CHAPTER 5

Race, Ruins, and Rebellion

SPATIALIZING RACIAL OTHERNESS IN JAMES GRANT’S
FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE (1868)

The violence evident in the transcript of the Royal Commission’s inquiry into the Morant Bay Rebellion threads its way through most mid-Victorian race narratives, especially those concerned with colonial unrest. James Grant’s *First Love and Last Love* (1868), one of the most graphically violent mid-Victorian racial texts, presents the events of the 1857 Indian Rebellion in more directly realistic terms than does Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins’s “Perils.” However, the central themes remain the same: the violation of English womanhood, the sense of betrayal, and the need for vengeance. In Grant’s novel, the association of women with the domestic, with a sense of home, becomes centered on the trope of the ruin site. Mid-Victorian fictions representing racial conflict in the colonial context often contain scenes in which the protagonists of the story escape to, or are confined in, a consciously stylized ruin site. We have already seen two of these structures. In Harriet Martineau’s *The Hour and the Man* (1841), L’Etoile, the dilapidated mansion, is re-envisioned to represent the rising new black nation of Haiti. The ruin site in Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins’s “Perils,” The Palace, is a prison in which dangerous pirates...
keep English colonials captive. Grant’s rendering of the ruin site includes a Gothic atmosphere that intensifies images of sexual violence found so frequently in Mutiny discourse. And a key trope of the Gothic, as I will discuss, is the site of the ruined, inadequate, or dangerous home. In this chapter, I will explore the further development and elaboration of the ruin scene in Grant’s novel and suggest that there is a relationship created in this text between the Gothicized ruin space and the body of the rebelling racial “other.” We saw this connection between structure and the racialized body in Knox’s obsessive use of the English country house to convey the Anglo-Saxon character, an image that becomes crucially important in Grant’s novel.2 The additional element of a Gothic atmosphere intensifies the sense of English rage and confusion in the face of challenges to colonial authority.

In *First Love and Last Love*, the romance plot becomes firmly established before the opening of the Rebellion, and the overlap of an adventure plot and a romance plot provides the basic structure of the text. Grant’s novel begins just a few weeks before the outbreak of the Rebellion. The hero, Jack Harrower, is a British officer stationed in India. Jack is in love with Lena Weston, a young woman whose family has just arrived in India. Jack and Lena were engaged at one time, but she broke off the relationship to become engaged to another officer. When that officer broke their engagement to marry a woman with more money, Lena was abandoned. Jack desperately wants to reunite with Lena, the heroine of this novel. The romantic element becomes primary, and much of the violence, although graphic, is narrated offstage.

Jenny Sharpe argues in *Allegories of Empire* that the violated body of the white British women was the central trope of representations of the Indian Rebellion. As I discussed in my analysis of Dickens and Collins’s “Perils,” accounts of high numbers of women killed in the Indian Rebellion, and the reports of mass raping of white women, later found to be without basis or evidence, brought out a chivalric rage in the officers in India at the time, as well as in the British public at home. Sharpe asserts that “there is no evidence pointing to a systematic rape and mutilation of English women, and that the Mutiny reports reenact that absent violence in its place” (Sharpe, 67). Dickens and Collins decided to render this anger metaphorically by constructing a historically divergent situation upon which to place the feelings elicited by accounts arriving from India in 1857. Grant, writing in the midst of the Governor Eyre controversy, by contrast places his novel in India at the time of the Rebellion and directly renders the violated female body, so graphically created within the accounts to which Sharpe alludes.
The actual situation of white women in India before the Rebellion was complicated. Often these women were blamed for rising tensions in the colony; scholars debate the validity of this charge. Penelope Tuson argues that the large female presence in the Anglo-Indian community in India was a relatively recent development at the time of the Rebellion: “In the 1850s, women had only just begun to go out to India in large numbers, either to accompany civilian or army husbands, or, to a much lesser extent, as independent missionaries and teachers. Even before the outbreak of the Rebellion, this created an atmosphere of anxiety among many of the almost exclusively male governing elite who had grown used to a lifestyle away from domestic responsibilities and who accepted, as a way of life, local sexual liaisons and friendships” (293).

The presence of middle-class white women bridged the gap between the freer, less restrictive colonial culture and middle-class metropolitan mores. No longer was India a place where men could live beyond conventional social norms. English women arrived, bringing with them the social restrictions of England, thus taking away a great deal of the freedom formerly associated with living in India. Tuson suggests that Englishwomen were supposed to embody the morals of middle-class culture, much as they were to be the purveyors of this type of morality in the metropolis:

European middle-class women in India were represented in public discourses in the same general terms as those in Victorian Britain and they were expected to bring with them to the imperial territories those same qualities of domestic virtue that were required of them in the home country. In return they were similarly accorded an exalted status and, increasingly, as notions of Britain’s imperial civilizing mission developed, they were protected, nurtured, and, at the same time, disempowered, as its gentler and more fragile representatives. They were to be the velvet glove on the iron fist of colonial aggrandisement. (294)

