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Wallpapering the novel: economics, aesthetics, and the realist home

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Abstract: Wallpaper suggests simple metaphors. It is veneering at its flimsiest, easily showing dirt and age or else an impudent newness, and its influence on literary characters is usually one of psychological disturbance or else the visual evidence of social rank. Scholars have established the internal contradictions and conflicts of the nineteenth-century conceptual ideal separating the public and private spheres, while material histories of consumer goods have parsed the realist novel's "thick descriptions." I argue, however, that as a quotidian domestic feature of the realist novels' homes, as well as a visual expanse that "backgrounds" the narrative, wallpaper is a unique meeting point between the "minor" details of realism's material ephemera and the social, economic, and narratological implications of spatial theory and visual analysis. While I address the representation of wallpaper and related forms of interior décor in a variety of nineteenth-century fiction and nonfiction, I focus each chapter on a particular early-, mid-, and late-century text that features a distinctive type of wallpaper: Honoré de Balzac's *Le père Goriot* (1835) and its panoramic décor; Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), whose wallpaper reflects the mass production of ornament and the industrialization of color and design; and Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), as well as his other late writings, in which the author grapples with the ethics of aesthetics and ornament, whether on walls or on the printed page. I place each works' depiction of wallpaper in the national, historical, and literary context of both the text and the décor described therein. Thus I trace the material history of wallpaper alongside and through the generic evolution of the realist novel via these literary touchstones, reordering the apparent superabundance of material details cluttering the realist home according to the metonymic logic of its literal and literary things.

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Debates about realism Edit. Despite the seeming straightforwardness of the realist position, in the history of philosophy there has been continuous debate about what is real. In addition, there has been significant evolution in what is meant by the term "real". The oldest use of the term comes from medieval interpretations and adaptations of Greek philosophy. Scottish Common Sense Realism is a school of philosophy that sought to defend naive realism against philosophical paradox and scepticism, arguing that matters of common sense are within the reach of common understanding and that common-sense beliefs even govern the lives and thoughts of those who hold non-commonsensical beliefs. Simon R Frost. This study shows how aesthetics and economics have been combined in a great work of literature. Widely acknowledged as one of the great English novels, *Middlemarch* was published at a time which saw the emergence of a commodity-based culture. Frost examines the history of *Middlemarch*'s composition and publication within the context of Victorian demand, then goes on to consider the interpretation, reception and consumption of the book. Reader experience and rival publications are explored alongside a 'commodity reading' of the novel. The study will be of value to sc