economy,” “Why, how came you so lame? You were not so when you left London, were you?” “No, Sir, I was turned over...from Lowdham Mill, to Ellice Needham, of Litton Mill” (166-67). There is a dual struggle here. The first is that Blincoe is unable to articulate his complaint clearly to not only adults but to the dominant members of society. Although it is unclear here, Blincoe’s “lame” condition could refer both to his physical condition and his mental inability to represent himself. Secondly, it is also unclear whether or not Blincoe would receive the help he seeks from the members of the counting-house if they could clearly understand him or not. This exchange further intensifies Blincoe’s alienated condition and allows him to be read as a metonym for both a region of geography and generations of children alienated by modes of production. It is this “new form of intensity” that has forever linked the landscape with the children and people who worked them and how once local customs have been devalued as a bleak, quotidian perspective of our place in the world.

To consider the relationship between classed space and place theory, one must also take into account how Henri Lefebvre’s work rejects the notion that space is no more than “the passing locus of social relations” (11). He goes on to establish three fields of space: physical, mental, and social. This forges an identity between mental and real space that puts their relations, or “role,” within a certain “mode of production” (11). Each of these spaces is on display within

Brown's memoir of Robert Blincoe primarily with the description of Saint Pancras workhouse, Lowdham Mill, and Litton Mill. These locations shape Blincoe's ability to function in the world given he occupies three failed spaces: the mills, mental perceptions, and, later, social relations.

In other words, alienated individuals who inhabit non-places, the domestic, or who "take residence" in places like the Saint Pancras workhouse are inherently shaped by that experience. This calls attention to the disparity between manufacturers and the political rhetoric employed to bring about laws that would alleviate child workers' misery. When Blincoe leaves Saint Pancras for Lowdham Mill, our attention is directed towards the journey in the external environment:

The inequality of the road, and the heavy jolts of the wagon, occasioned them many a bruise. Although it was the middle of August, the children felt very uncomfortable. The motion of the heavy, clumsy vehicle, and so many children cooped up in so small a space, produced nausea and other results, such as sometimes occur in Margate hoys. Of the country they passed through, the young travelers saw very little. (107)

Their confinement within the wagon recalls Blincoe's earlier experiences at Saint Pancras when his thoughts were always on "the busy world [that] lay outside the workhouse gates" because he found himself "cooped up in a gloomy, though liberal sort of prison-house" (99). There Brown likens Blincoe to a "bird newly caged, that flutters from side to side, and foolishly beats its wings against the prison walls...[Blincoe] often watched the outer gates of the house, in the hope, that some favourable opportunity might facilitate his escape" (100). Here he is finally given what he initially views as a reprieve from the workhouse—thinking that Lowdham will be much better than his current living conditions—but he is still prohibited from engaging with the outside world he has so long imagined. He remains the caged bird still held in place because they still remain "cooped up" in the wagon. The children are not permitted to engage or interact with the natural environment that surrounds them. The "inequality of the road" is part of what Michel de Certeau refers to as "spatial stories," in which every story is, in essence, a travel story (115). But Blincoe's travel story is one of inequality that can never seem to find a clear road away from the conditions that plague his young life. Because of this, the daily experience becomes an alienated condition (118). W.J.T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power* discusses how these man-made structures can be read as a "symptom of alienation" from the natural landscape (7). Blincoe's alienation is further compounded by the journey in that it is an extension of the physical and mental struggles he experiences in the mills and workhouses. The journey cannot be read as a respite from the struggles and classed conditions. Thus, the "symptoms" persist from place to place.

These symptoms only metastasize for Blincoe at Lowdham Cotton-mill, which, being "situated near a village of that name, stood ten miles distant from Nottingham, on the Surhill road. The mill, a large and lofty edifice, being surmounted by a cupola, Blincoe at first, mistook [it] for a church" (110). However, the conditions within Lowdham are a harsh juxtaposition to the church that Blincoe initially imagines. Once inside, Blincoe observes what he thinks will be his home for the next fourteen years. He states that he "was not greatly delighted, so closely did it resemble a workhouse" (110). At Saint Pancras he was depicted in animalistic, dehumanized terms, but Lowdham makes him into a scavenger who stalks the floors collecting "common [and] inferior materials" (115). The title of scavenger is something that is impressed upon him during this experience and remains with him the rest of his life. The initial resemblance Lowdham had

to a workhouse triggered Blincoe's conditioned mind into resigning to the lived conditions with which he was most familiar: the caged bird. However, because the conditions and treatment in Lowdham were far worse than at Saint Pancras, Blincoe experienced a further externalization. The scavenger is a wanderer who must roam about the world in search of the basic necessities of life. He or she also has nothing to call their own and are dependent upon the remains of others.