The women in Grant’s novel embody this moral and domestic symbolism, but without the complications evident in the historical events. They also display little of the pluck and bravery of Dickens and Collins’s Lady Marion. Unlike Lady Marion’s superior fighting skills in “Perils,” the Weston girls struggle to endure the loss of their privileged lifestyle, a loss that Grant dwells on at considerable length. They do not contribute markedly to the fight against the rebels. Instead, the women represent what the fighting men protect and reinstate.

argues that the response to English women in India was mixed. Many argued that the women were, in fact, responsible for creating a rift between the English officers and the Indian sepoys, because the women’s presence confirmed the boundary between the groups of men. The arrival of English women also created anxiety about miscegenation, which in turn created a still greater need for limits. And as women tried to carry out their prescribed role of spreading the light of civilization, they created anxiety in the Indian population. English women often reached out to Indian children and women, but this caused problems because they were perceived as trying to change the indigenous way of life (Robinson, 11). So, on the one hand, the English women’s contact with Indian women and children provided a moral pathway to carry out a religious and cultural mission that caused tension between the two communities. On the other hand, the women inhibited the relationship between the Anglo-Indian men and the Indian community, which had brought a sense of closeness between officer and sepoy and established an avenue for both interracial relationships and exploitation of Indian women by Anglo-Indian men.

Any ambivalence felt regarding the English female presence in India disappears in accounts representing the violence committed against white women during the Rebellion. And Grant’s representation of the events is more violent and shocking than is Dickens and Collins’s, because he depicts the violence done to women, both real and imagined, in graphic, disturbing, and sustained ways. Nancy Paxton argues that “the most extraordinary feature of Grant’s First Love and Last Love, one of the earliest novels about the Mutiny, is that it violates perhaps the most powerful literary taboo of the Victorian era which prohibited the description of the naked (white) female body and silenced mentions of rape in polite literature” (254). When one considers the historical context of the work, however, the violent images seem less of an aberration. Of particular importance to the English public in the metropolis that read about the event, and the Anglo-Indian community in India experiencing the events, was the violence that English citizens suffered. Reading about the brutal acts committed on English men and women created a sense of rage in the English psyche, especially when it came to the horrific Cawnpore massacre: “Cawnpore was not merely a matter of military affront: it struck deeper than that. It was all that was most vicious about the Mutiny stripped bare: the first time the women of England had ever been slaughtered in the history of battle. The British response was a tribal one—even atavistic—and still fuels bitter debate both here and in India itself” (Robinson, 98).

The publication date of Grant’s novel further fueled the rage expressed
in its pages. Grant’s novel was first published in 1868, during the height of
the Governor Eyre controversy, an event, as we saw in the previous chapter,
suffused with violence at every level by the English troops and rebels. The
English reading public may have been overwhelmed with the frequency of
accounts of colonial violence—accounts that were eroding the good feeling
created earlier in the century with the abolition of the slave trade and
Emancipation. The English were under attack, these accounts suggested,
and it was time to put these ungrateful and inferior subjects in their place.

The violence experienced by the Jamaican black and colored commu-
nity was, of course, also part of Indian colonial life. Rudrangshu
Mukherjee argues, “Violence . . . was an essential component of the British
presence in India” (93). Regarding women in particular, he notes that
British colonials committed violent acts of punishment on Indian women
in much the same way that British soldiers inflicted violence on Jamaican
women during the revengeful punishment for Morant Bay. Sexual violence
in particular, noticeably absent from the hundreds of pages of testimony
taken during the Morant Bay inquiry, was also part of life in colonial India.
Mukherjee argues that “it was an era of brutal floggings and of Indian
women being forced to become mistresses of white men; of recalcitrant
elements being blown from cannons so that their bodies were effaced and
the onlookers covered with blood and fragments of flesh. British rule thus
visibly manifested itself by marking the body of the Indian” (94). The vio-
lence so feared by and experienced by the British in India, then, was an
inverse reflection of what they inflicted on the colonized population.

This volatile combination of violence, women, colonial rule, morality,
and boundary anxiety became focused on the representation of the
English home. As Robinson argues, “The root of the problem was that
women represented home. That, to put it crudely, is what the memsahibs
in India were for. They were sent out as portable little packets of morality,
to comfort their men, keep the blood-line clean, and remind them of their
mothers” (13). And the question of home—how to create the Victorian
home in the colonial context, and what that home represents—became a
trope that conveys this array of issues in Grant’s text. The ruins to which
his characters return over and again (as opposed to the single visit evident
in the earlier texts) become figurative and imaginative recreations of home
as a safe space in the midst of rebellion. Catherine Hall argues that the rela-
tionship between home, nation, colony, and imperialism is fundamental
and insufficiently explored in the Victorian imperial project. 3 I argue that
the trope of home represents this relationship in Grant’s novel, and that
the image in which the discussion is most fully revealed is the ruin scene.
From the opening of the novel, it becomes clear that home, domesticity, and romance are central concepts in Grant’s text, and they are not limited to the romance between Lena and Harrower. Lena’s sister Kate is about to marry a good-natured soldier and friend of Harrower’s, Rowley Mellon, and so the initial moments of the text are suffused with romance and future weddings. This overlap between rebellion and domesticity is so overt that Kate’s wedding night is the moment when the Rebellion breaks out. The wedding takes place, but the Rebellion erupts between the wedding and the wedding night, thus interrupting the consummation of the marriage. The scene, which takes place in a chapter called “Kate’s Wedding Night,” begs an interpretation of the Rebellion as an event directly intruding on the domestic sexuality of the English home. The celebration, filled with happiness and safety, ends up as a scene of violent destruction: “The brilliant bridal party which had assembled in the church of Dr. Weston on that eventful 11th of May, was now scattered far and wide, or lying gashed and gory, dead and mutilated, a prey to jackals and vultures in the streets and gardens of Delhi” (Grant, 167). Kate, taken prisoner by an Indian prince, spends the rest of the novel trying to keep from being raped by him, a fate she successfully avoids.

