

**CHARLES JOHN HUFFAM DICKENS**  
(7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870)

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**Dickens's Great Expectations:  
Class Mobility in Victorian England and the Social Rise of the Underprivileged**

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*Great Expectations* is a polysemic novel. It is embedded with a wide range of thematic layers that not only relate to many realities of Victorian England, but also reflect Dickens's inexhaustible creativity as well as inimitable artistry of sophisticated fabulation. Indeed, the novel can be read and approached in many different ways; in other words, it is a pastiche of various fictional forms and nuances. Throughout the text, one witnesses descriptions, portrayals, narratives and fictional constructs that make one feel as if one were reading not only a social novel, but also what may be called in French a *roman-fleuve* that kaleidoscopically contains autobiographical, gothic, picaresque, pastoral, romantic and mystery material. One may even regard it as a novel about London's backstreets as well as its idyllic and yet mysterious rural environs on to the Thames estuary. However, this paper approaches *Great Expectations* as a social novel and, following a preliminary discussion of class mobility and its parameters in England from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries down to the Victorian Age, mainly focuses on Dickens's graphic fabulation through Pip of how the underprivileged of his time aspired to climb up the social ladder.

The prolific Victorian essayist, intellectual and journalist Walter Bagehot stressed in 1864 that English society had no barriers for class mobility and that anybody could have the opportunity to move upwards; for him, English society embodied

“a system of *removable inequalities*, where many people are inferior to and worse off than others, but in which each may *in theory* hope to be on the level with the highest below the throne, and in which each may reasonably, and without sanguine impracticability, hope to gain one step in social elevation, to be at least on a level with those who at first were just above them” (qtd. in Newsome 1997: 63).

Yet, another eminent Victorian and popular writer, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, specified the acquisition of wealth as the only and primarily important criterion for an individual's achievement of social elevation in Victorian England; indeed, as David Newsome emphasizes, in Bulwer-Lytton's view, “everybody seemed to be aspiring to be on the move —upwards; and each stage of the advance was associated with the acquisition of money” (1997: 63).

When considered historically, the origins of the social process of class mobility could be traced back to the medieval chivalric ideal and the gentry families of Tudor and post-Tudor England (Morrill 1996:288-297); for instance, Catherine Waters asserts that “the concept of gentlemanliness” was originally “derived from the chivalric ideal” (1997: 165). It was especially under the Stuarts in the seventeenth century that class mobility became relatively more dynamic and emerged as a growing social reality. Although gentry farming was still the main economic activity in the early Stuart era, “the promotion of overseas trade” (Morrill 1996: 290) during and after the Commonwealth led to a significant accumulation of capital; large imports of sugar, tobacco and various profitable produce and goods from the colonies and other overseas markets, and exports of finished goods worldwide, generated so much revenue for the merchant class that its members became the wealthiest in England (Morrill 1996: 293-294). Consequently, as John Morrill

points out, by the late seventeenth century, wealth was “no longer [...] primarily the perquisite of the landed” (294) and, clearly, “access to wealth and power was not restricted by outdated notions of privilege and obsessions with purity of birth as in much of Europe” (297). Thus, the traditional status of gentleman, which was based on land ownership and, accordingly, was restricted to the landed gentry in rural England, began to change and

“professional men, merchants, and town governors became bolder in asserting that they were as good as the country gentleman and were entitled to his title of respect. The definition of ‘gentility’ was stretched to include them without a prior purchase of land. This ‘pseudo-gentility’ became increasingly respectable and increasingly widely recognized, even by the heralds” (Morrill 297).

So, with a growing accumulation of capital (Clark 1986:131), a booming economy driven by liberalism and free trade, worldwide markets, imperial and colonial policies in place, increasing literacy, and the shift from a cottage manufacturing system to industrialization and mass production, England in the late eighteenth century not only evolved into an imperial world power, but also technologically and economically pioneered the Industrial Revolution (Langford 1996:352-418). Especially, the rise of an affluent bourgeoisie, and its political, economic, social and cultural influence, gradually removed traditional class barriers and rigidities and led to significantly increased class mobility. Indeed, as Paul Langford argues, “movable goods in the form of industrial capital, personal wealth, and trading balances were overwhelmingly owned by the broad mass of the middle class” (390). This led to “the ease with which individuals could move up and down the social ladder” (387). So, the fashions, manners, and speech styles of the ruling élite began to be adopted and mimicked by the *nouveaux riches* of industrialized, urbanized<sup>1</sup> and free trade England. It was clear that, as Langford observes, “all social values, distinctions, and customs gave way before the sovereign power of cash” (388). This process of social, economic, technological and industrial change gained a gathering momentum in the early decades of the nineteenth century, which had its political polarization in the 1832 Reform Act. For F.M.L. Thompson, the Reform Act “was an attempt to adapt political institutions to the alteration in the balance of social forces” (1988: 13) that the Industrial Revolution and free trade plutocracy had brought about. Obviously, the Reform Act, which actually introduced what Thompson called “£10 householder franchise” (16), was a radical step forward taken by the Whigs for the admission of the underprivileged into the body politic (Clark 1986:123); yet, among the target underprivileged were not included the unpropertied, especially wage-earning factory workers, the so-called “factory proletariat” (Thompson 1988:15 and 23), and they had to wait until the passage in 1867 of the Second Reform Act in order to gain their political rights. In the wake of the 1832 Reform Act, and with the impact of evolving radicalism in the early Victorian decades, represented by the Chartist Movement and developments towards trade unionism (Clark 1986: 132-135), social mobility became so dynamic that the traditionally stratified class system, such as was reflected in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century novels, almost completely lost its uniformity and became amorphous (Newsome 1997: 62-76 in particular). Indeed, as K.C. Phillipps (1984:2) states, the Victorian period was “a time of unprecedented change, which included the gradual breakup of a rigid class-system”. Moreover, due to the spread of public education, provided through an increasing number of boarding schools as well as vocational schools (Clark 1986: 255-274),<sup>2</sup> young people

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<sup>1</sup> As regards the impact of industrialization upon urbanization in England, see Langford 1996: 378-80; also see Thompson 1988: 13, 27-29 and 49.

<sup>2</sup> For an extensive account of pre-Victorian and Victorian improvements in education, see Stewart and McCann’s detailed study. For a specific case study, see Lancaster 1992: v-x and 1 ff.

were able to acquire the skills and learning that would give them the chance to climb up the social ladder. In particular, as regards the children of the poor or the socially and economically underprivileged, who were generally considered by the authorities to be associated with ignorance and criminality, governments introduced a number of measures to protect them and, by improving their personality through proper schooling and character-building, bring them to civilization and humanity (Clark 1986: 193-195 and 280; Thompson 1988:135-151). For instance, through his schools at Lanark, established for the education of working-class children, “[the] progressive educationalist” (Stewart and McCann 1967: 53) Robert Owen (1771-1858) strongly argued that “the character of the working class [...] could only be transformed by a change in society, a process in which education would play a crucial part” (Stewart and McCann 1967: 54). He further emphasized that, as Stewart and McCann have summarized,

“the children of the working class [...] should have not only the best manner, but also, and far more important, the best matter of instruction. It was not enough now to teach children to know their place [in society], to become docile and obedient; they must become rational and useful members of society” (60).

For him, working-class children were to be given “a rational and useful learning” and, hence, to be transformed “into rational beings, into useful and effective members of the state” (qtd. in Stewart and McCann 1967:60). So, pre-Victorian and Victorian developments and experiments in education had a significant impact on class mobility and enabled members of the underprivileged in society to raise their social status and acquire full respectability. For a lower-class young man, the ultimate aim was to become a gentleman and have a respectable status in society.

It is within this social and cultural context of England in the nineteenth century outlined so far that Dickens’s *Great Expectations* can be situated with reference to class mobility and that Pip’s story needs to be revisited. Initially, one must state at the outset that, in his fabulation of Pip’s inheritance and loss of a huge wealth, euphemistically termed in the novel as the “great expectations” (*Great Expectations* 141 [Chapter 18], hereafter abbreviated for reference as *GE*), Dickens primarily focuses on the economic dimension of class mobility in Victorian England. As for the role of education in class mobility, he refers to it briefly through the lawyer Jaggers’s explanation of the terms set by Pip’s benefactor, the erstwhile convict Magwitch, and also through Pip’s education under Matthew Pocket’s lax tutorship. Indeed, as Jaggers points out to Pip and his uncle Joe, Magwitch (the anonymous benefactor to them both) has already allocated “a sum of money amply sufficient for [Pip’s] suitable education [...since he, Pip,] “must be better educated, in accordance with [his] altered position” (*GE* 142 [Chapter 18]. So, for his education, Pip attends Mr Pocket’s private lessons, which, in fact, are not designed for a certain profession, but are mainly concerned with what a gentleman needs to know, such as manners, etiquette, rules of conduct, and elegant writing (*GE* 183-86 [Chapter 23], 190-91 [Chapter 24] and 258 [Chapter 34]). However, Dickens’s approach to class mobility has an adverse tone and verges on a satirical attitude. This is most explicitly revealed through Pip’s assessment of Estella, when he encounters her on his visit to Miss Havisham (*GE*, 221-30 [Chapter 29]) as a gentleman; during his conversation with Estella, he discovers that, though formerly inaccessible and disdainful, she has become over the years “so much changed, [...] so much more beautiful, so much more womanly” (*GE*, 224 [Chapter 29]). So, in his assessment of her, he recalls how, during his attendance upon Miss Havisham in his boyhood, he cherished aspirations for wealth and gentility in order to gain her (Estella) over (*GE*, 68-77 [Chapter 8], 90-101 [Chapter 11], and 121-122 [Chapter 15]):

“Proud and wilful as of old, she had brought those qualities into such subjection to her beauty that it was impossible and out of nature [...] to separate them from her beauty. Truly

it was impossible to dissociate her presence from all those wretched hankerings after money and gentility that had disturbed my boyhood – from all those ill-regulated aspirations that had made first me ashamed of home and Joe” (*GE*, 225 [Chapter 29]).

Perhaps it is in his representation of Mrs Pocket that Dickens explicitly parodies and most pungently satirizes the Victorian hankering after gentility. As “the only daughter of a certain quite accidental deceased knight, who had invented for himself a conviction that his deceased father would have been made a Baronet” (*GE* 184 [Chapter 23]), Mrs Pocket was “brought up from her cradle as one who in the nature of things [had to] marry a title, and who was to be guarded from the acquisition of plebeian domestic knowledge” (*GE* 184 [Chapter 23]). Moreover, her father had claimed delusively that she was ““a treasure for a Prince”” (*GE* 184 [Chapter 23]). Ironically, contrary to her father’s delusions, Mrs Pocket chose to marry Mr Pocket, who had been “educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he had distinguished himself” (*GE* 185 [Chapter 23]). However, on marrying Mrs Pocket, who has always tried ludicrously to mimic the manners of the nobility and still pretends to lead an extravagant upper-class life (*GE* 181-185 [Chapters 22-23]), Mr Pocket has lost his “loftier hopes,” and his “prospects” for the future have been ruined; consequently, he has ended up to become just a crammer (*GE* 185-186 [Chapter 23]). So, through this graphic representation of Mrs Pocket’s mimicry of gentility as well as her grotesque pretence to nobility, Dickens offers a fictional and comic critique of inexorable lower-class aspirations for upward social mobility. Since the Victorians fully endorsed and privileged in every sense what Andrew St George has termed “progress and change” (1993: xvi), Dickens certainly shared this principle, but he was also critical of its social abuse by the underprivileged for an undeserved personal upper-class status.