In the background of the memoir is Blincoe's continual quest to find his parents, or to establish something he might consider a home of his own. Gaston Bachelard begins his seminal work *The Poetics of Space* by stating: "our house is the corner of our world," and that "a house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (17). Yi-Fu Tuan adds that "home is at the center of an astronomically determined spatial system" which humans refer to as "the center of our world" (149). Although both works have been essential to contemporary understandings of both dwellings and city structures, neither Bachelard nor Tuan account for the large number of human groups, like workhouse children, without house or home. Even more contemporary space and place theorists have adopted this idealized version of home and identities structured around such images of stability. Robert Blincoe, having been "placed" in various work-houses and cotton mills (Brown 95), has been without the home or, as he laments, even a "name I can call my own" (95). It is the link between his name and home that calls attention to Blincoe's extreme suppression by the dominant. For members of the upper-classes, a name signals cultural capital. If Blincoe could have a "name" of his own, he could also begin to acquire a sense of belonging to a family and place of habitation. Blincoe's memoir calls attention to the need to consider these groups of child-laborers as not only alienated from the city and the self, but as children alienated from what contemporary readers understand as childhood.

Being without a home or familial representation, Blincoe is fully enslaved to the factory owners. Brown is certainly keen to this because he begins to overtly link Blincoe's experiences at Lowdham to slavery practices in America and the French Indies (106). Brown was not the only one who would make these comparisons. John Cobden's 1853 text, *The White Slaves of England*, provides further evidence of the factories as "hell-holes" (143). He cites from a speech made by a Manchester spinner named Mr. Grant who in 1833 asked: "Has slavery no sort of existence among children of the factories?" (144). He asks this question in relation to black slaves and their physical chains and answers: "Yes, and chains were sometimes introduced, though those chains might not be forged of iron" (144). In the mills, the workhouse bird remains caged with all his thoughts on "the busy world [that] lay outside the workhouse gates," unable to engage with the world. This trauma within this veritable "hell-hole" reduces Blincoe to someone who "simply occupies space, but has no command over it" (Tuan 97).

However, given that Blincoe is trapped inside the mill, his vantage point provides a unique perspective of the first-hand experience in these mills. In the now classic essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin makes two very important distinctions in response to building aesthetics:

Buildings are received in a twofold manner: by use and by perception. Or better: tactilely and optically. Such reception cannot be understood in terms of the concentrated attention of a traveler before a famous building. On the tactile side, there is no counterpart to what contemplation is on the optical side. Tactile receptions come about not so much by way of attention as by way of habit. The latter largely determines even the optical reception of architecture, which

spontaneously takes the form of casual noticing, rather than attentive observation. Under these circumstances, this form of reception shaped by architecture acquires canonical value. (268)

In this context, “canonical value” refers to a kind of unique representation that a given object presents to the observer. It is Benjamin’s observation that the process by which we receive structures from a phenomenological perspective is twofold: by observation but also in how we interact. With this in mind, it can be argued that the children in the mills have a more authentic relationship to their surroundings than inspectors who occasionally survey the mills. Blincoe has arguably been “split in the objectifying and subjectifying processes” and what is lost by Blincoe is his individuality in favor of a way of life and mode of thinking that is completely industrial (*Sociology* 86). As Gail Weiss explains in her book *Refiguring the Ordinary*: “Human beings’ as forms of labor, and their unique ways of loving, living, and dying, undoubtedly reveal much more than the state of a particular society. [These forms of labor] reveal the ongoing, intercorporeal relations that comprise an individual’s situation” (136). Blincoe’s job requires him to touch the machinery and the floors constantly; this persistent tactile reminder becomes a fetter without chains like those that John Cobden referred to. It also symbolizes a distance that is placed between children who lived and occupied these spaces and officials who have, at the very least, optical accounts of workhouses.