An irony exists between Grant’s fictional use of the trope of rape to assert a particular view of the relationship between Indian men and English women, and the reality that little or no rape of English women was committed during the Rebellion. “As early as 1865,” claims Paxton, “the distinguished historian George Trevelyan argued in Cawnpore that there was no evidence that English women were actually raped during the Uprising of 1857” (251). Mukherjee, discussing the religious nature of the Rebellion, observes, “Here was a society in open war with a foreign power; at the time when the rebels seemed to be victorious they had British women at their mercy for about fifteen days. Yet there was no rape” (115). However, even though Grant’s novel was published three years after Trevelyan’s account, the novel is filled with images of rape, threats of rape, and metaphors of rape.

Grant’s decision to retain the trope of rape in such dramatic and insistent fashion suggests a desire to exploit the sense of outrage arising from late-1850s accounts of the Rebellion. Paxton argues that the trope of rape fulfilled several concomitant functions: “Novels written after 1857 which were organized around this narrative [rape of English women by Indian men] naturalized British colonizers’ dominance by asserting the lawlessness
of Indian men and, at the same time, shored up traditional gender roles by assigning British women the role of victim, countering British feminist demands for women’s greater political and social equality. In short, texts which focus on the rape of English women by Indian men were used to mobilize literary traditions about chivalry in service to the Raj” (249).

The trope of rape, even when not supported by historical or investigative evidence, served to usher in conventional ideas about women’s roles, the domestic English environment, and the realities of violence in the colonial context. This constellation of issues is focused in Grant’s text on the idea of home, which takes many different forms, but centers primarily on ruin sites. The use of ruins allows the image of home to take on a more imaginative construction in the mind of the reader, not only because language presents the structure, but also because the incompleteness of the structure allows the reader to participate in creating and completing the vision of home.

The Solace of the English Home

Representations of home take three primary forms in the novel: sketch, memory, and ruin. At the beginning of the novel, before the outbreak of the Rebellion, Harrower keeps a sketch of Thorpe Audley, his home in England and the place representing Lena and himself as a couple. After he has seen Lena again with her family, he returns to his living quarters and looks at the sketch: “Harrower looked at the sketch again and again, and touched it up anew with his pencil, the arch of the Lichgate and its masses of ivy—the stile that lay beyond—the square tower and the porch of the old village church, with the chimneys of the village itself, peeping up among the woodlands in the distance. Every chimney there Lena would remember, and might recal [sic] its household, their faces, and all their little histories” (Grant, 54).

Here we see the conscious use of the aestheticized English home by the protagonist as solace in the midst of racial conflict. Harrower uses this representation of his home community to recall visions of his happy times in England while in the colonial context. In The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard argues that “Daydreams return to inhabit an exact drawing and no dreamer ever remains indifferent for long to a picture of a house” (Bachelard, 49). This moment brings us back to the repetitive use of the English country house in Knox’s The Races of Men as a stand-in for the figure of the Anglo-Saxon man. Key to this dynamic is the replacing of body
with structure, the overlapping of organic and architectural form. The sketch represents home, Englishness, and the future domestic and romantic relationship he desires with Lena.

This sketch will become his way of winning Lena back while in India, because the English home is a symbol for the colonial romance: “How fortunate it was that he had fondly preserved this little relic of those happy days, which he hoped it would bring back to her memory, in all their strength and purity” (Grant, 54). Malcolm Kelsall, in *The Great Good Place: The Country House and English Literature* (1993), argues that “the country house was the essential expression of England” (5). And we saw in Knox’s text that the image of the English country house is used three times to express the fundamental ethos of the Anglo-Saxon race. Grant’s novel triangulates the romance between Lena and Harrower through the image of home, and it is of primary importance that the location of this home is England. Its retention within the sketch becomes a morally virtuous refuge from the violence and from the cultural chaos produced by open rebellion.