Of course, Pip’s case as a social climber is morally and individually far more serious and instructive. His rise as a gentleman to a respectable social status, and his fall due to the Crown’s forfeiture of his benefactor Magwitch’s wealth (*GE* 407-408 and 411 [Chapter 55]), follows what one may suggest a tragic pattern. It is not so much a tragedy of circumstances as a tragedy of character. In other words, Pip becomes very conceited and snobbish upon the sudden and unexpected change in his social status from a downtrodden orphan and apprentice to a gentleman; pride or conceit becomes his *hamartia*. He begins to behave disdainfully and arrogantly towards the members of his own family, Joe and Joe’s wife Mrs Gargery, who, as his own sister, in fact brought him up from orphaned childhood and thus became a surrogate mother to him.<sup>3</sup> For instance, his pride and snobbery is most clearly revealed by his dilemma and adverse attitude when in his new status as a gentleman he learns from Bidley’s letter (*GE* 209 [Chapter 27]) that Joe is coming to London to see him:

“Let me confess exactly, with what feelings I looked forward to Joe’s coming. Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, and some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money” (*GE* 209 [Chapter 27]).

As an urbanized and aspiring young man, Pip is well aware of what Catherine Waters has aptly called his “shifting class position” (1997: 151) and “new genteel lifestyle” (162). Hence, he is determined to turn away completely from his humble origins and live with his new social identity, which is characterized by his “selfish pursuit of wealth and gentility” (159). Though he has now become “less coarse and common” as Estella replies to Miss Havisham’s enquiry about whether he is “changed” (*GE* 225 [Chapter 29]), he has in the meantime not only lost his childhood innocence and humility but also failed to

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Mrs Gargery as Pip’s surrogate mother, see Huston 1994:157.

embody humanity and loyalty. In fact, he values his acquired class status so ambitiously that one cannot help recalling Brutus' words in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which perfectly suit Pip's new self:

“But 'tis a common proof,  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber upward turns his face;  
But when he once attains the utmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend” (II.i.21-27).

However, in the long term, Pip begins to have certain qualms about his snobbish and arrogant behaviour towards his family. Furthermore, disillusioned with Estella's unyielding conduct and frustrated with the exigencies of a gentlemanly life, which has been characterized by his “lavish habits” (*GE* 256 [Chapter 34]), he drifts into a kind of sentimentality and longs for the warmth and simplicity of his earlier life:

“As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my character, I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good. I lived in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behaviour to Joe. My conscience was not by any means comfortable to Biddy. When I woke up in the night [...] I used to think, with a weariness on my spirits, that I should have been happier and better if I had never seen Miss Havisham's face, and had risen to manhood content to be partners with Joe in the honest old forge. Many a time of an evening, when I sat alone looking at the fire, I thought, after all there was no fire like the forge fire and the kitchen fire at home” (*GE* 256 [Chapter 34]).

This is for Pip a moment of what is called *anagnorisis* in classical Greek tragedy, which means discovery or recognition or self-enlightenment. Indeed, it is this experience of *anagnorisis* that reaches its climax with his return to the pastoral surroundings of his native village:

“The June weather was delicious. The sky was blue, the larks were soaring high over the green corn, I thought all that countryside more beautiful and peaceful by far than I had ever known it to be yet. Many pleasant pictures of the life that I would lead there, and of the change for the better that would come over my character when I had a guiding spirit at my side whose simple faith and clear home-wisdom I had proved, beguiled my way. They awakened a tender emotion in me; for, my heart was softened by my return, and such a change had come to pass, that I felt like one who was toiling home barefoot from distant travel, and whose wanderings had lasted many years” (*GE* 433 [Chapter 58]).

Thus, at the end of his gentility adventure and futile courting of Estella, which both end in utter frustration and disillusionment, Pip discovers that true gentility is an inborn moral quality, not deriving from wealth and status, and that Joe and Biddy, who have been happily married (*GE* 434-435 [Chapter 58]) and lead a quiet life, are the very embodiments of this quality. He acknowledges this fact when, on his reunion with them, he confesses:

“But I must say more. Dear Joe, I hope you will have children to love, and that some little fellow will sit in this chimney corner of a winter night, who may remind you of another little fellow gone out of it for ever. Don't tell him, Joe, that I was thankless; don't tell him, Biddy, that I was ungenerous and unjust; only tell him that I honoured you both, because you were both so good and true, and that, as your child, I said it would be natural to him to grow up a much better man than I did” (*GE* 435 [Chapter 58]).

As Waters (1997: 159) rightly argues, Pip “has come to perceive the value of home and family, one who appreciates the virtues of kindness, gentleness, and loyalty, and who has no more illusions about the lures of wealth and social pretension”. Actually, this is the core message of Dickens’s critique of class aspirations and capitalist materialism in Victorian England, and Pip’s social tragedy becomes a graphic representation of this Dickensian criticism.

To conclude, with its topical variety and multiple layers of meaning, *Great Expectations* not only generates a wide range of interpretation and critical discourse but also becomes, through the story of Pip’s social rise and fall, Dickens’s running commentary on Victorian class mobility, which, in the past, had been motivated by the accumulation of wealth and brought about by industrialization and free trade. Hence, it would not be out of place to regard Dickens as a kind of social historian who formulates his discourse through fabulation rather than mere documentation.

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### ***The Mysteries of Edwin Drood: The Search for Closure and Meaning in Neo-Victorian Rewritings of the Last Dickens\****

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*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the posthumous and incomplete novel that Charles Dickens was writing and publishing in monthly instalments when he suddenly died on 9 June 1870, remains an unfathomable mystery, as its title ironically announces, for we obstinately expect mysteries in books to be solved. Only six out of the twelve parts that were aimed to be published were actually issued, to the utter desolation of Dickens’s contemporary and future readers from all over the world, frustrated in their eagerness to give a final shape to a text which resists and, eventually, evades closure. Although there have been many speculations, sometimes founded on some nebulous and ambiguous testimonies, we probably shall never know how Dickens intended to finish his narrative, the only one among his works that, overtly and ostensibly, can be said to contain the

conventional features of detective fiction. According to G. K. Chesterton, through the creation of the plot of *Edwin Drood* Dickens “ended by inventing the new detective story”<sup>4</sup>. This opinion is accentuated by the fact that we deal with an *unending* narrative whose final solution is textually precluded, both the main character of the novel, and the author —Dickens himself—, being absent, respectively, at a definite point of the plot and in the middle of the process of composing the novel itself, as Joachim Frenk (2011) has perceptively analysed. This scholar exposes that all the continuations of the novel correspond to a cultural desire to resurrect the dead Dickens while finishing (off) his novel. As Steven Connor also postulates from a phenomenological stance, “The fragmentary condition of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* can never be self-sufficient, will always call for the reconstructive participation of its future readers” (1993: 86).

Consequently, Dickens’s incomplete novel, which promised to be —and actually is— a masterpiece, has remained unfinished and open to a succession of apocryphal endings, stirring up the imagination of an inventory of writers who have been haunted by the mystery it posed ever since, even shortly after Dickens’s death. There were three early sequels, all of them by Americans: Robert Henry Newell (whose nom-de-plume was Orpheus C. Kerr) parodied the novel as early as 1870 in a banal burlesque recreation; Henry Morford, who had visited Dickens’s Rochester with his wife, gave to the print a conclusion to the plot that was published in serial form during 1871-1872; finally, Thomas James, a Vermont printer, in a very Dickensian turn of the screw, alleged that the “Inimitable’s” spirit had manifested to him through ghostly channelling, with the purpose of dictating the remainder of his work. This peculiar and flawed version, which appeared in 1873, was eulogized and acclaimed by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, himself a firm believer in spiritualism and esoteric lore, very much in vogue in the late Victorian period, and it is well known that Dickens also embraced it. These insipid efforts were followed by Charles Dickens, Jr. (the great novelist’s son) and Wilkie Collins’s *John Jasper’s Secret: Sequel to Charles Dickens’s Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1898), and two more recent fictional works: Leon Garfield’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and Charles Forsythe’s *The Decoding of Edwin Drood*, both published in 1980. Finally, the Italians Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini contributed to this profuse inventory with a sequel to the unfinished novel in 1992.

Apart from these uneven literary efforts, there have been to date several attempts of a miscellaneous kind to reconstruct the Dickensian text: a written account of the peculiar trial of John Jasper (the most obvious candidate for the murder of his nephew, Edwin Drood), conducted by G. K. Chesterton as judge, with the participation of eminent men of letters of the time, George Bernard Shaw being the foreman of the jury<sup>5</sup>; film and radio adaptations; one BBC television series; and, most prominently, among other dramatic versions, a highly successful musical comedy, with book, music and lyrics by Rupert Holmes, entitled *Drood*, first produced in 1985, whose most innovative effect is brought about by the audience voting on which of the characters is the murderer, which one plays the role of the enigmatic Dick Datchery, and which of the couples in the play are the most suitable to develop a romance together<sup>6</sup>. The desire for closure reaches here a climatic... and diluted point indeed!

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.online-literature.com/dickens/edwindrood/>, accessed June 15, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> The text of the successful trial in popular terms, published in 1914, can be found in the edition of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, mentioned in the works cited section below. In his introduction to this edition, Matthew Pearl describes the trial as follows: “The result is an enjoyable and somewhat bizarre blend of scholarly analysis and cultural commentary, of debate and dramatization, that ends up edging into a postmodern paratext of the unfinished book” (2009: xviii).

<sup>6</sup> “Holmes wrote brief alternate endings for every possible voting outcome, even the most unlikely” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Mystery\\_of\\_Edwin\\_Drood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mystery_of_Edwin_Drood); accessed June 16, 2012). A summary of

However appealing these attempts to conclude Dickens's narrative may be, it is within the realm of recent popular neo-Victorian rewritings or spin-offs of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* that we can find aesthetically and ideologically significant efforts to recreate Dickens's fictional work for the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader, who has also inherited the desire to complete the fragmentary novel, in the ever paradoxical and recurrent pattern followed by human beings, always eager to bring to a close what is in itself inconclusive, trying to fill up the perpetual void of uncertainty which, inevitably, enfolds us. The *corps morcelé* —in Lacanian terms— of Dickens's text has to be reconstructed, following the reader's craving and struggle for meaning. The whole process attests to Dickens's attraction to readers of all times, emphasizing his (also) endless popularity as a writer and a myth of the Victorian period that readers persistently try to decode, in an endeavour to better understand what they feel and what they are.

Curiously published during the same year (2009), with admittedly no mutual contact whatsoever between the authors, Matthew Pearl's *The Last Dickens* and Dan Simmons's *Drood* share remarkable characteristics typical of the revival of Dickensian narratives in our times. They underline the processes and causes that prompted the writing of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, to the apparent detriment of offering a linear conclusion to the novel (a purpose which is, nonetheless, achieved in an oblique way), and show how relevant the influence of the great master can be on today's popular fiction, so much enthralled by neo-Victorian patterns. Both books fulfil Mark Llewellyn's conditions for a narrative to be included within the field of neo-Victorian fiction: they are works consciously set in the Victorian period, "representing marginalized voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally 'different' versions of the Victorian" (2008: 165), establishing creative dialogues with the imaginatively disembodied and reconstructed past. It is a truth universally acknowledged (or, at least, accepted in academic circles) that we are "the other Victorians"; that the Victorian era is, reformulating Kucich and Sadoff's words, "historically central... to postmodern consciousness" (qtd. in Llewellyn 2008: 167). It seems to be so if we take into consideration the vast amount of neo-Victorian rewritings and reinterpretations of Victorian works that proliferate on the contemporary literary scene, mostly in the English-speaking world. The international celebration of Dickens's bicentenary in 2012, apart from signalling the obvious preeminent place of the English writer in the literary canon, and the fascination he goes on holding for many contemporary readers who consider him "a classic", substantiates the validity of the previous assertions. In spite of the depreciation of his reputation in the academic circles not so long ago, Dickens is still and will remain a legendary figure, an literary force, whose mythical projection has been paradoxically enhanced by the fascinating and rigorous accumulation of information contained in his latest biographies (those of Peter Ackroyd 1990, Jane Smiley 2002 and Claire Tomalin 2012, for instance); they all suggest, in Wildean terms, that his life - full of lacunae and inconclusive data, as is the unavoidable fate of any human existence, no matter how scrupulously examined it may be - was the most depurated, intriguing... and mysterious of all his creations. In the end, Dickens himself is a Dickensian character, as both *Drood* and *The Last Dickens* come to prove.