Every time Blincoe is placed in a different mill, he encounters conditions that are far worse than his previous habitation. This is certainly the case with Litton Mill, which he describes with: “[e]verything was inferior to what it was at Lowdham” (132). The readers are set up to view these conditions by the description of the landscape surrounding this ominous mill:

It was in the gloomy month of November, when this removal took place! On the evening of the second day’s journey, the devoted children reached Litton Mill. Its situation, at the bottom of a sequestered glen, and surrounded by rugged rocks, remote from any human habitation, marked a place fitted for the foul crimes of frequent occurrence, which hurried so many of the friendless victims of insatiate avarice, to an untimely grave [...] the savage features of the adjacent scenery impressed a general gloom upon the convoy, when Woodward pointed out to them the lonely mill to which they were travelling. (132)

The experience of his removal is certainly not described in pleasant, pastoral images. Arguably, it cannot be described in such terms, as it would undermine or lessen the effect Blincoe’s stories create concerning the actions within the workhouses and mills. It is apropos that his movement through the landscape, which he desires both while at San Pancras and Lowdham, occurs in the gloom of a cold and dark November. The mill’s location is lower and the sequestered area is mimicked by the child workers who are lower on the class scale and sequestered from the city. The rugged rocks foreshadow the rugged nature of Ellis and John Needham and the abuse Blincoe receives. Rocks are impenetrable and inescapable. The remoteness allows the Mill to be understood both by its physical distance from the city and the kinds of humane habitations that are represented by an idealized notion of home and safety. The savageness of the external features is explicitly described to emphasize the savage and lonely conditions children like Blincoe will encounter.



The location of Litton Mill is typically discussed by historians for its isolation. Cornelius Brown's *A History of Nottinghamshire* describes the history of Lowdham as a contested area. Its "remote past" makes Lowdham a palimpsest of hardship (56). More recent scholarship from Karen Honeyman critiques Lowdham as well but only through Litton Mill and under the lens of bad business practices that foredoomed the Needhams and their mill to failure—the fact that it received such an infamous depiction by Brown and Blincoe is often barely more than a footnote in traditional historical accounts. This is not surprising, as Jane Humphries explains that child labor is paradoxically overlooked by many historians and economists of this era. For example, Stanley Chapman's essay, "Fixed Capital Formation in the British Cotton Industry, 1770-1815," makes only one reference to child labor practices, and that is merely to say that many of the manufacturers believed that children would be much better workers if labor could be performed under their parents rather than working for strangers (238). However, if we merge our understandings of class with spatial construction, then much of what can be understood from the description of Litton Mill in Blincoe's memoir is how the mill itself, and to a large extent Derbyshire itself, became what Yi-Fu Tuan identifies as a "landscape of fear" (*Landscapes of Fear* ii).

Within such landscapes there becomes a "dissonance between the ecologically sound and the socio-politically sound" where "the ordinary people who lived on it could seem stunted and deformed" (viii). Furthermore, analogies between landscapes and the people who inhabit them usually find the people to be "uncomely [and] unhealthy" in comparison to the natural, topographical features (viii). The root cause for this dissonance for Tuan is notably similar to claims made by historians, economists, and Marx himself, that "civilization is disposed to excess" (viii). The result of this excess, in the name of progress and industry, is for Blincoe "one continued round of cruel and arbitrary punishment" (141), foreshadowed by the natural environment in which the mill is located. Abandonment and loneliness are both major causes in the construction of landscapes of fear. The issue with Tuan's findings, however, is that his theory falls victim to the idea that childhood, as explained by Hugh Cunningham, is a "state of life to be enjoyed as a privileged and protected existence," and Tuan neglects to consider the "complex and tortuous path to a universal concept of childhood" (19). The memoir is a testament to the fact that large-scale social change never happens on its own but through a "tortuous path" of long-suffering. It is apparent that John Brown was aware of this fact at the onset of writing Blincoe's story, as the idealized version of childhood that is privileged and protected by first world nations is the result of generations of injustices towards children for the sake of material wealth and prosperity of dominant ideologies.

As Brown approaches the conclusion of the memoir, he notes how Blincoe's own "tortuous path" has left him crippled and speaking in a "slow and plaintive" tone (170). The time spent working in the mills has taken a young boy and rendered him a man whose narrative closes with him as a "poor little wanderer" nearly bankrupt (171). He is the alienated stranger about which Marx forewarned. After leaving Litton Mill, Blincoe wanders the countryside going from the mill to mill in search of work. He is still a "stranger" to the world, if not also to himself. He cannot dissociate from factory or mill work because it is how he identifies himself in relation to the world. Thus, it is quite easy to see how Brown would want to conclude the memoir with a prominent social critique by saying: "No savageness in human nature that has existed on earth has been paralleled by that which has been associated with the English Cotton-spinning Mills" (179). The memoir is a story of the laborer who has little to show for his life outside of the kinds

of "self-sacrifice and mortification" prophesied by Marx. However, with regards to these kinds of social problem novels, it should be maintained that these issues are best addressed by not only discussing *when* something happened but by linking *what* has occurred with *where* it occurred.