Throughout the novel, the perfection of the English home is contrasted with the inadequacy of the Indian home, in both its domestic and ruin state. When Lena and Jack flee the violence of the Rebellion, not knowing what happened to friends and family, they begin a long process of trying to find safety and shelter in the colonial wilderness. Khoda Bux, father of the Westons’ ayah, Safiyah, agrees to shelter the two people (although he thinks that they are married), even though it is dangerous for him to be seen helping the English. In a series of reflections on their surroundings that can strike the reader as exceptionally critical, the uncomfortable particulars of the Indian residence are continually dwelt upon, and this inadequacy is linked with the mistreatment of women, a common point of criticism in Victorian discussions of colonized societies:

Compelled to remain close within doors, Jack and Lena found the house of Khoda Bux an almost intolerable residence. Like all the dwellings of the poorer ryots, it was small, badly ventilated, children, cattle, and poultry being nearly all under one roof; but this mattered little to Khoda or the women of his household, as they were all a-field by cock-crow, and at work with spade and hoe among the sugar canes and rice fields. . . . Khoda was perhaps kinder to his horses and cattle than to the women of his household. As a Brahmin he was a thorough believer in the transmigration of souls; he knew that in the next state of existence he might figure as a horse, a cow, or even an alligator, but certainly not as a woman. (Grant, 211)
Often in texts about the Indian Rebellion, both fictional and nonfictional, authors point to the treatment by Indian men of women as inferior beings as a sign of their backwardness. Here, this misogyny is tied to the spatial environment of the home that fails to retain the crucial demarcation between the animal and human spaces, and that fails to valorize woman as the queen of the sphere. Spatial, bodily, and ideological concerns overlap to suggest the inferiority of the Indian group, even though they put themselves at risk to help Harrower and Lena. It is not that the Indians are bad people, the text suggests, just underdeveloped and uncivilized.

Eventually Khoda Bux learns that he is in great danger, and tells our hero and heroine that they will have to leave. It is at this moment that ruins begin to feature most prominently in the text. Their protector encourages them to look for shelter in sites of ruin scattered throughout the countryside: “The forest is full of ruined temples and old tombs—there you will find shelter easily” (Grant, 214). Harrower finds this suggestion particularly distasteful: “Ruined temples and old tombs—ugh!” (214), to which Khoda Bux responds, “Safe shelter, Sahib, till the present danger is past” (214). The couple has little choice, and makes preparations to leave. Lena and Harrower take off into the wilderness with limited provisions. Lena is on horseback, and Harrower runs beside her in chivalrous fashion. Before long, they arrive at the first of several ruin sites in which they will keep shelter:

Lena’s horse began to stumble among stones or masses of fallen masonry, over which an elaborate network of creepers, the growth of many years, was spread. Some arches and fallen columns next appeared, and before them stood one of the ruins to which Khoda Bux had referred—a fragment of an old Hindoo temple apparently. Two arches of the Moorish or horse-shoe form, about eight feet high, were still entire; but the pillars from which they sprung were buried to their capitals by the stones that had fallen from above and the rank luxuriance of the vegetation of centuries. (Grant, 216–17)

In this description of the ruin site we see familiar echoes of both Martineau’s L’Etoile and Dickens and Collins’s Palace. Nature encroaches on the domestic ruin site, just as at L’Etoile, “ropes of creepers hung down the walls” (Hour 1:276). Ruins illustrate an intersection of temporal (that is, historical and nostalgic) and spatial (that is, architectural and geographical) concerns evident in mid-Victorian representations of race and racial conflict. Reminders of a past, developed, and awesome civilization
remain in the decayed arches and columns, an image reminiscent of "Perils," in which "a flight of stone steps, of such mighty size and strength that they might have been made for the use of a race of giants" (222), leads to the ruin site. Grant's ruin has religious overtones in its history as a temple, and this element adds to its signifying power as a cultural artifact. This type of scene persists in racial representations of the period, and it symbolizes an ongoing discussion that took place within Victorian society about the relationship between the English and colonial home, the gendered and racial body, and the place of women in both locations.

The emergence of these questions in the ruin space becomes evident in the way our hero and heroine demarcate the area. Unlike Lady Marion in "Perils," Lena is a more traditionally passive female character, much more in keeping with the male adventure novel tradition. After they arrive at the ruin site, Harrower notices that "[r]ocks or masonry closed up those arches on one side, making each a species of vault" (Grant, 217). Harrower literally barricades Lena into the structure in order to create a wall of safety: "In one of these, Harrower stabled the horse and quartered himself; the other he apportioned to Lena, piling up in front of it, and in the entrance, several large stones as a barrier in case of a sudden attack from sepoys, or any wild animal" (Grant, 220). One could argue that this move simply creates a protective shield around Lena. But I suggest that it also reinforces certain domestic barriers so important to the Victorians, such as between the safe interior of the house and the dangerous outside, or the reliable English world and the unstable Indian world. These separations are especially important in light of the hero and heroine's unmarried status.