Simmons's and Pearl's narratives are eventual attempts to capture, discern and "(en)close" Dickens's last years and works, the turning point of the former being the appalling Staplehurst train derailment of 9 June 1865<sup>7</sup>, an episode that, justifiably, transformed Dickens's life forever, for he was on the verge of death when going from Paris to London, accompanied by his clandestine mistress, Ellen Ternan, and her mother.

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Dickens's novel and pop culture references to it, apart from additional information, can be found on this link. For those readers interested in the musical comedy, see Napolitano (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Exactly five years before Dickens died.



The gruesome Drood - more a fantastic apparition than a man - represents, in figurative terms, the phantom of death. On the other hand, from a biographical viewpoint, Pearl's narrative focuses on Dickens's American tour of 1867. Both novels portray "the Inimitable" as a vivid literary character, and they are carefully researched and splendidly documented, showing a combination of the recurrent elements of popular fiction and historical facts, demonstrating the obsession with giving new form to postmodern anxieties and traumas that are connected with the Victorian era in general, and with Dickensian paradigms in particular.

Both blockbusters are Dickensian in their scope: their roots in popular fiction are in keeping with the certainty that Dickens was the universal epitome of serial writing in the nineteenth century, when his instalments (fragmentary parts of a narrative gradually in search of an ending) were perhaps the most evident illustrations of the power of literature in a consumerist society. The popularity of "the Inimitable" was astounding, similar to that of today's notorious rock stars or famous football players, displaying a narcissistic cult of personality. Both *Drood* and *The Last Dickens* exploit this situation and present Dickens as a literary genius, even more worthy of admiration when he is described as inevitably human and, accordingly, fallible. As has been pointed out, Pearl inserts him within the framework of his second and last journey to the United States in 1867, which would prove eventually fatal for the ill and exhausted writer, but that would also show him at the peak of his fame, lionized by multitudes of enthusiastic American readers, eager to attend one of his public readings (even to the point of being almost kidnapped by a rich female fan and stalker), and portrayed as the victim of "bookaneers" in search of copying and transmitting his works in an illicit way - one of Dickens's persistent hobby-horses, and one of the most significant reasons for his acerbic onslaught on the United States, as reflected in his *American Notes*, composed after his first visit to the young nation in 1842.

Through the fictional character of James Osgood (Dickens's real American publisher being the Bostonian firm Fields, Osgood & Co.), Pearl's thriller introduces the so-called "Dickens Controversy", a debate about international copyright, dealing at the same time with the restless search for an ending to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Pearl makes us aware of the fact that "the battle of the books" in the Victorian age could be so serious as to trigger off murder. Big amounts of money were at stake.

On the other hand, through his Mozart-Salieri relationship with Wilkie Collins - the great Victorian writer and the fictional narrator of *Drood* -, Simmons provides magnificent glimpses of Dickens's complexities, with his inherent virtues and shortcomings, trying to provide a faithful portrayal of the great writer. Apparently, Collins - the author of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, those early masterpieces and forerunners of modern detective fiction - does not seem to be "a marginalized voice", in the sense that Llewellyn used the term, as quoted above. However, he *is*, if we take into consideration his jealous subordination to Dickens as a writer and his addiction to opium, which turns him precisely into an utterly unreliable narrator. His mental disorders and reveries bestow inconclusive features to *Drood* as a narrative, for the reader cannot fully determine whether the long story told by Collins is true or not, and whether the narrator's drug-induced story - addressed to a future reading audience, in what constitutes a strange sci-fi twist - provides a conclusive account of historical fact. Both Simmons and Pearl build up intertextual narratives, full of literary allusions and "Victoriana", the Gothic, "gaslight" atmosphere of both novels being one of their most successful features. As newspaper reviewers of *The Last Dickens* have put it, this kind of narrative - the same as *Drood* - could be placed under the categories of "alternative literary history" or "historical literary thriller(s)", the latter being, according to Anna Mundow, "a subspecies

of the historical novel”<sup>8</sup>. As a matter of fact, both Simmons’s and Pearl’s narratives, teeming with actual quotations from Dickens and other historical characters, are also exponents of metafictional works, for, in their desire to capture the literary and the personal evidences of Dickens’s life, they also reconstruct the process of composition of his posthumous novel, which is reflected in their plots as a sort of work in progress which, in the case of *The Last Dickens*, will be finally concluded, although frustratingly lost at the end of the book, eluding complete closure. Furthermore, *Drood*, with its emphasis on literary rivalry, also deals with Wilkie Collins’s parallel arrangement and development of his works, unveiling the mechanisms of narrative composition within the global context of Victorian serial writing.

Opium – which prevents a satisfactory ending to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, due to the hesitation and ambiguity that drugged narrators like Wilkie Collins produce in the readers - is at the core of Simmons’s and Pearl’s narratives, in keeping with the plot of Dickens’s last novel, which commences with the fantasies of John Jasper in an opium den:

An ancient English Cathedral Town? How can the ancient English Cathedral Town be here! The well-known massive grey square tower of its old Cathedral? How can that be here! There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point of the real prospect. What is the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe, it is set up by the Sultan’s orders for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash, and the Sultan goes by to his palace in a long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers. Then, follow white elephants caparisoned in countless gorgeous colours, and infinite in number and attendance (2009: 3).

As Joachim Frenk (2011: 149) has cleverly noticed, even the dull setting of the novel - Cloisterham - is strangely absent in this reverie. Some elements remind us of Dracula, another figure of absence and elusiveness, suggested by the truculent image of impaling, perhaps related to Vlad Țepeș, the Wallachian prince or *voivod*, who used that blood-thirsty means of torture against his enemies, Turks mainly. It is highly improbable that Dickens had access to anything new concerning that historical figure about whom Bram Stoker himself had less knowledge than is usually assumed. However, Frenk (2011) is right when comparing the ghoulish character of Drood (ultimately, Dickens’s fantastic invention in Simmons’s blockbuster) with a vampire. To my mind, adding Dracula to the picture would also provide a significant paradigm of the Victorian underworld, very much in accordance with the plot of Simmons’s neo-Victorian spin-off<sup>9</sup>, for the Count constitutes a symbol of colonial and postcolonial otherness, a feature which, following Llewellyn’s postulates, lies at the foundation of neo-Victorian texts.

In both Simmons’s and Pearl’s narratives, oriental and colonial traces proliferate. Some of them related to opium-eating, metaphorically connected somehow with the consumerism associated with popular literature. This, too, exhibits figurative vampiric and addictive connotations, since its readers are always willing to “devour” texts by decoding them and, ultimately, by providing a closure for them. Drood’s aim to create an occult Egyptian empire at the core of Victorian London, evidently linked with Dracula’s desire to give rise to a vampiric kingdom in the old imperial metropolis in a fantasy of racial inversion, is counterbalanced in Pearl’s novel by the opium plot, which is brought

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<sup>8</sup> The first label can be found in the *Kirkus Review*. Retrieved at <http://www.matthewpearl.com/dickens/reviews.html>, accessed June 13, 2012. The second, coined by Anna Munday, appeared in *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2009, and can be retrieved at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/03/AR2009040303434.html>, accessed June 14, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noticed that the fragmentary structure of Stoker’s popular novel, consisting of miscellaneous documents, was precisely taken from Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*.

in at the very beginning of the book (introducing Frank, Dickens's son, as a member of the Bengal mounted police) and through the character of the enigmatic Herman, a Parsee who obeys the orders of Trood, the criminal mastermind of the melodramatic book. Opium ingestion is inexorably linked to oriental figures, like King Lazaree (the "monarch" of "Undertown" in Simmons's narrative), and Herman in Pearl's novel. Dickens also makes use of an Eastern character in his description of the opium den frequented by John Jasper: "Lying, also dressed and also across the bed, not long-wise, are a Chinaman, a Lascar, and a haggard woman" (2009: 3). Reconstructing Dickens's text from a neo-Victorian perspective relates contemporary anxieties to the collective unconscious of the Victorian past. For obvious historical reasons, many of those somewhat veiled obsessions, have to do with a colonial substratum<sup>10</sup> whose decipherment leads to the understanding of present-day postcolonial issues still waiting for a definitive conclusion.

If a text is in itself non-conclusive, given its natural proclivity to reject one specific meaning, and, consequently, its propensity to be open to a multiplicity of interpretations, the possibility of providing a closure to a fragmentary and unending book, as is the case of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, becomes even more unattainable, in spite of Simmons's and Pearl's efforts. When both *Drood* and *The Last Dickens* were published, Jake Kerridge, the critic of *The Telegraph*, claimed that "Now Droodmania is upon us again"<sup>11</sup>. The cyclical necessity to retrieve the lost, never written text, and put an ending to it, will inevitably go on haunting readers' and writers' imagination for many years to come.

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<sup>10</sup> In this same colonial context, it should be pointed out that Edwin Drood, a man of action and disrespectful of readers, intends to travel to "undeveloped countries". As Matthew Pearl affirms in his introduction to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, "... by 1869 all but one of the six surviving Dickens boys had been, or were, involved in exotic colonial pursuits. Most of Dickens's sons would have likely joined Edwin in claiming to be about 'doing, working, engineering' and in 'contempt' of reading" (2009: xv).

<sup>11</sup> April 2, 2009. Kerridge's review can be retrieved at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5095160/Drood-by-Dan-Simmons-and-The-Last-Dickens-by-Matthew-Pearl-Review.html>, accessed June 13, 2012.

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**Anti-Tourism Rhetoric in Dickens' *Little Dorrit* and *Pictures from Italy*\***

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While in the Victorian age the aristocratic institution of the Grand Tour was reaching the masses, Dickens' touristic subplot of *Little Dorrit* and his own travelogue, *Pictures from Italy*, whose descriptions underlie the fictional text, were already putting the whole institution of the formative Continental tour into question, subverting traditional views of the benefits of travel. Indeed, many imaginative texts of the Victorian period containing a Grand Tour plot, such as Henry James' *Daisy Miller* or even George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, showed the darker underside of travel in their representations of sensitive characters who chafed under the strictures of the Grand Tour, whereas travelogues and almost industrially produced guidebooks contributed to the merchandising of travel as a social marker. The anti-tourism rhetoric described in our days by many theorists of travel literature (e.g. Fussell 1980, 1987, Urry 1990, or Buzard 1993) made its early appearance especially in these two texts by Dickens that go against the grain of mass tourism, highlighting the slavery of sight-seeing and the weariness of the tourist and suggesting that tourism is a form of alienation in which the unauthentic prevails over the authentic.

Dickens' two books display many features common to the kind of travel literature which, to borrow Buzard's words, distinguishes true travellers who go about "with open eyes and free spirits" from tourists, "dupe of fashion, following blindly" (Buzard 1993: 5). They contain much debunking of guided tours and guidebooks and caricatures of British tourists (the Davises in *Pictures*, the Meagles in *Little Dorrit*), as well as stereotyped representations of foreigners. The pose of cosmopolitanism is satirized as is the snobbishness of travel, seen in the characters of Mrs General or Mrs Merdle and in the Dorrits' pretensions on their redemptive tour.