Such analytical studies of these works are as needed now as they were to Brown in the nineteenth century. Scholars need to turn to the hundreds of biographical accounts of child laborers and begin to provide readings that could range from disability studies, trauma theory, memory studies, ecocriticism, and, as has been done here, space and place theory. Such a discussion, particularly as it relates to class construction, addresses the series of questions Henri Lefebvre cites in *The Production of Space*: "we may wonder whether the state will eventually produce its space, an absolute political space. Or whether, alternatively, the nation-states will one day see their absolute political space disappearing into (and thanks to) the world market. Will this last eventuality occur through self-destruction? Will the state be transcended or will it wither away? And must it be one or the other, and not, perhaps, both?" (220). These questions are still at the center of debate with respect to today's world market, as corporations continue to construct factories in third-world or developing nations that are like those in Blincoe's narrative primarily because labor laws in these countries are minimal or nonexistent. Ironically enough, the structure of the 1819 debate between Lord Kenyon and the Earl of Rosslyn has largely remained the same: one side pleads on behalf of the inhumane sufferings of human life, the other argues for and on behalf of manufacturers and employers. So long as these practices continue, regardless of where they occur, nations with poorly developed laws and amendments that protect against inhumane and unfair working conditions are places that will continue to produce their versions of Robert Blincoe.

## Works Cited

1. Auge, Marc. *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995. Print.
2. Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Maria Jolas, Trans. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. Print.
3. Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. London: Fontana, 1968. Print.
4. Brown, Cornelius. *A History of Nottinghamshire*. London: Elliot Stock, 1891. Print.
5. Chapman, Stanley D. "Fixed Capital Formation in the British Cotton Industry, 1770-1815." *The Economic History Review*. 23.2. (1970). 235-266.
6. Cobden, John. *The White Slaves of England*. Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853. Print.
7. Cunningham, Hugh. *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. Print.
8. de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life, Third Edition*. Steven F. Rendall, translator. Los Angeles: U of California P, 2011.
9. Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press, 2014. Print.
10. Earl of Rosslyn. "Cotton Factories Regulation Bill." 14 June 1819. Hansard Archives. Web. 12 April 2015.
11. Hardman, Malcolm. *Classic Soil: Community, Aspiration, and Debate in the Bolton Region of Lancashire, 1819-1845*. London: Rosemont, 2003.
12. Hasenbank, Andrea. "Giving Account: Robert Blincoe and the Consequences of Modernity." *Nineteenth Century Contexts*. 34.3 (2012). 201-215.
13. Honeyman, Katrina. *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labor Force*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. Print.
14. Humphries, Jane. "Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution." *Economic History Review*. 66.2. (2012). 395-418.
15. Jameson, Fredric. *The Jameson Reader*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000. Print.
16. Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991. Print.
17. \_\_\_\_\_. *Sociology of Marx*. New York: Random House, 1968. Print.
18. Lord of Kenyon. "Cotton Factories Regulation Bill." 14 June 1819. Hansard Archives. Web. 12 April 2015.
19. Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. New York: Beacon Press, 1991. Print.
20. Marx, Karl. *Selected Writings*. David McLellan, Editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
21. Waller, John. *The Real Oliver Twist*. Thriplow, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2005. Print.
22. Weiss, Gail. *Refiguring the Ordinary*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 2008. Print.
23. Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1973. Print.
24. \_\_\_\_\_. "Country and City in the Modern Novel." W.D. Thomas Memorial Lecture. University of Swansea, 26 January 1987.
25. Winn, Sharon A. and Lynn M. Alexander, eds. *The Slaughter-House of Mammon: An Anthology of Victorian Social Protest Literature*. West Cornwall, Connecticut: Locust Hill Press, 1992. Print.
26. Mitchell, W.J.T. *Landscape and Power*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. Print.

27. Simmons, James R, ed. *Factory Lives: Four Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiographies*. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Editions, 2007. Print.
28. Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977. Print.
29. \_\_\_\_\_. *Landscapes of Fear*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013. Print.