Further emphasizing the ways in which this structure reinforces ideas about domesticity and romance, the first evening at the ruins make Jack think of Thorpe Audley, the scene rendered in the sketch he touched up earlier in the plot:

He was neither fanciful nor romantic, but somehow on this night there came to his mind vivid thoughts of his home in Cornwall, of his family fireside and the faces of the dead; of the bleak hills and the peak of Caddonburrow, with his little patrimonial dwelling, the tenants of which he envied at that time of peril. And then he thought of the quaint chapel hard by, built by one of his ancestors, who had been a crusader—tradition said; for his effigy was there, cross-legged, with sword at side, shield on arm, and his hands clasped in prayer; and he remembered how that grim effigy had been an object of terror in boyhood, all the more that the name carved on the tomb was the same as his own—'Johan de Harrower, Miles.'
His family had for ages been buried in and around that little Norman fane, and many monumental brasses testified to the fame they had borne among the men of Cornwall, long ago. Would he ever lie there? (Grant, 218)

Hiding at the ruin with Lena triggers this series of associations for Harrower, bringing him imaginatively back to England. The natural environment becomes enmeshed with his romantic and domestic future. And his vision of home suggests a violent, Christian familial history, loaded with moral overtones. By sharing a name with his ancestor, Harrower is directly tied to his behavior, and the text suggests that Harrower is both awestruck and intimidated by the shoes he must fill.

Ruin scenes also take on the more mundane function of travel narrative, and this element of Grant's novel once again embodies the importance of the raced and gendered body. Each of the sites is explained in some historical or cultural fashion, so giving the reader interesting facts about the original structure. Often these passages take on a digressive quality, and the tone differs vastly from the primary one in the Rebellion plot.

In the explanation Harrower receives from a loyal Indian sepoy about the structure in which they keep themselves safe early in the novel, however, the connection among the domestic, the colonial, and the structure resumes:

It would appear, by what Harrower learned from the soubadar-major, Bhowanee Lall, that the ruin with the two quaint arches, which had afforded a shelter to Lena and himself in the forest of Soonput, was the remnant neither of a mosque nor a mansion . . . but it was the fragment of a once magnificent tomb, connected with the romantic story of one of the most beautiful and remarkable women who ever figured in the stirring and changing history of India—Nour Jehan, “the Light of the World,” better known in many a song and tale of fiction by her softer and more loving name, Nour Mahal, “the Light of the Harem”—(the same sobriquet which, in vanity or jest, or in his pride of having a toy so new and beautiful, Mirza Abubeker had bestowed upon his poor little English captive, Polly Weston . . .). (Grant, 248)

The story of this young sixteenth-century woman named Nour Mahal is told at length in the novel in a chapter devoted solely to that end (Grant, 248–53). It is at root a story of domestic betrayal, in which a father sells his daughter into a harem in order to pay his debts. Nour Mahal is also the
name given to Lena’s younger sister Polly, taken prisoner by an Indian prince, thus suggesting her possible fate as sexual slave. Eventually, in the legend, father and daughter are reconciled when he is able to save her life as an adult. This story of Nour Mahal, of domestic abandonment and reconciliation, underpins the structure in which Harrower and Lena hide. They take shelter in the architectural representation of the legend, the structural metaphor of the betrayed and violated female Indian body.

Eventually, Harrower and Lena have to leave the first site, and they remove themselves to another that is even more elaborate than the first. The repetition of ruin sites in Grant’s novel is reminiscent again of Knox’s use of the image of the English country house. Rather than one ruin site that stands at the center of the text, as we saw in The Hour and the Man and “Perils,” the protagonists inhabit several different ruined structures over the course of the novel, each of which becomes more Gothic and menacing. Soon we read a familiar scene as Harrower takes control of Lena, placing her in an appropriate place within the ruin site, and then creating a safe environment for them: “Up several steps, broken, decayed, and covered with grass and herbage, and between pillars of twisted, bulbous, and fantastic form, they passed, Harrower leading the shrinking Lena by the hand, until he found a stone or fallen column, on which he seated her, while preparing to make a fire, that they might look around them and see the features of their temporary habitation—the vast memorial of unknown ages, and of a mental darkness that is yet undispelled in the land” (Grant, 311).

These ruin sites are the remnants of an ancient civilization, both awesome and primitive. Traveling into the world of the colonial wilderness entails, in a sense, traveling back in time to primitive and lost civilizations. As we read further, the Gothic overtones, suggested by the “mental darkness,” are further accentuated. The ruins may be majestic, but the reader is not to forget that these are the ruins of a more primitive and less enlightened (albeit once grand) culture, far inferior to the English.

As with the previous site, the text provides a history of the structure, but this time the description includes traditional Gothic imagery. More importantly, the structure becomes personified, thus embodying a connection between history, legend, and the organic body:

This temple—one of the many magnificent Hindo fanes, rifled and ruined by Mohammed Ghora during his conquests in the twelfth century—is of vast extent and height, and out of the ghostly uncertainties of its depths and shadows, there could be seen coming forth in bold relief, while the light of the fire wavered and brightened on several pillars of bulbous
outline, with flat oval capitals, and many gigantic stone figures, whose heads supported the roof: and when the unsteady glow played on their huge and grotesque faces, these seemed to become animated, and to grin, mock, and jabber at the intruders; yet the whole scene, in all its details, its bold features, its black obscurities, and unknown history, was calculated to impress the mind with awe. (Grant, 311)

This site takes on a more sinister feeling than had the previous one. The images speak to the couple as they enter and mock them as they seek shelter and safety within its walls. The darkness of the scene becomes increasingly accentuated, and the couple seems dwarfed by the size of the statues. But still the description ends by acknowledging the impressiveness of the spectacle and its ability to elicit the couple’s respect.