Admittedly, Dickens was more of a traditional traveller than he cared to concede when he affirmed: "I have such a perverse disposition in respect of sights that are cut and dried and dictated – that I fear I sin against similar authorities in every place I visit" (*Pictures* 70). In spite of his refusal to be told what to do, what to see and how to interpret it, in other words to "follow blindly," it has been demonstrated that his travelogue relies heavily on Murray's Handbooks.<sup>12</sup> However, both *Little Dorrit* and *Pictures from Italy*, in their more inward-looking passages which go well beyond the satire of travelling habits, contain several anticipations of anti-tourism.

*Pictures from Italy* departs from the guide-as-instructor model of Baedekers and Murray's *Handbooks* in its impressionistic style defined by Dickens as "a series of faint reflections--mere shadows in the water" (*Pictures* 5). "In refusing previous models," Vescovi (2002: 99) points out, "Dickens had to create ex nihilo a new poetic of travel literature", a poetic which shunned descriptions, let alone practical information, in favour of figurative language and imagery with a combination of realism, fiction and surrealism that foreshadows postmodern traits. In the pastiche of the Arabian Nights perceivable in the description of Venice, Vescovi (2002: 104) states, "[t]he dreamy atmosphere of Venice subtracts weight from the city and reduces it to a heap of images that are given order and structure by the Arabian subtext". McNees, too, points out that Dickens's *Pictures from Italy*, is not only written from an anti-touristic point of view but is

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<sup>12</sup> *Pictures from Italy* relies on Murray's suggested travel routes, on the proper seasons during which to visit principal Italian cities, and, most significantly, closely paraphrases the Handbooks' descriptions of particular sites and specific paintings (see McNees 2007 and de Stasio 2000).

addressed to a readership similarly oriented, appealing “to a romantic yearning to resist the beaten track, to be both literally and metaphorically diverted” (2007: 211). Indeed, Dickens has a sort of post-touristic audience in mind when he thinks that his readers may visit the places he reminisces about “in fancy, the more agreeably, and with a better understanding” (*Pictures* 5). It is a characteristic of post-tourism that people “find less and less necessary to leave home. [Technology] allows people to ‘gaze’ on tourist sites without leaving home,” say Ritzer and Liska (1997: 102). What Dickens highlights is a first step towards this detachment from the actual experience of travelling.

In *Little Dorrit*, the reasons for the travellers’ failures, perplexities and disillusionment are inscribed in the plot of the novel. William Dorrit and his family are on a tour of Europe to forget the many years spent in the debt prison of Marshalsea, out of which the old gentleman bought his way after discovering he was the lost heir to a large fortune. The family travel in style over the Alps and take up residence in palaces, as grand tourists used to do, first in Venice and then in Rome. While the rest of the family indulge in many ostentatious and expensive activities through which they hope to escape the memory of long years of suffering and humiliation, the younger daughter, Amy, better known as Little Dorrit, realizes that everything is still under “the shadow of the Marshalsea wall.” Unlike the other members of the family, she does not believe that the new life, the new riches and the encounter with a beautiful country, much fabled about, can change anything. She goes through the tour in an oneiric dimension, the same dimension used by Dickens for his phantasmagoric descriptions of Venice and other places in *Pictures from Italy*.

Like the persona of the traveller in *Pictures from Italy*, whose stances anticipate the twentieth-century distinctions between traveller and tourist, Amy, too, shuns traditional forms of travelling, avoiding repetitive and thoughtless wandering in the footsteps of someone else. Unlike her own creator, however, she has no pretence of rebelling against imposed ideas: she simply wants to be left alone to contemplate her present and past lives according to the suggestions that come from her environment. The strictures of the governess, Mrs General’s conception of tourism, on the other hand, frustrate her timid attempts at finding some pleasure in her trip. Her riding “out in a hired carriage [...] and wander[ing] among the ruins of old Rome” (*Little Dorrit*, 795), or her floating alone in a gondola are looked askance by the governess and by polite society: “Social people in other gondolas began to ask each other who the little solitary girl was whom they passed sitting in her boat with folded hands looking so pensively and wonderingly about her” (608). Even her daring to express a personal opinion is rebuked. Mrs General complains about her “wondering exceedingly at Venice”: “I have mentioned to her that it is better not to wonder. I have pointed out to her that the celebrated Mr Eustace, the classical tourist,<sup>13</sup> did not think much of it” (608).

Amy wants to keep off the beaten track not out of a desire to distinguish herself - a common pose in travel literature - but because her focus is on the Self rather than on the Other. Her questioning of the idea of tourism is subtler than that put forward in *Pictures from Italy*. Dickens through Amy Dorrit questions the whole idea of travel in a much more radical fashion. Travel is futile. Touristic sites are unreal, not because of their beauty but because they are foreign to the traveller’s predicament. Amy, unlike the governess, Mrs General, and the many other tourists in this and other Victorian novels who appear totally incapable of appreciating the beauty of Italy, is fully aware of the fascination of the country: “All that she saw was new and wonderful, but it was not real; it seemed to her as if those visions of mountains and picturesque countries might melt at any moment” (604), indeed, “the more surprising the scenes, the more they resembled the

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<sup>13</sup> John Chetwode Eustace’s *A Classical Tour Through Italy* (1817) was one of the most popular guidebooks to Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

unreality of her own inner life" (605). Grand Tour destinations in Dickens' descriptions actually lack objective characteristics; they are mere mirror reflections of states of being. However, the way Dickens empties them out of all meaning makes them also counterparts to modern non-places, such as vacation centres, theme parks and cruise ships where the "issue of reality or rather its absence" is central (Ritzer and Liska 1997: 102). In his suggestion that touristic sites have no substance, Dickens anticipates Augé's theorizing about "non lieux" (non-places) or Foucault's "heterotopias."<sup>14</sup>

The impossibility of escape from one's former self and life, which is a standard motif in travel literature, becomes in *Little Dorrit* the dominant response to the protagonist's encounter with Italy, a country in which natural beauty and cultural magnificence are in sharp contrast with human suffering and political and social collapse, bringing back poignant memories of Amy's former state or reflecting her sense of unease. She is fascinated by the beauty of the country, but perceives it as unreal except when she notices the dichotomy of "misery and magnificence wrestling with each other upon every rood of ground in the prospect, no matter how widely diversified, and misery throwing magnificence with the strength of fate" (605). But unlike other travellers who feel detached or superior, for Amy it is a self-referential experience.

Her response to poverty also goes against Mrs General's vision of tourism: "Nothing disagreeable should ever be looked at" (622). Or, if looked at, it should only be considered as something picturesque. Instead, in *Little Dorrit* there is no gloating on Amy's part over the picturesque aspects of beggary and dilapidated buildings, no spectator's gaze but a participatory attitude which makes her react as a responsible tourist ante-litteram, trying to relieve the poverty she sees and which she recognizes as her own. She is part of the scene. In the magnificence of her new life, she shares fully in the misery of Italy: "[M]any a time, when the money she had brought to give them was all given away, she would sit with her folded hands, thoughtfully looking after some diminutive girl leading her grey father, as if the sight reminded her of something in the days that were gone" (607).

Apart from such instances, what Amy sees does not exist *per se*: it is only a reminder of prison. Emotional triggers for the inescapable memories of her former life are the sight of ruins, decayed or mouldering objects, shadows and passages through darkness, or from darkness into light. As the family state-carriage crosses the Alps, the apparent release from the dark confinement among the mountains is perceived as a dream, as, indeed, the release from the memory of prison will prove to be: "the descent into Italy, the opening of that beautiful land, as the rugged mountains widened and let them out from a gloomy and dark imprisonment – a dream" (605). From the crossing of the Alps onwards, everything Amy sees will be a reminder of prison: the gorges in the mountains, the great staircase of the Grand St. Bernard hospice with its "bare white walls [...] broken by an iron grate" and the "dreary", "confined", "contracted" life of the monks in the hospice (576-577). Even water in the canals "might run dry and show her the prison again," a "lasting reality" that had never changed. (609).

The simple vision of a shadow, as in the case of Amy's contemplation of the tower of Pisa, will unleash melancholic thoughts concerning both the unreality of the present and the aberration of the past:

When we went to see the famous leaning tower of Pisa, it was a bright sunny day, and it and the buildings near it looked so old and the earth and sky so young, and its shadow on

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<sup>14</sup> Marc Augé introduces the term *non-lieux* (non-places) in his book *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Seuil, 1992. Michel Foucault talks about heterotopias in "Des espace autres", *Dits et écrits*, IV, Paris, Gallimard, NRF, 1994; "[D]es sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables" (752). ("Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality". Transl. by Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces", in *Diacritics*, 16/1 (1986), 22-27.

the ground was so soft and retired I could not at first think how beautiful it was, or how curious, but I thought 'O how many times when the shadow of the wall was falling on our room [...] this place was just as quiet and lovely as it is to-day!' It quite overpowered me. (720)

Wandering among the ruins of old Rome, Amy has a double vision. She sees the ruined remains which represent such an attraction for tourists, but they only give back a reflection of her own ruined life:

The ruins of the vast old Amphitheatre, of the old Temples, of the old commemorative Arches, of the old trodden highways, of the old tombs, besides being what they were to her were ruins of the old Marshalsea – ruins of her own old life. [...] Two ruined spheres of action and suffering were before the solitary girl often sitting on some broken fragment, and in the lonely places, under the blue sky, she saw them both together. (795-796)

In Rome "everything seemed to be trying to stand still for ever on the ruins of something else" (666), just as in the precariously opulent life of the family. The empty pretensions of the Dorrits underscore Amy's perceptiveness in recognizing ruins and decay in the very magnificence of their lives in splendid places. For instance, she is moved by her father's desolate solitude: "even as he sat before her on his sofa, in the brilliant light of a bright Italian day, the wonderful city without and the splendours of an old palace within, she saw him at the moment in the long-familiar gloom of his Marshalsea lodging" (478).

Little Dorrit's clearer vision of the heterotopic magnificence of tourist sites and her discovery that tourism is "a superior sort of Marshalsea", though justified by the plot, are, however, also a premonition of the modern tourist's syndrome that the tour taken to escape and to forge a new identity by contact with the others turns into a new form of slavery and imprisonment. The statement by John Urry that "we tour in order to see and experience something different" (1990: 2-3) is contradicted by Amy as well as by modern tourists, who characteristically engage in forms of tourism closely related to their lifestyle at home and accept that there is no true authentic experience apart from the commodification of place and self. As Ritzer and Liska (1997: passim) point out, they wind up visiting shopping-malls and eating at McDonald's, much as Amy keeps returning to Marshalsea or the persona of the narrator in *Pictures* indulges in reveries about London.

Dickens' sense of the futility of travel and of the unreality of the places visited foreshadows, indeed, postmodern attitudes. In pointing to the banalization and commodification of mass tourism and to the constructedness and artificiality of touristic sites at the very onset of the phenomenon, the Victorian author is anticipating some of the themes of post-tourism.

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## ***Unexpected Turkey and Turks in Household Words and All the Year Round***

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Western collective imaginaries have represented the Turk not only as terrible, savage, "unspeakable", but also as "sex-crazed", "harem-driven" and debauched. In the last few decades, scholars coming from anthropological, historical and cultural areas of study, influenced by poststructuralist theories and studies on discourse analysis, have frequently confirmed the persistence of this stereotype in the history of Western popular thought. The historian Karim H. Karim (2000), for instance, who traced the origin of this image in antiquity, writes that, between the seventh and eleventh century, Islam began to represent a serious threat for the Europeans, accentuating the repertoire of negative accounts about the Orient, accounts that at a later time, when the Ottoman Empire became a threat for the Europeans, also influenced depictions of the Turks. Edward Said (1978), a commentator in literary and cultural studies, elucidated the connections between a racialized concept of the Turks, and of the Orientals in general, and the power relations within imperialism. Regardless of the discipline, many scholars agree that the Turk-stereotype, in which the Turk possesses qualities which European or Western civilized persons do not have, persisted for hundreds of years, reaching its peak in the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire achieved its greatest geographical extent.

In nineteenth-century Britain, the validity of this stereotypical representation was attacked and the Turk-caricature was weakened, albeit not completely. In an article from 1854, published in the weekly magazine edited by Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, William Blanchard Jerrold set out to reverse this trend; his main purpose was to show how popular representations of the Turks as savage and barbarian were no longer valid for the present day Turk, who - as he states - "is a being who differs very widely from the savage gentleman of popular fiction".

Focusing on similar representations in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, this article will examine the manner in which a stereotypical "regime of representation", which had helped to construct the image of the Turks in terms of Otherness, underwent certain modifications and variations in the second half of the nineteenth century, alongside the circumstances that surrounded these changes and the role of these two journals in prompting them. Briefly, it will review the changes in the dominant stereotype of the Turk and examine the corresponding "twists and turns" in the two journals edited by Dickens.

1.

In *The Spectacle of the 'Other'*, centered on the study of representation as both a concept and a practice, Stuart Hall (1997) talks about the existence of "twists" and "turns" in the ways in which the black experience was represented in mainstream American cinema. If, as Hall highlights, the repertoire of stereotypical figures drawn from slavery days have strongly influenced American mainstream cinema in general over the decades, there were some moments and figures of American cinema that succeeded somehow in inflecting this representational regime of racial difference. In the 50s and 60s in particular, and



again in the 80s and 90s, the subject of race, Hall maintains, was broached by American mainstream cinema. The upheavals of the Civil Rights movement and the ending of legal segregation, two historical moments that contributed to the social and political emancipation of the Afro-American community in the United States, played the decisive role in the inflection of a representational regime and in the subversion of stereotypes and practices involved in it.

Through examples of Afro-American people in American mainstream cinema, Hall demonstrates that it is impossible to fix meaning to people, things and images by a stereotype or representation. Even if stereotypes attempt, sometimes successfully, to fix meaning, ultimately, Hall (1997: 270) states:

“meaning begins to slip and slide: it begins to drift, or be wrenched, or inflected in new directions. New meanings are grafted on top of the old ones. Because words and images carry connotations over which no one has complete control, and these marginal and submerged meanings come to the surface, allowing different meanings to be constructed or deconstructed and allowing different things to be shown and said.”

Special historical, social and political circumstances coincide with a so-called “slip”, “slide” or “drift” in the meaning of a stereotype. For the Afro-American community, these circumstances arose in the United States in the 50s and 60s; in England, in Turkey, and in the relationship between the two nations, they occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The events which led to certain changes in the depiction of the Turks were principally social and political in nature. The nineteenth century was one of important reforms in both countries which, while not without problems, contributed to modernizing the social and political institutions of the two empires in question. For the specific case of Turkey, beyond influencing the modernization of the country, the Tanzimât reforms also prolonged the Ottoman Empire's life, postponing its decline and increasing its international prestige.

English interests in the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, were firmly established by the 1850s. The first changes in the approach of British foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire had already occurred in the 1830s. The growth of Great Britain as a colonial power was at the core of similar political agendas. Indeed, towards the end of the eighteenth century, England had become the leading country in global industry and commercial activity, becoming the most powerful colonial state with the acquisition of overseas territories. All of which led English foreign policy towards the tendency to consolidate the *Pax Britannica*. Protecting the route to India was certainly important, as was controlling the isthmus that divided the Mediterranean from the Indian Ocean. In Europe, on the other hand, this same objective was pursued by maintaining the “balance of powers”. As such, the decision was taken to promote both the politics of integrity and inviolability of the Ottoman Empire, which consisted of support for a reformed Turkey, conceived as a bulwark against Russia. Interest in the area was then definitively established with the official involvement of Great Britain, between 1854 and 1856, in the Crimean war and, in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris (1856), in the issues relative to the so-called Eastern Question. (Cf. Anderson, 1966)

All of these shifting historical circumstances contributed to the growing interest in the region<sup>1</sup>, as well as to changes in the representations of the Turks in popular English journals, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* included. These Dickensian journals were published in the two decades when social and political changes occurred in the two

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<sup>1</sup>With regard to a region at the core of the 'Ottoman Balkans', i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Berber, Neval 2010. *Unveiling Bosnia-Herzegovina in British Travel Literature (1844-1912)*. Pisa: Edizioni Plus/Pisa University Press.

empires, as well as the aforementioned changes in relations between England and Turkey (from 1850 to 1859, *Household Word* and, then, between 1859 and 1870, *All the Year Round*). As with other journals in that period, such as *Fraser's Magazine*, *Macmillan Magazine*, *The British Quarterly Review*, or *London Magazine*, they kept a watchful eye on political and social changes in Turkey and were conscious of changes in the British political agenda towards it. But, unlike other journals, they wanted above all to understand the reformism at the core of Turkish society.

2.

One of Dickens's original and consistent aims was to raise public awareness of the need for penal, educational and social reform. Catherine Waters (2005: 155) states, not by chance, that Dickens was "the leading reformer among contemporary novelists". His writing is characterized by a reformist social vision and seeks to effect a change in public consciousness of the "other nation" hidden from view. The same interest characterizes the articles Dickens published in the two journals in those years, as well as the articles by journalists, who, between the 1850s and 1870s, wrote for *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

For George Walter Thornbury, William Blanchard Jerrold and Eustace Clare Grenville Murray, Dickensian journalists writing from Turkey, the Tanzimât reforms that were changing Turkish society became the main topic of interest, also complicating their representations of the Turks and Turkey. Even as they continued drawing on the repertoire of well-known stereotypes of the Turks, they also began to doubt them, questioning their validity and capacity to represent the Turkish society they observed between 1850s and 1870s.

The interest in the reforms was perhaps most evident in the writing of George Walter Thornbury, who authored eight articles on Turkey, which first appeared in *All the Year Round* and then were published in 1869 in *Turkish Life and Character*. For example, in his articles, *Turkish Prisons* (1860c) and *Lunacy in Constantinople* (1860a), Thornbury specifically talks about prison reform and madhouses. While this journalist wished to familiarize readers with the idea of general improvement of the prisons and madhouses after the introduction of the Sultan's Tanzimât reforms, he observed the Turkish social phenomenon of containment in both the wider European, and specifically *English*, context, remarking for his audience at home that he did not expect "trim iron doors, neat turnkeys, shining clean doors [...] as in Europe", and that Turkey was still "this [...] prison of the middle ages, such as Shakespeare had sketched in *Measure for Measure*" (1860c: 435).

Other authors were more attentive when analyzing the improvements in the living conditions of the minority nations within the Ottoman Empire. In *Education in Turkey*, Murray (1854a) observed in particular how the recent reforms had helped to modernize the Turkish school system, including the Greek population living in the Empire. Murray also highlighted changes in Turkish costumes that occurred throughout the nineteenth century, offering us as an example the Sultan, who, he maintained, happened to go to the important Friday prayer dressed in European costume: "He (the Sultan) is a mild-looking man – dark of course – about thirty. He is dressed in the European costume; although his tailor has not been happy in the manner of making it" (Murray 1853: 205).

These articles illuminate a Turkish society which has been changed by the Tanzimât reforms. These changes, even if a pale comparison to supposedly more progressive parallel changes in English society, are generally evaluated by Dickensian journalists as markers of civilizing values, able to redeem Turkish society from the savageness which it had known for centuries and to revive the declining Ottoman empire. These changes were occurring very slowly and with difficulty in the eyes of these Englishmen; as Murray (1853: 207) stated: he does not "very well see daylight through the darkness".

3.

If such reforms had changed Turkey enough to attract the attention of these Englishmen, what of Turkey's inhabitants?

The Turks were generally portrayed through implicit reference to the stereotypes mentioned above. In general terms, it can be stated that their image did not substantially change with the passing of time, as Thornbury (1860b: 363), for example, observed when he wrote that: "in like manner as the nineteenth century the Turk is one and the same with the Turk of the seventeenth century, so are the Stamboul streets of 1860 much what the Stamboul streets must have been in 1660". The Turks were therefore seen as savage, ignorant and idle people; they were tyrannical towards other nations (for example the Greeks) and towards (Turkish) women; they were idle, as there was in them a striking absence of life and a predisposition to *dolce far niente*, and they were primitive in their customs in the sphere of sexuality (because they owned harems and practiced polygamy). Their ignorance, as Murray (1853: 207) noted, emerged with evidence if they were compared to other nations: "The Turks, accustomed from the beginning to look upon themselves as conquerors, are the most ignorant and unskillful persons in Turkey"; or, as Thornbury (1860a, c) stated, their cruelty could be observed in madhouses and prisons. As regards the idleness of the Turks, Murray, for example, reported that in order to make certain sectors in the society more efficient, it was necessary to hire foreigners, especially English people: "The Turks do nothing. Even the smart little steamboats which still run from the bridge at Samboul to Bujuduré are manned with Englishmen, and our caidji (boatman) is a Greek" (Murray 1853: 206). The cited examples mainly confirm the validity of the scholarly studies which were quoted at the beginning of this paper.

Yet one may notice features in this image showing how this representational regime is neither definitive nor unique and stable. All three authors who referred to the Turks with the stereotypes which they held to be representative of their way of life, habits and customs, also remarked upon the recent changes in society and on the reforms that, according to them, had the power to change these attitudes and the behaviour that so dominated popular representations. Drawing on social and political processes taking place in Turkish society, they somehow managed to contest the well-known stereotypes of the Turks. They co-opted the existing stereotypes to create new images representative of the Turks, in line with ongoing reforms in the Turkish society that they supported, engaging in what Bakhtin (1981) called "trans-coding". The main stereotype of the Turk as savage, cruel and barbarian was in fact placed side by side with an image of him as respectful of laws, morally pure and less cruel. The two images ended up cohabiting, increasing the diversity of the way in which *being a Turk* was depicted.

The article by Jerrold was probably the most representative in this sense. For Jerrold the stereotype of the Turks was no longer able to describe the Turks of the day. Indeed, for Jerrold (1854:57), "the Turk or Ottoman [...] is a being who differs very widely from the savage gentleman of popular fiction". The Turk, according to Jerrold, was a gentleman who did all that the Turks of the popular descriptions did not do, they respected the laws in the same way as they respected their religion, confined themselves to one wife only, did not tie up their ladies in a sack and throw them into the Bosphorus when they returned home in an angry mood, did not stab people in the dark, and were far from being outrageously impure in their morals. They were, in Jerrold's opinion, a much more civilized people than public opinion had been led to consider them throughout the centuries, so that not even the name "Turk", which was perceived as a synonym for a "barbarian" in both England and Turkey ("to call a man a 'pretty Turk' in England, is not to pay him a compliment. Even in Turkey no man likes to be called a Turk; he is an Ottoman; a Turk in his eyes is a barbarian" (1854: 57)), could hardly explain or describe the present day population of Turkey ("Thus it will be seen that the Turk (for we must

still call him so) born in the present time, does not enter upon a scene quite so barbarous as that upon which his grandfather played a part”, *ibidem*).