The increasingly menacing nature of the structures provides the opportunity to display the bravery and resilience of the English character. Even though this structure takes on fearful and sinister traits, it also holds the scene of reunion between the two lovers in a quiet moment that conveys a sense of domestic peace. Successful romance becomes synonymous with English fortitude. The middle-class domestic plot will not be overrun by the personified, racialized Gothic ruin structure:

She was reclining with her left hand under her cheek; she stretched out her right to him, and he pressed its soft fingers between his own in silence, and thus they sat for a long space hand in hand, looking sometimes at each other, and sometimes at the fire which burned brightly on the paved floor; at the quaint pillars, at the quainter figures of the Hindoo idols, hewn out of marble of porphyry, on which daubings of red paint were still traceable; at the symbols on the walls, where the bull of Brahma, the serpent of Seva, the trident of Vishnu, and the noose of Kalee, were reproduced in innumerable carvings. (Grant, 312)

As with L’Etoile in Martineau’s The Hour and the Man, different aspects of the novel blend into the structure and surroundings in which the primary characters hide. The exotic spectacle of the Indian site accentuates the moment. Rather than providing a fearful scene, the imagery vacillates between traditional symbols of the romance plot and the rebellion plot. The natives are dangerous, the previous passage seems to suggest, with their dark past and their dark civilization. But as aesthetic and historical spectacle, the specifics of the scene enhance the romantic tenor of the moment between the hero and heroine.
The scene becomes the point at which Lena finally breaks down and admits her feelings for Harrower. As this action takes place, Grant’s depiction of the site continues to vacillate between suggestions of fear and sublimity. The text specifically highlights this ironic juxtaposition when it describes the physical manifestation of the feelings that have been developing between them: “and now they were reunited, lip to lip, hand in hand—but where?” the text asks. “In a Hindoo temple of Bengal—far, far away, amid the savage wilderness of Soonput Jheend!” (Grant, 316). The narrator points to this paradoxical moment for the reader, a paradox housed within the contradictory space of the colonial ruin site.

Although the site has the potential for goodness, romance, and peace, in general the couple’s flight from the Anglo-Indian community suggests the inferiority of the Indian landscape relative to the English domestic environment. Pat Doyle, the goodhearted Irishman and British officer, says, “When people have a comfortable home, I wonder why the devil they ever leave it” (Grant, 331). And in an overtly jingoistic moment, the narrator reinforces the superiority of the English relative to the Indians: “For in the terrible time of the mutiny, when happy households and loving family circles were scattered far and wide, men were thankful to entrust wives, children, and sisters to the care of all, or any, who could protect them, the sole bond, the greatest tie of all, being community of race, religion, or colour” (Grant, 223). The natives—even the loyal ones—are far inferior to one’s own kind, Grant’s narrator implies. Grant constructs English identity in relation to family, race, and nation, and uses the loyalty evident between families, and the treachery against the English that the Indian population exhibits, to reinforce the moral and racial superiority of the colonizers.

The Gothic Ruin Site

The connection among ruins, domestic space, entrapment of women, and sexual danger has obvious similarities with the conventions of the traditional Gothic novel. In Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914 (1988), Brantlinger outlines the development of what he calls the “Imperial Gothic” in the late-Victorian period. Brantlinger argues that the “Imperial Gothic” has three central themes: “individual regression or going native; an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world” (230). This development arises in works written
by H. G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, and Joseph Conrad, to name just three authors, and reflects late-Victorian cultural anxieties about the imperial project, the erosion of the importance of religion, and an increasing interest in the occult. Grant’s novel is an earlier, less ambivalently jingoistic manifestation of the “Imperial Gothic” subgenre. Although Grant’s novel certainly exploits popular interest in alien and exotic cultures, the manifestation of the Gothic in *First Love and Last Love* is unwaveringly nationalist and suggests none of the ambivalence evident in later imperial fiction such as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899, 1902). In addition, as Linda Bayer-Berenbaum argues, the subject of colonial rebellion more directly mirrors themes evident in the earlier branch of the Gothic, such as fears about populist revolutions: “In terms of politics, the Gothic novel has been continuously associated with revolution and anarchy” (42).

Perhaps the strongest generic similarity between *First Love and Last Love* and the early Gothic is in the overlap of danger, domesticity, and the site of the failed home. In *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (1989), Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that the image of the castle in Gothic literature conveys the paradox of the middle-class domestic space as both site of happiness and site of terror (x). In Gothic texts, the domestic turns fearful: “Focusing on crumbling castles as sites of terror, and on homeless protagonists who wander the face of the earth, the Gothic, too, is preoccupied with the home. But it is the failed home that appears on its pages, the place from which some (usually ‘fallen’ men) are locked out, and others (usually ‘innocent’ women) are locked in. . . . Either the home has lost its prelapsarian purity and is in need of rectification, or else the wandering protagonist has been driven from the home in a grotesque reenactment of God’s punishment of Satan, Adam, and Eve” (ix).