Furthermore, the descriptions of Turkey by Montesquieu, an authority in the field of Orientalism and representative of the typically Orientalist ways of representation, according to Edward Said, were, as Jerrold said, “no longer applicable”, since the reforms of the previous fifty years had changed the social processes which had made Montesquieu represent the Turks as disrespectful of property, ignorant of civil laws and fond of slavery and polygamy:

When he [Montesquieu] wrote it was true that property was not respected; that civil law was not known; that slavery had degraded the people; and polygamy had destroyed the purity of social life. But things have changed within the last fifty years, under the rule of the present Sultan and his predecessor. (Jerrold 1854: 57)

Traces of this same practice can be found in Murray and Thornbury as well, who, between 1850s and 1860s, attacked the well-known stereotypes of the Turks in a very similar, if not so explicit, way. Murray, for example, in *Household Words*, offered the portrait of a “pasha” he had met in Turkey, who, according to him, possessed qualities that were in direct contrast to those which generally described the Turks. The “pasha” was an honest, sincere and honorable man: “I believe it would be physically impossible for him to utter an untruth, to forget his honourable pride, or to do one mean, paltry, or unworthy action to any human being” (Murray 1854b: 462). By focusing on aspects of Turkey and the Turks which went beyond the stereotypes, Thornbury, in *All the Year Round*, showed anthropological and cultural interest in his representations of the Turkish bazaars in *The Bazaars of Constantinople* (1860d) and *Turkish Shops and Shopkeepers* (1860b) or artistic, architectonic and natural beauties in *Turkish Street Fountains* (1860f) and *The Valley of the Sweet Waters* (1860e).

What Jerrold and others demonstrated was a special propensity to observe and analyze the changes taking place in Turkish society, which certainly complicated their representations of the Turks. Even if they drew on well-known themes to represent the Turks, they contested those same stereotypes, changing the meaning of the image of the Turks, which became more complex, permeated with contradictory and ambiguous features, more difficult to capture and analyze.

In the nineteenth century, changing power relations facilitated this representational practice. If stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power, so too do changes in meaning of stereotypes occur when this same power is attacked and threatened. This is precisely what transpired in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Turkey went from a historical enemy and antagonist to an ally for the British. Thus when economic and political interests pushed the English to protect the Ottoman Empire, this shifted the language used to describe Turkey and the Turk.

In order to understand if this was a general tendency or rather an exception related to the two journals edited by Charles Dickens and to the wider interest of the Dickensian journalists in the modernization and reforms within Turkey at that time, it would be necessary to engage in a broader analysis, comparing representations of the Turks by Dickensian as well as other journals writing about Turkey and the Turks in that period, such as *Fraser's Magazine*, *Macmillan Magazine*, *The British Quarterly Review*, or *London Magazine*. Heretofore this article has limited itself to the two Dickensian sources, demonstrating that a twist in representational practice of the Turks did take place in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, which did not eradicate the widespread stereotypes representing the Turks, but served to show the fragility of their meaning and their openness to change and transformation.

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## Wax, Death and Crime in Dickens's *Great Expectations*

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### “[T]he ghastly waxwork at the fair”

—All moveables, of wonder from all parts,  
Are here, Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,  
The Horse of knowledge and the Learned Pig,  
The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,  
Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,  
The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,  
The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft  
Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet shows  
All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,  
All freaks of Nature, all Promethean thoughts,  
All jumbled up together to make up  
This Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths  
Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast Mill,  
Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,  
Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms. (Wordsworth 1805: 680–95)

As William Wordsworth's description of Bartholomew fair brings home, nineteenth-century fairs were popular venues with multiple attractions. The parliament of monsters did not just feature nature's marvels but also new inventions, such as automata, contributing to the popularisation of science and technology in a significant way. Among them, waxworks, crafted by “modern Merlins”, seemed to belong to the world of wonders that Bartholomew fair offered to its visitors. This magical world orchestrated by the wizards of modern times capitalized on people's love of the marvellous. Fairs shocked

and amused visitors with their monstrous specimens, fairies, giants and dwarfs, preserved animals or exotic species, just as they deceived them with plays and tricks of all sorts. Among the available shows in 1830 were menageries, the “living skeleton”, the pig-faced lady, the Scotch giant and its chief attraction: the lying in state of George IV, a waxwork found in many wax exhibitions of the period (Frost 1875: 305).

It is a similar motif which introduces Pip’s romantic vision of reality in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861)—a novel which opens in the 1830s—when the young hero discovers Satis House and its macabre Cinderella—or rather, Sleeping Beauty. Dressed in her bridal gown, with only one shoe on, Miss Havisham is compared to “the ghastly waxwork at the fair” (Dickens 1994: 57). The comparison binds the character to a world of make-believe, that of the stage or exhibitions. As in a phantasmagoria, Miss Havisham’s room, artificially lit by wax candles, suggests how deceptive reality can be, as Pip mistakes tatters for rich materials and a corpse-like woman for a rich and beautiful lady. Moreover, as a “personage lying in state”, Miss Havisham encapsulates many popular figures of the time. The wax effigy Pip has in mind may be one of the models of royals which appeared in many a wax exhibition both in fairs and in museums, such as Tussaud’s, like that of George IV, which fascinated Dickens.<sup>1</sup> This potential link with the monarchy strengthens Pip’s vision of Miss Havisham’s social class as different from his own, the image encapsulating inaccessibility. But the wax also plays its “democratic” function, annihilating social boundaries between viewers and the represented celebrities: in venues such as Tussaud’s, the public was sometimes allowed to touch the wax exhibits. The waxwork in the narrative thus captures the tension between social distance and social proximity which pervades Dickens’s novel.

In addition, the waxwork betokens Pip’s refusal to acknowledge the reality of Miss Havisham’s corpse-like appearance, her body shrunk to skin and bone. Wax displaces and replaces the gruesome body. Wax models of royal characters had been used since the fifteenth century to display kings and queens without fearing decomposition. Similarly, dressed in bridal attire, Miss Havisham’s wax-like and virginal corpse highlights her attempt at arresting physical decomposition and counteracting time and death. The wax model thus typifies the narrative’s interplay with anxieties related to time and bodily decay, more especially so when Miss Havisham wishes to be laid upon the table when dead, with people coming and looking at her—“the complete realisation of the ghastly waxwork at the fair” (83).

Laid upon the table, as female corpse and artwork, Havisham’s body is very much redolent of the wax anatomical models that were popular in the mid-eighteenth century and throughout the Victorian period, as exemplified by the numerous anatomical Venuses displayed both in medical museums and at fairs. These models, such as those of the Specola, which opened in Florence in 1775, moulded after cadavers and used as substitutes of the putrefied dead body, were used in medical education in order to teach the mechanisms of the human body. The wax substitutes enabled medical professionals to teach human anatomy without resorting to corpses at a time when the supply in cadavers was scarce.<sup>2</sup> However, such anatomical waxes, though modelled on cadavers, represented female *bodies* rather than corpses. Hardly any trace of bodily decomposition ever appeared on Florentine waxes, the waxworks looking like female sleepers—Sleeping Beauties—and often even ornamented with rich accessories. In fact, the anatomical models, blending art and science, were conceived as objects of the gaze—ideal bodies revealing their secrets to medical professionals. These anatomical Venuses also circulated

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<sup>1</sup> Many coronation displays were exhibited at Tussaud’s, an institution which very much promoted and popularised the monarchy, as with the coronation of George IV or the model of Queen Victoria which participated in maintaining the queen’s visibility even after her retreat after Prince Albert’s death in 1861.

<sup>2</sup> From 1832 changes in the legislation, with the Anatomy Act regulating dissection, facilitated the supply of cadavers in England.

in fairs and anatomical museums open to the public (although frequently for men only), especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1839, Sarti, a Florentine, ran an exhibition at 27 Margaret Street, showing a Venus that could be taken apart, like Dr Joseph Kahn's, whose Venus was made up of eighty-five pieces, or Reimer, whose Anatomical and Ethnological Museum opened in 1853 (Pilbeam 2003: 137–9). When away from the world of medical education, however, anatomical Venuses fed the public's appetite for the macabre and the erotic. The normative, idealized female body was offered to the gaze of (often male) viewers, its parts gradually taken away in a morbid strip-tease.

Interestingly, not only does Miss Havisham play a significant part in Pip's education (whether as potential benefactress or as deceiver teaching Pip to tell the real from the artificial), but her body also strengthens the connections with such wax Sleeping Beauties. Introducing herself as a woman with a broken heart, Miss Havisham defines her body in mechanical terms, the play on the broken heart suggesting parallels between the state of her house, with clocks stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and her physiology which seems to have gone wrong. The metaphor thus constructs her, to some extent, as an anatomical Venus, made up of multiple pieces likely to be disassembled. But Miss Havisham also recalls one of the most famous mechanical automaton displayed in the nineteenth-century: Madame Tussaud's Sleeping Beauty—Madame du Barry's wax model—which again connects Dickens's female character with the world of waxwork exhibitions.<sup>3</sup> Du Barry's "breathing" wax model had a mechanical beating heart, and her chest could be seen rising as she lay asleep on a sofa, disturbingly disrupting the boundaries between the real and the artificial as between the animate and the inanimate.<sup>4</sup> The multiple associations of Miss Havisham with contemporary models of Sleeping Beauties demonstrate how both anatomical Venuses and automata linked death and wax, framing the body in representation, women being more often than not "subjects to this imaging" (Bruno 2002: 149). In fact, as Giuliana Bruno contends, just like the anatomical Venuses, the "fascination for automata, which extended from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, was embedded in the struggle against decay", as "movement transformed the inorganic into organic matter" (Bruno 2002: 147).

Furthermore, Miss Havisham not only often repeats identical words ("Play! Play! Play") or movements, walking "round and round the room" (83), but her movements also are suddenly arrested, Pip describing the stopping of her body parts one after another as if she were made of independent pieces:

[Miss Havisham's] face had dropped into a watchful and brooding expression—most likely when all the things about her had become transfixed—and it looked as if nothing could ever lift it up again. Her chest had dropped, so that she stooped; and her voice had dropped, so that she spoke low, and with a dead lull upon her; altogether, she had the appearance of having dropped, body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow. (60)

The construction of Miss Havisham as a character out of Madame Tussaud's museum is further emphasized when Pip relates his visit to his sister, Joe and Pumblechook. Pip believes that "if [he] described Miss Havisham's as [his] eyes had seen it, [he] should not be understood" (64). Worse, Miss Havisham, herself, would not be understood. The story Pip then makes up, portraying her sitting in her room in a black velvet coach eating cake on a gold plate while dogs fight for veal cutlets out of a silver

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted here that Tussaud's was careful never to include anatomical models in the exhibition in order to make sure that it would not be confused with fair exhibitions and because the museum was wary of the Obscene Publications Act of 1857.

<sup>4</sup> The model had been made by Curtius (Marie Grosholz's (later Tussaud's) 'uncle'), and inherited by Madame Tussaud after his death. Philippe Curtius (1737–1794) was a doctor who had left his medical career to set up a wax exhibition in Paris. His waxwork of Marie Jean du Barry (Louis XV's mistress), made in 1765, was the starting point and a significant landmark in the history of waxworks.

basket, reinforces the connections with the world of waxworks. The flags, swords and pistols Pip plays with, alongside the other “marvels” (68) of the room are reminiscent of some of the exhibits at Tussaud’s, notably the tableaux, or Napoleon’s Waterloo carriage, which was exhibited in 1843 and could be used as a kitchen, a dining-room, a study, a bathroom or even a bedroom. All the kitchen utensils were gold and silver and visitors could even climb aboard the carriage (Pilbeam 2003: 113).

### **Feasting on Sleeping Beauty: Waxworks and Secrecy**

Although anatomical Venuses and other sleeping beauties embodied the Victorian ideal of feminine weakness, passivity and vulnerability—images of ideal womanhood heavily influenced by contemporary medical discourses—Dickens’s Miss Havisham is far from being a passive virgin awaiting her prince or a female corpse submitting to the anatomist’s blade and compliantly awaiting dissection. The “sleep-death equation” (Dijkstra 1986: 62), which enabled nineteenth-century artists to portray passive sensuality and avoid morbidity, is undermined in *Great Expectations*. Indeed, the narrative evokes tensions regarding Miss Havisham’s body, particularly using the Gothic paraphernalia to metaphorize the villainess’s corporeality. The “crawling things” (83) Pip notices on the table, the “speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies”, beetles and mice, as so many scavengers, hint at the bodily dissolution of Dickens’s Sleeping Beauty, turning the sight of eternal youth into a macabre spectacle of decomposition.

Inevitably, the view shatters the reassuring image of wholeness emblemized by Sleeping Beauty’s body eternally frozen in youth and evading death. Miss Havisham, who has locked herself up in Satis house, is a morbid Sleeping Beauty, her “corpse-like” appearance (59) giving a twist to stereotypical representations of ideal femininity locked in virginity. Moreover, the spectral bride is also seen as a mummy threatened to be struck to dust if taken into the natural light (59), a death-in-life figure signalling instability, her body likely to fall into dust and disappear. Thus, if the image of Sleeping Beauty’s crystallized body promised eternal life, Dickens’s Gothic paraphernalia dooms the female body to decomposition. As “yellow skin and bone” (84), Miss Havisham’s body is an envelope hosting a skeleton, her lack of fleshiness pointing even more powerfully to her material body, as a corpse urging anatomists to investigate it before putrefaction sets in.

As Elisabeth Bronfen (1992) has argued, the dead woman was a *topos* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century culture. Whether dead or in a trance, corpse-like women haunted the period. Often portrayed as neither dead nor alive, dead women were stereotypically white and pure—immaculate—in their eternal sleep. However, they were also seen as mysterious and unfathomable, most especially so in scenes of dissection featuring anatomists dealing with dead female bodies. These Sleeping Beauties uncannily hovered between stereotypes of virginal femininity (safely protected from temptation by death) and corpses hosting mysteries likely to escape the anatomist once decomposition starts. In J. H. Hasselhorst, *The Dissection of a Young, Beautiful Woman by J. CH. G. Lucas (1814–1885) in order to Determine the Ideal Female Proportions* (1864) or Gabriel von Max’s *Der Anatom* (1869), the white virgins lying on the anatomists’ tables look like so many Sleeping Beauties eternally sleeping. Yet their skin, like a sheet or shroud covering the mysteries of the female body, lures the anatomists, inviting them to lift it. As Bronfen (1992: 5) argues, even as the painting “signifies an immaculate, immobile form, [this form of beauty] potentially contains its own destruction, its division into parts”. The corpse, as representation, is thus stuck in limbo—seemingly stopping time and denying bodily dissolution while simultaneously pointing to its inevitable decomposition.

In *Great Expectations*, the body of Miss Havisham magnifies such tensions. As Sleeping Beauty, the character promises revelation, matching Pip’s fairy tale ideals and his belief that he is meant to “do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance,



and marry the Princess” (229); as corpse, she threatens to deny access to the truth, concealing secrets locked away for ever. Both as a self-constructed passive body and as a plot-maker or puppet-master, directing Pip and Estella’s romance, Miss Havisham brings to light the contradictions inherent in the image of Victorian Sleeping Beauties. In doing so, Dickens’s *Sleeping Beauty*, likely to break up into pieces and disintegrate, reflects the narrative mechanisms of the novel, as Pip tries to reassemble the pieces of the puzzle and unveil the secrets of Estella’s or his benefactor’s identity. The world of wax exhibitions, its artificiality, its costumes and its *Sleeping Beauties* thus pave the way for Pip’s apprenticeship, especially as its macabre atmosphere takes the hero to London, where wax signals crime and its punishment.

### **Macabre Exhibitions: Waxworks and Crime**

Indeed, throughout the novel, the motif of wax is linked to punishment,<sup>5</sup> and the world of wax exhibitions courts that of criminality. The motifs which associate waxwork exhibitions with the realm of death are the very same as those which are used to define crime. The dust and the mould which cover the room where the wedding table has been laid in Satis House, as evidence of *Sleeping Beauty*’s decomposition, are found again in London, this time associated with Newgate, as when Pip feels “contaminated” by the dust on his feet and in his lungs (261). The disease metaphor, together with the way in which the dust is related to Pip’s body, penetrating his organism, strengthen the parallel between the two places. In addition, the scaffold, which Pip had associated with Magwitch in the opening chapter, appears as well when Pip leaves Satis House after his first visit and sees Miss Havisham hanging on a great wooden beam by the neck. Furthermore, the candles, which encapsulate artificiality and the make-believe world of Satis House, reappear in Jaggers’s office, this time “decorated with dirty winding-sheets, as if in remembrance of a host of hanged clients” (384).

More significantly, perhaps, the casts of hanged criminals in Jaggers’s office, offer a much more macabre vision of the world of waxwork exhibitions. Jaggers is Pip’s guardian whom Pip had met at Miss Havisham’s (hence his belief that Havisham is his benefactress). His office is another Gothic realm—a dismal place, the skylight “patched like a broken head” (162), Jaggers’s chair looking like a coffin and two casts of hanged criminals with swollen faces are exhibited on a shelf. Like Miss Havisham’s body compared to a waxwork resisting bodily decomposition or to an embalmed corpse likely to crumble into dust, the casts are unstable motifs. Though made of wax, the artificial reproductions of the criminals are surrounded by flies which settle on them as on decomposing bodies and appear animated every time Pip notices them. Tellingly, Jaggers, whose hands smell of scented soap, reminding Pip of doctors (81), washes “his clients off, as if he were a surgeon” (208). Holding a penknife, he reads people’s bodies like an anatomist, as when he reads power in Molly’s hands, “coolly tracing out the sinews with his forefinger” (212). The network of motifs evokes the world of anatomy, recalling how murderers’ bodies were handed to surgeons and anatomists after their execution in order to be dissected, the casts, therefore, uniting the legal and medical fields.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, crime, the casts suggest, can be exhibited. When Pip later travels with two convicts, their keeper is compared to a Curator, the prisoners making “an interesting Exhibition not formally open at the moment” (224). This “most disagreeable and

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<sup>5</sup> Humorously enough, Tickler, which Pip’s sister uses to beat him, is a “wax-ended piece of cane” (9).

<sup>6</sup> The beginning of anatomy legislation may be traced back to 1540, when Henry VIII allowed anatomists the use of the bodies of four hanged felons per year. This allowance was extended to six by Charles II, until the 1752 Murder Act granted anatomists the use of all the criminals hanged at Tyburn and later Newgate from 1783. The 1832 Anatomy Act radically reformed anatomy, granting anatomists the right to use unclaimed pauper bodies from workhouses.

degraded spectacle” (225) is found again in Wemmick’s “museum”, as he keeps in a “chamber of the Castle” a “collection of curiosities” (207). The latter are items that belonged to the criminals who were hanged, including human remains, such as locks of hair. This echoes the image of Miss Havisham as an anatomical model,<sup>7</sup> more and more connections associating the medical and legal worlds with that of exhibitions, all the more so as Newgate is an entertaining place very similar to wax exhibitions: a drunk minister of justice offers Pip “a full view of the Lord Chief Justice in his wig and robes ... like waxwork” (164) at the reduced price of eighteen pence.

In fact, the wax motif, appearing as a leitmotiv and increasingly linked with death and crime, gradually guides the reader towards the truth, pointing to the secrets which Pip must discover. Jaggers is the man who is “more in the secrets of [Newgate] than any man in London” (265) and his casts function as landmarks in the novel, appearing every time Pip is about to discover something. Pip notices them on the shelf each time he enters Jaggers’s office; they also become animated each time the narrative refuses to lift up the veil on a character’s identity. Pip notices their swollen faces when he meets Jaggers’s mysterious housekeeper, Molly (198); they seem to eavesdrop on the conversation or to be about to sneeze on the day when Pip comes of age, and Jaggers refuses to reveal the identity of Pip’s benefactor (282); they try to open their eyelids when Jaggers asks Pip under what name Magwitch has written to him (333); they seem to play bo-peep when Pip tries to connect Estella and Molly; they look as if they were smelling fire when Pip conceals his identity to send nine hundred pounds to Herbert (404).

As a result, the casts pave the way for Pip’s discovery of the truth and for his self-discovery, playing a significant part in the *Bildungsroman*. Wax, as a malleable material, shapes the hero’s modelling into an adult, more especially so because it is associated with forms of visual education and amusement like waxworks. Moreover, wax teaches him to distinguish reality from artificiality. By flirting with death and crime, wax maps out the young boy’s experience and his reading of the world. Lastly, if wax, as representation, particularly epitomized the desire to freeze the body so as to “harness the emotion of the body and its temporal history” (Bruno 2002: 149), wax as a motif is used throughout *Great Expectations* to signal the reification and mechanization of feelings, as if this was the ultimate secret Pip needed to unveil, wax being the medium used throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to mask death and master emotions related to the body. Thus, because, the novel shows, repression works in tandem with crime and death, Dickens’s characters—crushed by blows, turned into automata, grotesquely disguised until they look like corpses (like Magwitch whose dressing up has the “effect of rouge upon the dead” (334))—must learn to open up their hearts and let out their tears, even if Dickens’s prince is denied marriage to his princess and his Sleeping Beauty eventually crumbles into dust.

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<sup>7</sup> Human hair and teeth were used by wax modellers like Curtius and Tussaud.

**Dickens - *mon voisin***  
***A London Diary of Random Thoughts of Persons and Places***

**C. George Sandulescu**  
Principauté de Monaco

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The worst thing that happens to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that we are, all of us, losing our sense of history to an ever greater extent. We live from day to day, the American way! One of the fundamental problems that Charles Dickens had to face throughout his life was the question of time, more particularly how to handle time in his fiction, and that perhaps was his weakest point. As for ourselves, one of the problems we face every day is precisely the relation between *time* and *history*.

To me, Dickens is the first modern author of whom I have to speak in terms of 200 years, instead of just 100 years. It is probably the first author in my life of whose year of birth I was overconscious – 1812, in the far away days of Napoleon, The Corporal-Emperor, and his French Revolution.

I can adopt the point of view of the novelist, I can adopt the point of view of the journalist, and I can adopt the point of view of the philosopher. But, from all three points of view, the relation between *time* and *history* remains the most enigmatic relation in the day to day life of everybody, great or small.

When I was in London, and that was more than thirty years in all, I spent most of my time studying James Joyce and rhetoric in *The British Museum Library*. For *The British Library* at St Pancras had not come into existence yet. And Joyce I have always considered my absolute contemporary, as I was seven years old when he died. Whereas Dickens was far back into the remote past for me, as far back as Beowulf... And this is the most important point for the novelist, for the journalist, and for the philosopher.

But both *time* and *history* are subjective concepts. Depending on one's state of mind, they can suggest nearness and remoteness so very simultaneously, that one is staggered at the thought.

Anyhow, I was with the Joyce manuscripts in the British Museum. And my temporary flat was so far away, somewhere in Hackney, that the journey by bus took almost one hour one way, morning and evening.

Two hours on the bus every day was such precious time wasted that I decided to acquire a flat as close as was humanly possible to the British Museum. And luck was on my side, because, almost every day, going to my local pub, called *A Friend at Hand*, to meet my University of London friends and colleagues, I would pass a building right in Russell Square, if you please, where there were more than a hundred or so flats available for sale. Consequently, I almost forgot Joyce, as I forgot every other author, dead or alive, in English literature, and concentrated on the flat. The location was ideal, because it was within fifty yards of the back entrance of the British Museum, but the choice of the flat was difficult, because of my *embarras de choix*. I used to spend my lunch break visiting the hundred flats over and over again. Can you believe that all the doors were open? Can you believe there was nobody around in competition with me, except the friendly concierge? They were all nearly identical, like many authors are nearly identical in the cheap literature of the detective-story kind. As I never resort to outside opinion, I had nobody to turn to, except the more than useful pint of Guinness. And so it happened that, one sunny day in mid-winter, not very far at all from either Dickens's or Joyce's birthdays, I had the brilliant idea to see the sunniest place in gloomy London. It was the most suitable place for me. And it turned out that it even had a balcony looking out on Russell Square. The rest was easy. A phone-call to my London solicitor did the trick, and

then a phone-call to my best friend in the University of London, Dennis Deletant, to invite him for a celebratory drink.