The ruin structures in Grant’s novel suggest a kinship with the Gothic castle, and the centrality of women in positions of vulnerability reflects the overlap of the domestic and the dangerous so prevalent in the early Gothic novels. The “fallen man” becomes the colonial soldier, officer, or administrator, and the vulnerable female his wife or sweetheart. The colonial environment takes the place of the mountainous Italian terrain. Rather than the Italian, Catholic castle, the protagonists must first find shelter in, and then escape from, the exotic colonial ruin. The newfound home in the colonial territories becomes terrifying, and images of the true home in England shepherd the English hero and heroine to safety.

Bayer-Berenbaum points out in *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art* (1982) that ruins were a central element of early
Gothic texts. She argues that the development of the Gothic in the late-eighteenth century suggests a connection between its development and growing interest in time, archaeology, and historical ruins: “soon any ruins—the process of decay itself—became associated with the Gothic as did wild landscapes and other mixtures of sublimity and terror” (19). And of course ruins were central to the picturesque aesthetic and abound in Romantic literature. Later, Thomas Carlyle would use the ruined Abbey at Bury St. Edmunds as his “Past” in *Past and Present*, thus using a ruin site as a repository for a state of mind and way of living that Carlyle saw as necessary for the salvation of England. Carlyle uses ruins as spatial metaphors for his temporally based argument to look to the past for remedies for present social ills: “For the Present holds in it both the whole Past and the whole Future” (Carlyle, 42). Ruins exist at the intersections of times, as a way of marking both the passing of organic time and the persistence of the past in current life.

The colonial ruin conveys conflicting ideas about the clash of cultures that transcend the moment at hand. Ruins suggest time, past and future time, as well as the power of time to erode greatness, structure, and civilization. In his classic work, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal argues that ruins force a culture to confront its own possible mortality in the ruined scene of fallen greatness: “Exemplifying the transience of great men and deeds, the consequence of depravity, or the triumph of justice over tyranny, ruins inspired reflections on what had once been proud and strong and new but was now decrepit, corrupt, degraded. And as reminders of the evanescence of life and the futility of effort, ruins became a staple of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century response to the past” (Lowenthal, 148). Ruin sites are a trope of “Imperial Gothic,” whereby, like the castles of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Gothic novels, ruins become central to the creation of a uniquely frightening atmosphere existing at the center of some form of domestic or cultural unrest. But rather than evoking images of populist revolution or social unrest within the European continent, the early Imperial Gothic develops in response to increasing fears regarding the colonial uprisings and bloodshed. For, as Edmund Burke argued in his discussion of the sublime: “I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power” (Burke, 59). Power exists in the ruin site in complicated fashion, in that it represents both power degraded or passed and power currently contested. The heroes and heroines of this genre find themselves at the mercy of a dangerous and exotic colonial subject in a state of rebellion, and dragged into the wilds of
the colonial landscape, away from metropolitan protective forces and social norms. It is a genre born out of developing racial theory, fueled by increasing colonial unrest, and feeding public antagonism for the subjects of British authority in the colonies.

The racial “others” that invade the ruin site in which Harrower, Lena, and now Pat Doyle hide harken back to the Indian banditti so common in the early Gothic novel. Grant’s narrator describes the scene as a moment of supernatural terror as Harrower, Lena, and Pat observe the marauders from a hiding place deep within the ruin site:

The glare of several torches and Indian fireworks (particularly the flaming trident of Vishnu) elevated on poles, and shedding blue, green, purple, and yellow glares, alternately ruddy or ghastly, or mingling and blending together in rainbow hues, now lighted up a most wild, picturesque, and striking scene, bringing out in bold relief the quaint carvings and details of the ancient Hindoo temple, its wondrously decorated and twisted pillars, wreathed with stony garlands and seven-headed snakes, and more than all, the gigantic figures of the triple gods, each four-armed, with high conical caps, thick flabby lips, depressed noses, staring eyes, and girdles of lotus leaves. (Grant, 332)

The flickering torchlight, demonic villains, sense of entrapment, and awe inspiring surroundings all create a conventionally Gothic atmosphere. Time is central to this moment, because the degradation of the structure and the ancient writings on the wall combine to give a sense of oppressive danger and claustrophobia. The negative characterizations of the Indian figures speak to the directly racial nature of the terror employed in the scene. Religious figures add a supernatural or otherworldly tenor to the site, but they also allow the element of irrationality, so prevalent in racial thinking, to find a voice. Much as the early Gothic novel is associated with anti-Catholic sentiments, the early Imperial Gothic reacts against the perceived pagan heathenism of the Oriental world. The protagonists need to escape from the temporally displaced world of the past, and, this novel suggests, into the light of English civility.