It was only days afterwards that I started thinking about my neighbours. And, as the building was still practically empty, and the name of the street was Upper Woburn Street, I started examining everything around, house by house. And this is when I had the time-and-history-shock, all in one, just because I had decided to take a break from my intensive research in the British Museum, where I was the first to arrive, at nine in the morning — I mean, among the first five queuing to enter the library, and the last to leave, among the last twenty-five packing their papers to go home. I was right back in the middle of Bloomsbury, without realizing it, and who do you think was my next-door neighbour, two houses away in the direction of Euston Station, but Charles Dickens himself!

The literary shock was terrifying in that, to any 20<sup>th</sup> Century specialist, Bloomsbury only means Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot and all that lot. But to discover Charles Dickens' House at less than a stone's throw away from the house of Virginia and Leonard Woolf was a jump in time, quite worthy of H.G. Wells and his *Time Machine*... And it was not the end of the shock. We are all familiar with the quarrel between Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, which lasted for years; this was put an end to late in life, right on the steps of my own club, which then was the London Athenaeum, off Piccadilly Circus.

Thackeray was not very far away from my house either, I soon discovered, because his house was on a narrow little street behind Dickens's, practically back to back with it. It was the moment when I realized that the term *Bloomsbury* carried a clearly distinct *time-dimension*: to be able to say Bloomsbury in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and think of the Bloomsbury Group, with all its implications, in the same geographical area of London where, one hundred years before that — and a hundred years to the day it was — the very same streets carried the very same names, but the “Bloomsbury” of Virginia Woolf did not exist yet ..., it was still tucked away in the H.G. Wells's silly little *Time Machine*... And, to be honest, it was not really a *Time Machine* that Wells was talking about, but rather a *History Machine*! Poor H.G. Wells does not seem to have been sufficiently well educated in philosophy to see the difference between Time and History—the starting point of this very discussion.

Suddenly, the moment I discovered the Dickens House, all my childhood came back to me, and I remembered how, as a small child, I used to love *A Christmas Carol*, and hate its very first sentence. It was that very first sentence by Charles Dickens that started me on English studies in earnest. He says of one of his characters, and you know very well who that was, that he was “as dead as a door-nail”. Why, in the name of hell, as dead as a door-nail, I wondered? That sentence haunted my childhood. That sentence haunted my adolescence. That sentence haunted the rest of my life! Wherever I went in Europe, and saw the Dickens book, I automatically looked at the translation of the first sentence of *A Christmas Carol*. I did it in Oslo, and I understood everything. Then I did it in exactly the same way in Helsinki, and understood absolutely nothing, just because the Finnish language is even worse than Hungarian. And I cannot help being obsessed with what I heard the other day on the radio: it was the BBC of course; namely that *The Dickens Museum* at 48 Doughty Street—just round the corner from Russell Square was the only museum in the whole of the United Kingdom which was open on Christmas Day! No communist-born individual can even understand what that means in the United Kingdom, where Christmas Day is so absolutely holy that there are not even taxis available anywhere in the whole country for the whole day. Well, the Dickens Museum was, in 2012, open on Christmas Day. Why? For the sake of one single story, and that single story was *A Christmas Carol*. And, to me, *A Christmas Carol* is more than that. Or rather less than that. Because, to me, *A Christmas Carol* is only its first sentence: “He was

as dead as a door-nail.” If you put on your hat as a sophisticated literature man, you begin to suspect that Dickens was far too subtle for us. Particularly when you consider that bit of text against the factual statement which is currently said about Samuel Beckett, namely that Samuel Beckett was born the day Jesus Christ died! And Samuel Beckett died the day Jesus Christ was born! And that is not literary nonsense. It is absolutely correct actual fact. Look it up if you do not believe me!

It is there that we begin to understand that Dickens was not the superficial storyteller, uneducated and all that. *A Christmas Carol*, probably Dickens’s most importantly cheerful piece, begins with death, and it is there that the connection with the present day becomes unavoidable.

But let us go further, and take again the opening paragraph of one of his novels, chosen more or less at random. Dickens begins the book—one of them—by writing the following, and a lot more: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of hope, it was the age of despair.” *Et ainsi de suite...* We clearly begin to think that Dickens was a far more sophisticated story-teller than we take him to be. I have only illustrated one of his rhetorical devices so far, and that is called *the hammer-stroke introduction*.

Let us not forget that Dickens also wrote *Pickwick Papers*, which is his next best, and which I used to read as a child, and give it preference over all other stories, for one single reason, and that single reason was I did not quite understand it. Often I did not see the humour. I did not see the irony, either. I was fascinated by the names of the characters, which kept ringing in my ears every day on the way to school.

So, what is Time? What is History? What is Literary History? I realized, to my professional despair, that Mr Jingle and his father were far more alive in my throat than either Mrs Dalloway or even Becky Sharp of *Vanity Fair*. To say nothing of the highbrow Stephen Daedalus.

How was that possible? Walking aimlessly round and round these houses, I discovered that, right in front of Euston Station, there was a beautiful church, and, on a little street by the side of it, at 5 Woburn Walk, there was a special plaque saying that that had been the residence of William Butler Yeats for close to twenty years, from 1895 to 1917. That is where James Joyce used to go to see Yeats, and knock on the door. And, even as a very young man, had the impertinent courage to throw “You, I do not need!” in Yeats’ face. And he meant it. And he achieved it. But, for some very strange reason, of all these authors that I have mentioned, whenever I was mumbling names and texts in my mind, imperfectly, of course, I fell back on Charles Dickens. His name had a resonance that was outshining everybody else. When I was speaking to myself, I was never saying *Oliver Twist*: I was saying *Oliver Twists*. Far jazzier, is it not? And that is why I perfectly understand the platitude that was commonly circulating as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century... You may remember that in *Pickwick Papers* there is a character called Sam Weller. Well, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century platitude that I found ridiculous as a student and more than ridiculous afterwards, as a teacher, was the following: “Others wrote well, but Dickens wrote Weller!”

So far, I have been dealing with books and houses. To wind up the whole thing, I would like to say a few words about how, and where, Charles Dickens used to write.

I was saying that I have been a member of *The Athenaeum* for a great number of years. And *Athenaeum* is the most celebrated London club, having been frequented by politicians, men of letters, and top clergy, in that order. It was started way back, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and it had the biggest open-shelf library of any famous club anywhere in the world. That is where I used to spend my time when the British Museum was closed on a Sunday, or any other bank holiday. And most of my evenings, of course. And what was the most cherished piece of *The Athenaeum*, in the small private reading room, but a writing desk and a chair going with it, all cordoned off, so as not to be used by any of the

members. And... whose desk was that? That was the desk of Charles Dickens, and nobody was allowed to sit at it and write. Though, one late evening close to midnight, when the club was nearly empty, and I had had a sufficient dose of whiskey kindly provided by the Chinese barman, who was always there, I presumed to remove the cordoning off, and sat at Dickens's own desk in *The Athenaeum*. Myself. My problem was, suddenly, that I did not know *what* to write. My mind was blank. And stayed blank. As if under a spell. In fact, at the very bottom of my heart, I realized that the only thing I could well have written would have really been a down and out platitude, or a foolish thing that I would regret for days afterwards. So I refrained that very moment from writing anything at all. (If it had been a famous tree, anybody would have scratched their name on it...) But I for one—constantly obsessed with Joyce—could not help having the sudden revelation in my mind—Joyce would have called that *an epiphany*—of the vast distance between an ordinary individual like me, and the formidable genius that Charles Dickens had always managed to be throughout his fairly short life.

But that is not all. One day I went and visited the Madame Tussaud's Museum, next to Baker Street Tube Station, within fifty yards, again, of the Sherlock Holmes House, at 202b, as well as the Hotel opposite. Where Anthony Burgess always used to stay. So, I went and visited Madame Tussaud's, and what do I see there, as a piece surrounded by great restrictions of privilege, but the desk and chair of Charles Dickens. Another one. I looked and meditated that it was no wonder he wrote so much, having so many elegant desks all over the place at his disposal!

But then, I examined the desk more closely, and become suspicious; and my suspicion almost turned to certainty. I said nothing, and went back home, and thought and thought for the whole night. And I knew for certain that I had seen the desk that was being displayed in the Madame Tussaud's Museum somewhere else: and that was where it properly belonged, namely in The Charles Dickens Museum, at 48 Doughty Street. Around the corner from me again, about half a mile, it is true, but still around the corner, I had seen that desk on the first floor of the Charles Dickens Museum in Doughty Street, that was an absolute certainty. So I decided to go to Doughty Street at once and investigate. To my surprise, when I got up to the first floor, I discovered that the desk was gone! And as I used to be in the habit of visiting Charles Dickens's House quite often, either alone, or with American friends—all of them James Joyce specialists, of course—as I went on to the first floor, I discovered that the desk was indeed gone. So my gentle image of Charles Dickens having *three* distinct desks, in *three* corners of London flew out of the window into thin air. Being by nature of an inquisitive and quarrelsome disposition, I went straight to the curator and bluntly asked him: "Where is the desk, Sir? Where the dickens is the Dickens desk?" The curator was clearly embarrassed, but then blurted it out: "They get far more visitors than we do, on account of the vast array of American Presidents they display, and in consequence they pocket a lot more money than we do, too! At Madame Tussaud's! So, I let them have the desk on a long-term loan!"

That is my story of Dickensland. The problem we have, the problem we are left with in our life is that, in spite of two hundred years since his birth, Dickens flatly refuses to go away! Ben Jonson is quite gone, I'm afraid. And so is Dr Johnson! But Dickens? Not at all! There is something that is probably *incrusté* in his very name, and that is why Dickens *is* in Bloomsbury today, without paradoxically being there. I repeat: Dickens's Bloomsbury is not Bloomsbury. It is Dickensland. And the further paradox is that, in Dickensland, nobody is ever dead: nobody is ever *as dead as a door-nail*. Everybody is still as alive as all the famous people are in Dante's *Inferno*, particularly in the upper—or is it lower?—circles...

P.S. The *Dickens House* in Upper Woburn Street is today the headquarters of the *British Medical Association*. When there was a big bomb explosion on a London bus on seven seven of whatever year - 2005? – the bomb had exploded right in front of my house, and

right in front of Dickens's House too. And it was a big bomb. And it was a big bus. And it was a big crowd. And it was a very big explosion. But the remarkable thing is that never in similar situations had surgeons started operating so quickly on the wounded as in that particular case. And the reason was simple, so very simple: *The British Medical Association* in the Dickens House possessed an operation table, and everything that goes with it, and it was wheeled out into the middle of the street, and surgeons started operating there and then on the many wounded within less than minutes, right there, in the middle of the street, right next to the badly damaged bus, desperately trying to see how many lives they could still save. The British courage and stiff upper lip was omnipresent. The way Charles Dickens had always wanted it to be. The Dickens optimism is all-pervasive.

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### **EVA FIGES**

(15 April 1932 – 28 August 2012)

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#### ***Eva Figes' Last Journey***

***Silvia Pellicer-Ortín***  
*University of Zaragoza, Spain*

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“She continued on her journey, as we all must do. And I, having listened to her story all those years ago, decided it was worth recording. Now, while there is still time” (Figes, 2008: 181). These words close the last semi-autobiographical work written by Eva Figes in 2008, entitled *Journey to Nowhere: One Woman Looks for the Promised Land*, and I wanted to start this obituary by recalling them, as they signify the main impulses that fostered Figes' production until the very last moment of her life: her constant interest in depicting those minority (hi)stories that had been kept silenced by the official and universalising versions of history, like the traumatic testimony of the Jewish maid Edith to which she alludes in this passage, and her incessant desire to always keep on the hard