What becomes crucial here is the overlap of Gothic structures and racialized, dangerous bodies. Judith Halberstam suggests that “Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity, one which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known” (Halberstam, 2). Grant’s bringing of a Gothic atmosphere into the description of the ruin site, an atmosphere missing from Martineau’s use
of the trope and muted in Dickens and Collins’s text, suggests a preoccupation with deviant subjectivities in the overlap of structure and racial identity. And, as Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space*,

Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space. This is a truly remarkable relationship: the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.” (Lefebvre, 170)

In Grant’s novel, the overlap of organic body and physical structure, the connection between the creation of space and the living human form, becomes accentuated in the repetition of the image and the Gothic nature of the rendering. The relationship between the African subjectivity negotiated in Martineau’s L’Etoile and in Dickens and Collins’s Palace becomes overtly personified in Grant’s living ruin site that jeers back at the colonials. But what they face in the personified structure is the product of their own consciousnesses, their own bodies. They confront the spatial realization of the racial “other” produced in scientific and colonial discourse.

The heroism of the colonials is suggested by their immunity to the scene, by the ability of the romance plot to continue in the face of the site. If, as Halberstam suggests, the “Gothic . . . is the breakdown of genre and the crisis occasioned by the inability to ‘tell,’ meaning both the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize. Gothic, I argue, marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse” (Halberstam, 23), then we can see Grant’s deployment of the trope as a further intensifying of the situation we found in “Perils.” These texts create conflicting plotlines that break down around the ruin site as they engage with ideologies of race circulating in mid-Victorian culture. The ability to decipher breaks down in Martineau’s text as the monkeys stare at the renderings of French political authorities. In “Perils,” Collins’s ambivalence conflicts with Dickens’s rage in the decision to leave Mendez sleeping and kill Christian George King. In Grant’s novel, the romance narrative and the adventure tale become most firmly delineated in the face of the most striking personification of the ruin space. Race, for the Victorians, precipitated an obsession with boundaries. Racialized rebellion became a crisis of form and limits, an interweaving of different times, different identities, and different
geographies. As a barrier against the influence of the Gothic ruin site, Harrower turns pleadingly to the representation of the English country house for solace in the confusing world of racial conflict, structural degradation, and romantic frustration. It is to structure, as with Knox, that the protagonist turns, and it is an aestheticized structure that will ultimately embody the conflicted and irrational nature of imperial policy and the racial ideologies upon which it was built.

The trope of architectural ruin in mid-Victorian racial fictions conveys several overlapping ideas: dangerous colonial natives, romantic civilizations lost in history, adventurous travel, and colonial expansion into unknown worlds. English characters in these texts respond to the unknown, dangerous quality of the sites by attempting to impose a specifically British domestic environment onto the scene. The result of this interaction between domestic and exotic space, gender, and entrapment, and time and safety, is the production of a branch of the Gothic genre centered on colonial conflict. This branch represents mid-Victorian cultural anxieties about colonial rebellion, much as late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Gothic writings reflect anxieties about populist revolution and social unrest. Exploration of these spatial sites is the exploration of the past, and thus it suggests the intersection of spatial and temporal considerations so common in Victorian discussions of racial distinction. Supernatural and religious images within the sites reflect the irrational and imaginative aspect of racial thinking. The danger of racial rebellion, Grant’s novel suggests, is the loss of domestic and national control, as embodied in the ruin space. But in Grant’s text, British control is ultimately regained and vengeance won; ambivalence about expansionist policies remains at a minimum; and the English remain steadfastly English until the end.

The drawing of Harrower’s English home provides a temporary canvas on which Grant projects that image of safety and happiness, a picture that helps the hero and heroine to survive the danger. The solace found within this aestheticized emblem of Englishness is our final example of the pattern within the texts under consideration in this study; these texts move toward aestheticized environments or questions regarding the aesthetic as a way to manage, escape from, or reconcile anxieties and confusions produced in the texts by white English confrontation with racial otherness. Harriet Martineau’s L’Etoile provides a more romanticized, natural, and hopeful ruin site in which she stages an engagement with politicized racial
conflict that ultimately ends in a vision of indecipherability. Robert Knox obsessively returns to the structure of the English country house as he constructs his irrational and contradictory taxonomy of racial otherness. Ultimately it is aesthetic form in which he, like Harrower, rests as he gazes on the Greek Marbles in the British Museum. Dickens and Collins aestheticize the Indian Mutiny itself, taking events away from the realm of historical accuracy and moving into a metaphorical engagement with imperialism and the problem of racial rebellion. The use of the “Palace” in that text becomes, as in Martineau, another inconclusive scene as the fetish figure of racial otherness, Pedro Mendez, is left sleeping at the ruin site. And finally, in the Royal Commission transcript we see the obsession with form that motivated Knox made evident in the Commission’s meticulous adherence to the generic parameters of empirical inquiry. Taking Halberstam’s observation on the breakdown of genre in Gothic form and the creation of the racialized other, we can see that the momentary break with generic convention created in the “baker’s dozen” comment brings into relief the obscuring nature of these generic parameters. As we turn now to the present day and the return of Sara(h) Ba(a)rtman(n)’s remains to South Africa, we will look at what is involved in reversing the process—what is required to de-aestheticize the racial “other” of white British discourse.